

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:

Roger Gough, Leader of the Council

DECISION NO:

23/00060

For publication: Yes

Key decision: Yes

Key decision criteria - Total value exceeds £1m and impacts across more than two electoral divisions.

Title of Decision: Domestic Abuse Act Framework 2023-25

Decision: As the Leader of the Council, I propose to:

1. **CONFIRM** and **ENDORSE** 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.
2. **APPROVE** the framework arrangements set out in the report for ongoing management of the DA Act Funding 2023-25.
3. **DELEGATE** authority to the Corporate Director Adult Social Care and Health to, in consultation with the Leader, Corporate Director Finance and Corporate Director Children, Young People and Education, to revise and amend the arrangement set out in the framework details, subject to the scope of the terms and conditions of the grant funding.
4. **DELEGATE** authority to the Corporate Director Adult Social Care and Health, in consultation with the Corporate Director 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.
5. **AGREE** to continue to utilise the Kent Integrated Domestic Abuse Service (KIDAS) contract to support delivery of the requirements of the Act until March 2026.
6. **AUTHORISE** 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.

Reason(s) for decision: In December 2022, DLUHC announced the Local Authority Domestic Abuse Duty: 2023 to 2024 and 2024 to 2025 funding allocations.

Year	2023-2024	2024-2025
DA Act funding allocation (Kent)	£3,174,764.00	£3,234,663.00

This was accepted via Officer Decision [OD-23-0002](#), taken under delegated authority by the Chief Executive, arising from Key Decision 22/00040. It is appropriate and necessary for these previous arrangements to be noted and the ongoing acceptance and deployment of the DA Act funding to be agreed in consultation with the Leader.

It is proposed that a 'Domestic Abuse Framework' will be used to determine further spend of DA Act funding and support decision making.

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. Under this Framework all expenditure of DA Act funding must be in line with budget forecasting and adhere to the DLUHC 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.

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 increase the reach of the existing support offer to survivors residing in a property that is part of a Sanctuary Scheme.

The DA Act requires the countywide needs assessment to be refreshed annually and renewed every three years. The council must also prepare and publish strategies. The current Kent and Medway DA Strategy is for the period of 2020-2023. A new strategy for 2024-2029 is being drafted with partners. 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 above.

Financial Implications: Since 2021, Kent County Council (KCC) has received new, DA Act funding to implement the new duties. The initial lack of clarity and late notification from DLUHC around future funding allocations created barriers in staff retention and delays in progression of some projects, resulting in an underspend of the full annual grant amount.

Unspent funding from 2021-22 and 2022-23 totalling £2,032,894.77 has been transferred to reserves, to be drawn down and used for domestic abuse safe accommodation support services in 2023-24.

The estimated expenditure of DA Act funding in line with implementing the Domestic Abuse Framework (section 4.4) across 2023-2025 is;

		Year	
		2023-2024	2024-2025
INCOME	Grant funding from 2021/22 and 2022/23 transferred to Reserves	£2,032,894.77	£1,616,612.88
	DA Act funding allocation	£3,174,764.00	£3,234,663.00
TOTAL BUDGET		£5,207,658.77	£4,851,275.88
FORECAST EXPENDITURE (includes Staffing, Strategy costs, Support in Refuge and Safe Accommodation projects)		£3,591,045.89	£4,474,199.79
BALANCE		£1,616,612.88	£377,076.09

Funding held in reserves at the end of 2024-25 will be spent in 2025/26 to support the full duration of the two-year Safe Accommodation Support Service (SASS) and Sanctuary Access for Eligible

Residents (SAFER) contracts, ensuring the council has sufficient funding to meet contractual obligations and maintain support delivered within safe accommodation.

Regular financial monitoring reports will be produced and shared with the Corporate Director Finance and Corporate Director Adult Social Care and Health

Throughout 2023-25 planning will be undertaken on how services can be maintained should DLUHC not provide any further Grant allocations for DA Act duties.

Legal Implications: 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'.

Implementing the Domestic Abuse Framework will support the delivery of activity across 2023-25 and support the council in meeting its statutory duty and use of the funding in accordance with the guidance set by government, and terms and conditions of the grant. Specific legal implications for operational or funding allocation activity will be considered through the delegated decision-making as normal.

Equalities implications: An Equality Impact Assessment has been conducted and found the impact of this work to be positive across all groups. Specific service arrangements made via the Framework will incorporate necessary equality consideration as part of Officer level decision-making.

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

The proposed decision will be discussed at Adult Social Care Cabinet Committee on 6 July 2023, the Children, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee on 18 July 2023 and Cabinet on 20 July 2023 and the outcome included in the paperwork which the Leader of the Council will be asked to sign.

Any alternatives considered and rejected: Consideration was given to the following. The option of turning down the DA Act funding was discarded as there are many people in Kent who will benefit from this resource, and it supports the council to meet its statutory duties.

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.

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