

Decision Pathway – Report



PURPOSE: Key decision

MEETING: Cabinet

DATE: 24 January 2023

TITLE	Acceptance of funding for Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs)		
Ward(s)	All Wards		
Author: Sue Moss	Job title: Senior Public Health Specialist		
Cabinet lead: Councillor Ellie King – Cabinet Member for Public Health and Communities	Executive Director lead: Hugh Evans – Executive Director Adults and Communities		
Proposal origin: City Partner			
Decision maker: Cabinet Member Decision forum: Cabinet			
Purpose of Report: This report seeks approval to accept funding from the Ministry of Justice (via the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Avon and Somerset) to fund Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs) working as part of the Next Link Plus service.			
Evidence Base: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The Mayoral Commission on Domestic Abuse was set up in the summer of 2020 with the aim of having a clear pathway for people who are affected by domestic abuse to follow and to reinforce the message that victims and survivors are not alone and will be supported by the city. Mayoral Commission on Domestic Abuse (bristol.gov.uk) 2) An IDVA is a specialist professional who works with a victim of domestic abuse to develop a trusting relationship. They can help a victim with everything they need to become safe and rebuild their life, and represent their voice at a Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC), as well as helping them to navigate the criminal justice process and working with the different statutory agencies to provide wraparound support. 3) Safe Lives report that following support from an IDVA service, at the closure of their cases: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The majority of survivors reported cessation of abuse • 84% of survivors reported feeling safer • 73% of survivors felt their quality of life had improved Safe Lives (2022) https://safelives.org.uk/what-is-an-idva 4) In February 2021 the commissioners of Domestic Abuse services at Bristol City Council were asked to assist the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) for Avon and Somerset in putting forward an Expression of Interest (EOI) to the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) for Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs) in Bristol as part of a wider Avon and Somerset bid, the funding was designed to increase advocacy support for victims and survivors of domestic abuse and to enable the expansion of service capacity, primarily in response to the pandemic. It followed some emergency COVID-19 funding that the MOJ had provided. The EOI was successful and the OPCC were able to fund seven Independent Domestic Violence Advisors in Bristol for a two-year period to 31 March 2023. 			

- 5) The MOJ has since extended this funding for a further two years and provided funding for an additional post. The OPCC has proposed that the most effective and efficient way for this funding to be distributed is for it to be devolved locally, and has asked that Bristol City Council, as the lead commissioners of domestic abuse services in Bristol, takes on the administration of the funding for these eight posts from 1 April 2023. . This devolution has already taken place with other neighbouring local authorities including Somerset, South Gloucestershire, BANes and North Somerset.
- 6) This will enable a more coherent, holistic commissioning approach (with benefits for both commissioners and providers), including oversight of service delivery and supporting providers to problem-solve any issues as they arise. The posts are all currently held within organisations that are part of the Next Link Plus service. These posts are in addition to the commissioned Next Link Plus service which includes over 30 IDVAs and specialist workers who support individuals affected by domestic abuse.
- 7) The total funding for all eight IDVAs will be £278,048 per annum, so for two years (1 April 2023 – 31 March 2025) the total funding is £556,096. It is proposed that the Next Link Plus contract is varied to include this additional funding.
- 8) It is possible that the MoJ will continue to fund IDVAs in a similar way and that Bristol City Council would therefore be expected to continue to administer the funding. Cabinet is also asked therefore to delegate the acceptance of any future extensions of funding to the Executive Director: Adults and Communities in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Public Health and Communities.
- 9) If MOJ funding is not continued beyond March 2025 there would be a reduction in the capacity of the Next Link Plus Service and an appropriate exit strategy would be put in place.

Cabinet Member / Officer Recommendations:

That Cabinet:

1. Approves the acceptance of Ministry of Justice funding of up to £556,096 for Independent Domestic Violence Advisors posts from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2025 from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Avon and Somerset.
2. Authorises the Director of Public Health to vary the Next Link plus contract as necessary to enable continued funding of the IDVA posts up to the maximum budget envelope outlined in this report.
3. Authorises the Executive Director Adults and Communities, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Public Health and Communities, to take all steps required to accept and spend future extensions of this funding which may be above the key decision threshold.

Corporate Strategy alignment:

- **A city where every child belongs and every child gets the best start in life, whatever circumstances they were born into. Children and young people are safer from harm and violence.** Providing direct support to victims of domestic abuse works towards this goal.
- **Tackling health inequalities** – we know the health impacts of domestic abuse are wide ranging and extensive, having long-term impacts on both the physical and mental health of women and girls and disproportionately affecting those in the most disadvantaged areas of our city. Providing support for victims helps to tackle these inequalities.
- **For Homes and Communities domestic abuse is also a particular focus.** The recent Mayoral Commission on Domestic Abuse includes 35 recommendations that the city will take forward, moving us towards becoming a safer, kinder place where victims and survivors of domestic violence and abuse feel supported and empowered to move forward and build new lives.

City Benefits:

The acceptance of this funding benefits the city because it brings in additional resource and also ensures a holistic approach to the commissioning of domestic abuse services.

Consultation Details: Not applicable

Background Documents:

Domestic Abuse Act 2021 – Statutory Guidance

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1089015/Domestic_Abuse_Act_2021_Statutory_Guidance.pdf

Home Office (2021) Tackling violence against women and girls strategy 2021

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1033934/Tackling_Violence_Against_Women_and_Girls_Strategy_-_July_2021.pdf

Revenue Cost	£556,096	Source of Revenue Funding	The Ministry of Justice
Capital Cost	£0	Source of Capital Funding	N/A
One off cost <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Ongoing cost <input type="checkbox"/>	Saving Proposal <input type="checkbox"/>	Income generation proposal <input type="checkbox"/>

Required information to be completed by Financial/Legal/ICT/ HR partners:

1. Finance Advice:

This report seeks approval to accept £556,096 of funding from the Ministry of Justice (via the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Avon and Somerset) to fund Independent Domestic Violence Advisors, working as part of the Next Link Plus service.

It is understood that there are no additional financial implications to the Council arising from the acceptance of this funding, which will be used to fund a contract variation which will specify the cost of the service will be contained within the £556,096 budget envelope. An appropriate exit strategy will be put in place to ensure ongoing costs to the Council are avoided if the funding ceases. As the service is being commissioned there no risk in terms of staffing implications and associated potential redundancy costs.

Finance Business Partner: Denise Hunt 6 January 2023

2. Legal Advice: Legal services will advise and assist officers with regard to the variation of the contract as required.

Legal Team Leader: Husinara Jones, Team Manager/Solicitor 6 January 2023

3. Implications on IT: I can see no implications on IT in regard to this activity.

IT Team Leader: Alex Simpson – Senior Solution Architect 1 December 2022

4. HR Advice: The report is seeking approval to accept funding from the Ministry of Justice to fund Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs) working as part of the Next Link Plus service. This service is currently commissioned from Bristol City Council as part of Next Link Plus service, and there are no significant HR implications arising from this report for BCC employees.

HR Partner: Lorna Laing 7 December 2022

EDM Sign-off	Christina Gray	07 December 2022
Cabinet Member sign-off	Councillor Ellie King	12 December 2022
For Key Decisions - Mayor's Office sign-off	Mayor's Office	19 December 2022

Appendix A – Further essential background / detail on the proposal	NO
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Appendix B – Details of consultation carried out - internal and external	NO
Appendix C – Summary of any engagement with scrutiny	NO
Appendix D – Risk assessment	NO
Appendix E – Equalities screening / impact assessment of proposal	YES
Appendix F – Eco-impact screening/ impact assessment of proposal	NO
Appendix G – Financial Advice	NO
Appendix H – Legal Advice	NO
Appendix I – Exempt Information	NO
Appendix J – HR advice	NO
Appendix K – ICT	NO
Appendix L – Procurement	NO