

**From:** Richard Smith, Corporate Director Adult Social Care and Health

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

**Subject:** **Procurement of the Property Security element of the countywide SAFER Scheme**

**Key decision:** 23/00022

**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Past Pathway of report:** Adult Social Care Cabinet Committee – 15 March 2023

**Future Pathway of report:** Cabinet Member decision

**Electoral Division:** All

**Summary:** Kent County Council has a statutory responsibility under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 to assess need, publish a strategy and commission support services for survivors of domestic abuse (adults and children) residing in 'safe accommodation', which 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, where the perpetrator does not live in the accommodation. It also incorporates an element of specialist domestic abuse support to the individuals residing there.

Following engagement with stakeholders including district and borough councils', survivors and the market, Kents Sanctuary Access for Eligible Residents ('SAFER') Scheme has been developed to deliver an equitable, countywide Sanctuary Scheme, which is a key area of the Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Strategy and supports the council in meeting its new statutory duties.

The SAFER Scheme will be made up of three service elements. This paper is in relation the **Property Security** element. It is proposed that this is procured through a competitive procedure as detailed in this paper with the costs for this element being met in full by Domestic Abuse Act funding (awarded by the Department of Levelling Up Housing and Communities)

**Recommendation(s):** The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health is asked 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.

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) estimated that 5.0% of adults (6.9% women and 3.0% men) aged 16 years and over experienced domestic abuse in the year ending March 2022. When applied to the 2020 mid-year population estimates this equates to an estimated 64,135 adults that may have experienced domestic abuse in Kent.
- 1.2 The Domestic Abuse (DA) Act 2021 introduced new statutory duties to local authorities to assess need and commission services to support survivors of domestic abuse (adults and children) residing in 'safe accommodation' which includes refuges, Sanctuary Schemes, move-on and dispersed accommodation.
- 1.3 Since 2021, the Department of Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) has awarded £12.4m in new Grant funding to Kent County Council (KCC), to support implementation of these duties until 2025.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1 Across the county, support in accommodation such as refuges (which is now statutory) and community-based support for survivors of domestic abuse (16+) is provided through the Kent Integrated Domestic Abuse Service (KIDAS). This contract is multi-agency funded with the now statutory (refuge) element being met by the DA Act funding.
- 2.2 The DA Act requires the council to undertake an assessment to determine the level of need for support within 'safe accommodation' and commission services to meet that need. The 2021 Needs Assessment and 2022 refresh, identified a gap in statutory provision and finds that there is not a geographically equitable Sanctuary Scheme offer across the county.
- 2.3 As at August 2022, five of the twelve district and borough councils across Kent had a Sanctuary Scheme offer, whereby some security measures can be installed to individuals' homes, if necessary, available through district and borough councils. There was no offer available in Canterbury, Gravesham, Thanet and Dover. In West Kent, a local domestic abuse provider offers some low value home security items if required across Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and Malling and Tunbridge Wells.
- 2.4 The Needs Assessment evidenced that fewer private owner/occupiers are accessing refuge provision than expected and their tenure may be a barrier to fleeing domestic abuse. The Needs Assessment also evidenced that people with a disability experience additional barriers to reporting and accessing support including in refuge. Developing an equitable Sanctuary Scheme offer across the county will benefit both cohorts and maximise the council's safe accommodation support offer.
- 2.5 To comply with the definition of 'safe accommodation' under the DA Act and for a property to be classified as a Sanctuary Scheme, security measures are to have been installed following a property assessment, which has determined the

measures required to enable a survivor and their children to remain in their own homes safely (if this is their preference) providing the perpetrator no longer resides there.

- 2.6 In line with the DA Act, KCC has a new statutory duty, and funding, to provide support to the survivors residing in a property that is classified as a Sanctuary Scheme. This support package includes the specialist property assessment, advice around safety, installation of the security items and specialist domestic abuse support for adults and children.
- 2.7 Currently the community-based support element of the KIDAS contract does not meet the requirements placed on the new DA Act funding as it is not delivered in 'safe accommodation'. The costs for this service are met by the KIDAS funding partners, which includes KCC Adult Social Care, Public Health, the Office for the Police and Crime Commissioner, Kent Fire and Rescue and district and borough councils.
- 2.8 In 2021-22 there were over 3500 adult survivors who accessed community-based support through KIDAS, who may have benefited from a Sanctuary Scheme. Should a Sanctuary Scheme have been in place, the costs for their support needs could have been met through the new funding.
- 2.9 The countywide Sanctuary Access for Eligible Residents (SAFER) Scheme, has been developed to address the findings of the Needs Assessment and support the council in meeting its statutory duties. It will be funded in full by DA Act monies.
- 2.10 Delivery of this proposal supports maximisation of the council's safe accommodation support offer, in line with the DA Act, and may create future savings to adult social care base budget (which contributes towards the community-based element of KIDAS)

### 3. Commissioning options considered and disregarded

3.1 The following commissioning options have been identified and an Options Appraisal undertaken.

3.2 A summary of the findings for these options is set out in the table below

<b>Option 1</b>	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.
<b>Option 2</b>	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.
<b>Option 3</b>	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 equity and the opportunity to achieve full efficiencies through collaborative commissioning would be lost.
<b>Option 4</b>	Procure a countywide Sanctuary Scheme including Single point of access, Property Security and support package for adult survivors.	This is the preferred option. It 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 council's offer to survivors of domestic

		<p>abuse. Developing one service offer will create geographic equitability and clear referral pathways. One contract and procurement exercise will create economies of scale and efficiencies. There is also the opportunity to utilise existing contractual arrangements in place which will create further efficiencies. Commissioning and procurement resources are in place within the county council.</p>
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#### 4. Service development

4.1 Activity to develop and co-design the countywide Sanctuary Scheme - SAFER, which includes the Property Security element, was completed between August 2022 and January 2023 and comprised:

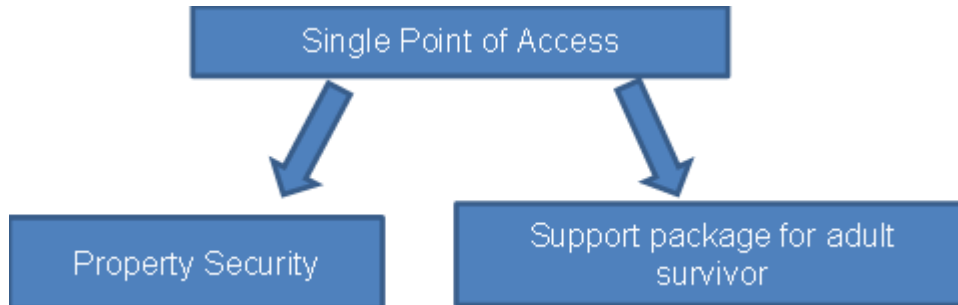
- Research into the new legislation and Statutory Guidance, collation and analysis of data to assess need and demand
- Engagement with identified stakeholders including all district and borough councils across Kent to gain views and insight
- Collaboration with other local authorities to map existing schemes and identify best practice
- Working in partnership with Children's, Young People and Education colleagues to align SAFER with the new support service for children in all forms of 'safe accommodation'
- Seeking feedback from survivors on measures that made or could help make them feel safer in their property and the support areas they felt could help them
- Hosting two market engagement events with potential providers from a variety of local and national organisations.

4.2 This activity has established that nationally, other local authorities have recently awarded a contract or are in the process of procuring a Sanctuary Scheme, utilising their DA Act funding allocations. This includes Cambridgeshire and Suffolk County Councils.

4.3 Feedback from this activity clearly demonstrated support for the proposed model and has informed the development of the SAFER Scheme service design and specification.

## 5. SAFER Scheme service elements

5.1 It is anticipated that the countywide SAFER Scheme will be split into three service elements, shown in the diagram below.



5.2 **Single point of access** – this element will be countywide, receive the referral, determine eligibility, and notify the organisation/s delivering the Property Security service **and** the support package for the adult survivor. The existing Referral, Assessment and Triage Service that supports KIDAS is delivered via the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioners countywide Victim Support contract and can facilitate this further addition through a contract variation.

5.3 **Property Security** - an organisation responsible for delivering the property assessment and required security measures across the county, to improve safety/delay someone gaining access. (eg door locks/chain, reenforced doors or door bars, fire proof letter boxes, window alarms, panic alarms, close circuit television). It is proposed that this is procured through a competitive procedure as detailed in this paper.

5.4 **Support package for adult survivor** residing in property that has had security measures installed through the SAFER Scheme. (Support could include safety planning, advocacy, therapeutic programmes or counselling). This is able to be aligned with the existing countywide community-based provision delivered through KIDAS.

5.5 Under the DA Act, a child who sees or hears, or experiences the effect of, the abuse, and is related to the adult survivor or perpetrator, is classed as a victim in their own right and therefore also entitled to support if they reside in a property classified as a Sanctuary Scheme.

5.6 Commissioners in Children, Young People and Education (CYPE) have developed a separate service offer, the 'Safe Accommodation Support Service' (SASS) to provide support to children residing in all forms of safe accommodation. SASS is anticipated to go live from May 2023 and will work in conjunction with the countywide SAFER Scheme.

**6. Commissioning intentions**

- 6.1 The planned next steps for the three elements of the SAFER Scheme were shared with the Commissioning Assurance Group on 18 January and members agreed with the intended routes to market.
- 6.2 The single point of access and support package for adult survivor will be delivered via existing contractual arrangements.
- 6.3 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.
- 6.4 The invitation to tender for the Property Security service element will include a requirement for
  - partnership working with the other SAFER Scheme service providers,
  - expertise to undertake a robust property assessment,
  - provision and installation of necessary security items, as detailed in full in the Service Specification.
- 6.5 The three main objectives for the SAFER Scheme include but are not limited to.
  - Enabling people to remain in their own homes, within their local support networks.
  - Improving safety, health, and well-being.
  - Preventing harm.
- 6.6 The SAFER Scheme will support the following key outcomes:
  - Improved offer to underserved groups.
  - Reduction in risk
  - Reduction in repeat offences
  - Reduction in homelessness
  - Reduction in use of emergency accommodation
  - Increased prosecution rates
- 6.7 If the decision to proceed with the procurement of the Property Security element of the SAFER Scheme is endorsed, the key milestones are as follows:

Milestone	Date
Invitation to Tender (ITT) issued	April 2023
Tender Evaluation Period	May 2023
Final Negotiation Period	Early June 2023
Contract Award	July 2023
Contract start date	1 August 2023

6.8 A report detailing the outcome of the tender exercise and subsequent contract award will be shared with committee members at the July meeting of the Adult Social Care Cabinet Committee.

**7. Financial Implications**

7.1 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.

7.2 The proposed contract start date for the Property Security service is 1 August 2023 and will be funded in full by the council’s DA 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.

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

7.4 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.

	<b>KCC Domestic Abuse Act funding</b>
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

7.5 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.

**8. Legal Implications**

8.1 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.

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



## **9. Equalities implications**

- 9.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) has been completed (attached as Appendix 1) and did not identify any potential adverse effects. This is a live document and will be updated as the new service is procured.

## **10. Data Protection implications**

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

## **11. Conclusion**

- 11.1 The DA Act 2021 introduced new statutory duties and funding to Local Authorities to assess need and commission services to support survivors of domestic abuse residing in 'safe accommodation'. The 2021 Needs Assessment and 2022 refresh, identified a gap in statutory provision and finds that there is not a geographically equitable Sanctuary Scheme offer across the county.
- 11.2 Commissioning options have been considered and Option 4, to procure a countywide Sanctuary Scheme including Single point of access, Property Security and support package for adult survivors is preferred.
- 11.3 The proposed countywide SAFER Scheme, has been developed and co-designed through extensive activity to address the findings of the Needs Assessment and support the council in meeting its statutory duties.
- 11.3 Commissioners in Children, Young People and Education (CYPE) have developed a separate service offer, Safe Accommodation Support Service (SASS) to provide support to children residing in all forms of safe accommodation.
- 11.4 It is proposed that the Property Security element of the SAFER Scheme is procured through a competitive procedure as detailed in this paper. The total contract value being £1,600,000, funded in full by DA Act funding and is within the council's approved budget.
- 11.5 Commissioners will follow the Public Contract Regulations (2015) and Spending the Council's Money guidance in relation to the procurement undertaken. An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and has identified no negative impacts.
- 11.6 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.

11.7 Delivery of the countywide SAFER Scheme, supports maximisation of the council's offer of support within safe accommodation, in line with the DA Act, and may create future savings to adult social care base budget.

## 12. Recommendations

12.1 Recommendations: The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health is asked 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.

## 13. Background Documents

None

## 14. Report Author

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