

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:

Clair Bell, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health

DECISION NO:

23/00022

For publication: Yes

Key decision: Yes

Title of Decision: Procurement of the Property Security element of the countywide Sanctuary Access for Eligible Residents (SAFER) Scheme

Decision: As Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health, I propose to:
a) APPROVE the procurement of the Property Security element of the countywide Sanctuary Access for Eligible Residents (SAFER) Scheme: and
b) DELEGATE authority to the Corporate Director Adult Social Care and Health to take relevant actions to facilitate the required procurement activity.

Reason(s) for decision: Kent County Council (KCC) has a statutory responsibility under the Domestic Abuse (DA) Act 2021 to assess need, publish a strategy and commission Safe Accommodation support services to survivors of domestic abuse. Since 2021, the Department of Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) has awarded a total of £12.6m new Grant funding to the council to support implementation of these duties until 2025.

Under the Act the definition of 'safe accommodation' includes refuges, Sanctuary Schemes, move-on, and dispersed accommodation. A Sanctuary Scheme is a property where security measures have been installed, enabling survivors to remain in their own homes safely if they chose to do so. It also incorporates an element of specialist domestic abuse support to the individuals residing there.

The countywide assessment of need for support within 'safe accommodation' identified a gap in provision and found that there is not a geographically equitable Sanctuary Scheme offer across the county.

Procurement of the Property Security element will support the council to address the findings of the needs assessment and meet its statutory duties by maximising the opportunities and offer of support within safe accommodation. In turn removing barriers to underserved groups in accessing existing safe accommodation and improving the councils offer to survivors of domestic abuse.

Service design

Kent's proposed Sanctuary Access for Eligible Residents (SAFER) Scheme has been co-designed through extensive engagement with survivors, stakeholders, the market, and other local authorities with similar successful schemes and will be made up of three service elements.

Procurement of the Property Security element will be via a competitive procedure with negotiation, with the aim of successfully identifying and selecting the provider. The proposed contract term is two years with the option to extend for a further two, twelve-month periods

The invitation to tender for the Property Security service element will include a requirement for partnership working with the other SAFER Scheme service providers and expertise to undertake a robust property assessment, provision and installation of necessary security items, as detailed

in full in the Service Specification

Financial Implications: Since 2021, the Department of Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) has awarded £12.6m in new Grant funding to KCC, to support implementation of these duties until 2025.

The proposed contract start date for the Property Security service is 1 August 2023 and will be funded in full by the councils Domestic Abuse Act funding allocation. The proposed contract length is two years with two one-year extension options. Delivery will be by preferred bidders identified following a competitive tendering exercise.

Financial modelling has been undertaken based on extensive market consultation and engagement with other local authorities who have implemented a similar scheme.

The table below outlines the costs to KCC for the initial two years and extension options and can be met within the council's approved budget.

	KCC Domestic Abuse Act funding
Initial two-year contract term	£800,000
Two, one-year optional extension periods	£800,000
Total (Initial two-year contract term PLUS Two, one-year optional extension periods)	£1,600,000

To ensure a sustainable offer, engagement will commence with all stakeholders to seek ongoing funding for the Property Security measures and development of an integrated, partnership funded service from year three, if Government grant funding does not continue.

Legal Implications: The change in legislation in 2021, means that the council now has statutory duties to provide support to those residing in 'safe accommodation'. The Kent SAFER Scheme including the Property Security element will ensure the council meets its new duties under the DA Act.

Commissioners will follow the Public Contract Regulations (2015) and Spending the Council's Money guidance in relation to the procurement undertaken.

Equalities implications: An Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) has been completed and did not identify any potential adverse effects. This is a live document and will be updated as the new service is procured.

Data Protection implications: A full Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) will be developed and amended as necessary for the new service.

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation: The proposed decision will be discussed at the Adult Social Care Cabinet Committee on 15 March 2023 and the outcome included in the paperwork which the Cabinet Member will be asked to sign.

Any alternatives considered and rejected: Consideration was given to the following options; Option 1 - Do nothing. The Needs Assessment has shown that there is not a consistent offer of sanctuary across the county, resulting in an inequitable offer of support to survivors and their children. Doing nothing will not address this identified gap in services and therefore the council will not be meeting its statutory duties.

Option 2 – Delegate funding and responsibility for delivery of Property Security measures to district

and boroughs across Kent and commission support for adult survivors residing in properties where measures have been applied. It is recognised that this would likely result in multiple procurements and the opportunity for efficiencies through collaborative commissioning would be lost. There would be 12 separate sanctuary offers across the county with separate referral routes, making pathways unclear for survivors and referrers.

Option 3 – Procure a Sanctuary Scheme (Property Security measures and support for adult survivors) for areas where there is not currently a provision in place only. (Canterbury, Gravesham, Thanet, Dover, Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and Malling and Tunbridge Wells) It is recognised that this would likely result in 7 separate sanctuary offers across the county with separate referral routes, making pathways unclear for survivors and referrers. All offers would need to ensure a clear pathway for the provision of support for adults and new support service for children (due to be procured in April 2023) It is viewed that option 3 would be challenging to implement and deliver geographic equitability and the opportunity to achieve full efficiencies through collaborative commissioning would be lost.

Any interest declared when the decision was taken, and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer:

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signed

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date