

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

To: Roger Gough, Leader of the Council

Subject: Extension of Domestic Abuse Act Framework and KIDAS contract

Key decision: Yes

Decision Number: 25/00033

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of report: Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee – 5th March 2025

Future Pathway of report: Leader decision

Electoral Division: All

Summary: Kent County Council will receive £4,031,222.00 for 2025-26 in Domestic Abuse Duty Safe Accommodation grant funding via the core settlement, which is an uplift of £796,559.00 to demonstrate central government's commitment to halving violence against women and girls. In line with this continued funding, the 'Domestic Abuse Framework' approved under Key decision 23/00060, is required to be extended from 2025-27, as detailed in this paper, to support in determining activity and spend.

The Councils Kent Integrated Domestic Abuse Service (KIDAS) contract is due to end in March 2026. This contract underpins the Councils response to the Domestic Abuse Act and includes delivery of statutory safe accommodation support services for adult survivors. This includes services funded by the Domestic Abuse Duty Safe Accommodation grant, in line with the Framework. Financial uncertainties are impeding recommissioning activity for a new contract post March 2026. Legal advice has confirmed there is the opportunity to extend the existing contractual arrangements and postpone recommissioning activities. This contract extension also supports implementation of the Framework.

Recommendation(s):

The Leader of the Council is asked to agree to:

1. **APPROVE** extension of the framework arrangements set out in the report for ongoing management of the DA Act Funding 2025-27.
2. **AGREE** extension of the KIDAS contract and additional services up until March 2027 (12 months), permissible by PCR 2015 72(1)(b) and to continue to utilise this contract to support delivery of the requirements of the Act until the end of the contractual term.

3. **CONFIRM** the arrangements put in place via Officer Decision OD-23-0002, taken under delegated authority by the Chief Executive, arising from Key Decision 22/00040, to delegate acceptance of any future monies to the Corporate Director of Finance, providing funding is given on similar terms and to enter into relevant agreements with Government as required to accept the funding (2025-2026).

4. **DELEGATE** acceptance of any future monies (2026 onwards) to the Corporate Director of Finance, providing funding is given on similar terms and to enter into relevant agreements with Government as required to accept the funding.

5. **DELEGATE** authority to the Corporate Director Adult Social Care and Health to, in consultation with the Leader, Corporate Director for Finance and Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education, revise and amend the arrangement set out in the framework details, subject to the scope of the terms and conditions of the grant funding.

6. **DELEGATE** authority to the Corporate Director Adult Social Care and Health, in consultation with the Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education where applicable depending on affected portfolios, to administer any further DA Act grant monies under the funding / governance framework put in place by this decision, including the determination of Officer Decisions to progress activity via the framework.

7. **DELEGATE** authority to the Corporate Director Adult Social Care and Health, in consultation with the Chief Executive to take other necessary actions, including but not limited to entering into contracts or other legal agreements, as required to implement this decision.

1. Introduction

1.1 Kent County Council (KCC) has a statutory responsibility under Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse (DA) Act 2021 to;

- assess, or make arrangements for the assessment of, the need for “accommodation-based support” in its area,
- prepare and publish a strategy for the provision of such support in its area,
- monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy.

(“Accommodation-based support” means support, in relation to domestic abuse, provided to victims of domestic abuse, or their children, who reside in relevant accommodation as defined by the Secretary of State which includes refuges, Sanctuary Schemes, move-on and dispersed accommodation.)

1.2 Since 2021, new Grant Funding has been awarded to support implementation of these duties. Key decision 23/00060 sets out previous parameters for the management of the DA Act funding 2023-2025 (‘Domestic Abuse Framework’)

1.3 Further funding of £4,031,222.00 for 2025/26 has been confirmed by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MGCLG) and

accepted by Officer Decision (ref OD/25/00001) in line with delegations under key decision 23/00060.

- 1.4 The Kent Integrated Domestic Abuse Service (KIDAS) delivers support to adults (16+) both in accommodation such as refuge and within the community. Additional services have been levied into this contract, achieved through successful funding bids made by Commissioners and the Providers, to increase the community service offer.
- 1.5 This contract also delivers additional safe accommodation support services, funded via the Councils Domestic Abuse Duty Safe Accommodation grant, in line with the Domestic Abuse Framework and statutory duties.

2. DA Act Framework 2025-27

- 2.1 It is proposed that the 'Domestic Abuse Framework' (previously agreed under key decision 23/00060) will continue to be used to determine spend of Domestic Abuse Duty Safe Accommodation grant funding, and support decision making across 2025-27.
- 2.2 The Framework decision approach places responsibility and accountability as well, as Strategic oversight, in a centralised position. With the Leader exercising the full Executive function as the decision-maker, operational decision-making and implementation activity, within the scope defined by the Framework agreed by the Leader as part of this decision, is delegated to Officers.
- 2.3 Under this Framework all expenditure of DA Act funding must be in line with budget forecasting and adhere to the MHCLG Guidance and Memorandum of Understanding terms. Additionally, proposals for spend must meet one of the following criteria:
 - A. Will support the council in conducting its statutory functions under the DA Act which include assessing need, preparation, publication, monitoring and delivery of strategies, commissioning activity and mandatory reporting back to central Government.
 - B. Will improve, develop, or maintain specialist support to people who have experienced domestic abuse (adults and children) residing in 'safe accommodation', as defined by the DA Act, (this includes Refuge accommodation, Specialist Safe accommodation, Dispersed accommodation, Sanctuary Schemes and Second stage accommodation) to meet gaps identified through the needs assessment.
- 2.4 Examples of projects that would meet the criteria include.
 - Engagement project to develop and maintain engagement with people who have experienced domestic abuse.
 - Development of new services to reduce barriers within existing support offers to underserved groups.
- 2.5 Activity for 2025-27 has been planned in line with this Framework criteria (Appendix A). Delivery of some of this activity includes using the councils

existing contractual relationship through the Kent Integrated Domestic Abuse Service (KIDAS).

Adjusting proposals

- 2.6 The Act requires the countywide needs assessment to be refreshed annually and renewed every three years. Also to publish a strategy including the provision of support. A countywide assessment of need was published in February 2023 and the Kent and Medway DA Strategy 2024-29 developed and published to address its findings. The commitments made within this strategy have been agreed by all partner agencies across the Kent and Medway Domestic and Sexual Abuse Executive Group.
- 2.7 The Domestic Abuse Framework therefore requires the council to have the ability to deliver pilots, short-term services and expeditiously realign existing DA Act funded services, to meet the changing needs and demands of people who have experienced domestic abuse, providing all revised proposals meet the criteria set out in point 2.3.

Monitoring and reporting

- 2.8 The cross directorate New Burdens Funding Steering Group supports the Local Partnership Board in monitoring the expenditure of Domestic Abuse Duty Safe Accommodation grant funding and meeting reporting requirements to central Government.
- 2.9 Activity will be reviewed periodically, with any updates subject to consideration against the framework approved by this decision and the associated Grant agreement requirements. Updates on progress against delivery will be taken annually to the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee.

3. Kent Integrated Domestic Abuse Service (KIDAS)

- 3.1 The core domestic abuse support service for adults is the KIDAS contract, which delivers support to adults (16+) both in accommodation such as refuge and within the community. This contract is partnership funded, with a total annual value of £3,667,904 in 2024-25. This value includes additional services, funded by separate sources, varied into this contract to increase the service offer and meet new statutory duties under the Act. This contract is due to end in March 2026.
- 3.2 The Integrated Commissioning team have been proactive in co-producing what a new service, post March 2026, will look like, using feedback gained from survivors, stakeholders and the market. However determination of a funding envelope for the new service, post March 2026, including DA Act Grant monies, is required to confirm the final service specification.
- 3.3 Lack of longer term Domestic Abuse Duty Safe Accommodation grant allocations beyond 2026 is impeding progression of recommissioning activity, this could result in there being no service provision from 1 April 2026 and the council not meeting its statutory duties.

- 3.4 To mitigate this, legal advice has been sought which has confirmed there is the opportunity to extend the existing KIDAS contractual arrangements under Public Contracts Regulations (PCR) 2015 72,(1),(b). If implemented this would result in recommissioning activities being postponed until there is a more certain financial landscape from central government.
- 3.5 Negotiations have been undertaken with KIDAS Providers to agree delivery costs for a one year extension period from 1 April 2026 until 31 March 2027. Engagement has achieved positive commitment from KIDAS funding partners to continue financial contributions for this period.
- 3.6 The costs for the contract extension will be met in full by partner contributions which includes KCC, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Kent Fire and Rescue and Districts and Domestic Abuse Duty Safe Accommodation grant.

4. Options considered but rejected

DA Framework

- 4.1 The option for handling all DA Act funding activity on an individual basis, with certain projects managed at operational level and others progressing via the Key Decision process as and when required was considered. That option would not enable the council to respond quickly and flexibly to changing demand and need or provide a clear strategic plan for delivering against the DA Grant requirements.

Extension of KIDAS contract

- 4.2 The option to allow the KIDAS contract to come to an end from 31 March 2026 was considered and rejected as this would result in the Council not meeting its statutory duties under the DA Act 2021.
- 4.3 The option to recommission a new domestic abuse service, to commence 1 April 2026 was considered and rejected as to run a procurement, mobilise and then de-mobilise a new contractor would be very cost and resource heavy especially as the new contractor will only deliver the services for a short period of time (one year) due to the lack of longer term Domestic Abuse Duty Safe Accommodation grant allocation.

5. Strategic priorities

- 5.1 The KIDAS contract is an integrated service and aims to improve health and care outcomes. The DA Act funding furthers collaboration with our partners and delivery against shared priorities within the Kent and Medway DA Strategy 2024-29. This decision therefore supports the Council's strategic priorities in Framing Kent's Future – Our Council Strategy.
- 5.2 This activity has a focus on delivering preventative interventions to reduce further needs developing and people presenting with multiple complex needs and requiring further interventions from ASCH. The extension of the KIDAS contract supports Securing Kents Future and prioritises best value as to run a

procurement, mobilise and then de-mobilise would be very cost and resource heavy and would achieve the same results as contract extension.

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1 The Local Authority has a statutory obligation to meet the duties set out in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, including to provide support for people who have experienced domestic abuse residing in what is defined as ‘safe accommodation’. Continuing to implement the Framework and extending the KIDAS contractual term, will support the delivery of activity across 2025-2027 and the council in meeting its statutory duties.
- 6.2 Specific legal implications for operational or funding allocation activity will be considered through the delegated decision-making as normal.
- 6.3 In line with legal advice, the modification of the KIDAS contract length is permissible through the application of Regulation 72(1)(b) of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (PCR15)

7. Financial Implications

DA Framework

- 7.1 The cost of implementing the Domestic Abuse Framework across 2025-27 will be met in full by DA Act Grant funding, including unspent grant funding from previous years (held in reserves). A draft budget forecast for 2025-26 indicates that expenditure will be £4,451,727.48. A breakdown is provided in Appendix A. Regular financial monitoring reports will be produced and shared with the Corporate Director of Finance and Corporate Director of Adult Social Care.
- 7.2 MHCLG have advised that future allocations post 2026 will be consolidated within the core financial settlement and that a Memorandum of Understanding will accompany this. It is proposed that acceptance of future monies, providing it is given on similar terms, is delegated to the Corporate Director of Finance. Future activity planned in line with the Framework will be reviewed once the allocation post April 2026 is announced.

Extension of KIDAS contract

- 7.3 The cost to KCC to extend the KIDAS contract from 1 April 2026, is £2,899,332.46 per year, and will be met in full by the KIDAS funding partners and the Councils Domestic Abuse Duty Safe Accommodation grant, broken down as follows;

Funding Partner	2026-27 contribution
KCC	£2,504,327.41
External funding partners (including the Office of the Police and crime Commissioner, Kent Fire and Rescue and Districts)	£395,005.05
Total	£2,899,332.46

- 7.4 Additional services, may be levied into this contract throughout the extension period, to increase the service offer and support the delivery of the Domestic

Abuse Framework. These will be funded in full by external grants and in accordance with PCR regulations.

8. Equalities implications

- 8.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been conducted and found no negative impacts as a result of this work. Specific service arrangements made via the Framework will incorporate necessary equality consideration as part of Officer level decision-making.

9. Governance

- 9.1 An executive decision is planned for March 2025 to extend arrangements for meeting DA Act requirements and continue appropriate funding use. The Key decision will be considered by Policy and Resources on 5th March 2025, in advance of the final decision being taken by the Leader.

10. Conclusion

- 10.1 Domestic Abuse Duty Safe Accommodation grant allocations 2025-2026 have been announced and KCC will receive £4,031,222.00.
- 10.2 It is proposed that the 'Domestic Abuse Framework' will continue to be used to determine spend of Domestic Abuse Duty Safe Accommodation grant funding and support decision making. Under this Framework all expenditure of DA grant funding must be in line with budget forecasting and adhere to the MHCLG Guidance and Memorandum of Understanding terms. Additionally, proposals for spend must meet one of the criteria detailed in section 2.3. Planned activity under this Framework is broken down in Appendix A.
- 10.3 The core domestic abuse support service for adults (KIDAS) is due to end in March 2026. This contract underpins the Councils response to the Domestic Abuse Act and includes delivery of statutory safe accommodation support services for adult survivors, funded by the Domestic Abuse Duty Safe Accommodation grant, in line with the Framework.
- 10.4 Due to lack of longer term Domestic Abuse Duty Safe Accommodation grant allocations, legal advice has confirmed that there is the opportunity to extend the existing contractual arrangements for a further year and postpone recommissioning activities. This will ensure the Council continues to meet its statutory duties and deliver activity under the DA Framework.
- 10.5 The cost to KCC to extend the KIDAS contract from 1 April 2026 until 31 March 2027, including additional services will be met in full by KIDAS funding partners.

Recommendation(s):

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2. **AGREE** extension of the KIDAS contract and additional services up until March 2027 (12 months), permissible by PCR 2015 72(1)(b) and to continue to utilise this contract to support delivery of the requirements of the Act until the end of the contractual term.
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4. **DELEGATE** acceptance of any future monies (2026 onwards) to the Corporate Director of Finance, providing funding is given on similar terms and to enter into relevant agreements with Government as required to accept the funding.
5. **DELEGATE** authority to the Corporate Director Adult Social Care and Health to, in consultation with the Leader, Corporate Director for Finance and Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education, revise and amend the arrangement set out in the framework details, subject to the scope of the terms and conditions of the grant funding.
6. **DELEGATE** authority to the Corporate Director Adult Social Care and Health, in consultation with the Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education where applicable depending on affected portfolios, to administer any further DA Act grant monies under the funding / governance framework put in place by this decision, including the determination of Officer Decisions to progress activity via the framework.
7. **DELEGATE** authority to the Corporate Director Adult Social Care and Health, in consultation with the Chief Executive to take other necessary actions, including but not limited to entering into contracts or other legal agreements, as required to implement this decision.

12. Background Documents

- EQiA

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