

REQUEST FOR ASSISTANT DIRECTOR DECISION – ADD2474

New duty on the Greater London Authority to support victims and their children in domestic abuse safe accommodation

Executive Summary:

The Domestic Abuse Bill includes a new duty on tier 1 local authorities (the Greater London Authority in London) to assess the need for and commission support to victims and their children in domestic abuse safe accommodation. Subject to the successful passage of the bill, the new duty will come into force in April 2021. The Government has awarded each tier 1 authority £50,000 to undertake early planning and preparation work ahead of implementation of the new duty.

This decision seeks approval for the GLA to receive and expend this funding.

Decision:

That the Assistant Director, Housing, approves:

- 1) receipt of £50,000 of funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to prepare for the proposed new duty on the Greater London Authority, set out in the Domestic Abuse Bill, to assess the need for and commission support to victims and their children in domestic abuse safe accommodation in London; and
- 2) expenditure of up to £50,000 across 2020/21 and 2021/22 to procure a contractor and other services to support the preparation for the new duty.

AUTHORISING ASSISTANT DIRECTOR/HEAD OF UNIT

I have reviewed the request and am satisfied it is correct and consistent with the Mayor's plans and priorities.

It has my approval.

Name: Rickardo Hyatt

Position: Assistant Director, Housing

Signature:



Date: 2 November 2020

PART I - NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1 Under the current approach to delivering accommodation with support for victims of domestic abuse, funding and commissioning is almost entirely at a local authority level. In addition, provision has been supplemented by relatively modest Government funding, made available through short-term bidding rounds and, in London, by grants provided by London Councils (through borough contributions). This approach does not work well for a vulnerable group whose need for accommodation-based services is usually best met outside their local area, who often require very specialised support, and whose numbers are, for some sub-groups, too low to make local provision viable.
- 1.2 The current approach results in an overall shortage of an estimated 320 refuge spaces in London, which means two-thirds of people approaching a refuge are turned away.¹ There are particularly severe shortages for specific groups, such as people with No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF), some BAME groups, LGBT+ people, young women, disabled people, male victims, and people with multiple needs.
- 1.3 Furthermore, the current approach is characterised by:
 - a lack of strategic oversight and planning across areas;
 - marked variations, unrelated to need, in the level of provision commissioned by different local authorities;
 - the quality of provision and commissioning not being consistently high across all areas;
 - some local authorities restricting access to the provision they fund to local people;
 - a lack of opportunity to trial innovative forms of provision;
 - short-term funding negatively impacting on service delivery and outcomes; and
 - difficulties aligning capital funding for developing additional provision with revenue funding for support.
- 1.4 The Mayor's London Housing Strategy and VAWG Strategy contain Mayoral commitments to ensuring a more strategic approach to the provision of accommodation and support for victims of VAWG, to address the issues outlined above.
- 1.5 In 2019, the Government consulted on proposals to enable a more strategic approach to accommodation and support for victims of domestic abuse and their children, and these are now embodied in Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Bill. These will place a new duty on tier 1 authorities (the GLA in London) to provide support for victims of domestic abuse and their children within safe accommodation and a duty on tier 2 authorities (the boroughs in London) to cooperate with the tier 1 authority.
- 1.6 Subject to the successful passage of the Bill, the new duties will commence in April 2021. The key elements for tier 1 authorities are:
 - assessing the need for domestic abuse support in its area;
 - preparing, publishing, evaluating the effectiveness of and reviewing a strategy for the provision of support;
 - giving effect to the strategy, through commissioning and decommissioning decisions; and
 - appointing and running a domestic abuse local multi-agency partnership board, to advise the Tier 1 authority.
- 1.7 The legislation will be underpinned by statutory guidance, which will be consulted on shortly, and a standardised needs assessment framework. The Government is currently consulting on the allocation

¹ Solace Women's Aid, calculated on the basis of one space per 7,500 population, 2016

mechanisms for the two streams of funding that will be made available to tier 1 and tier 2 authorities to implement their duties:

- administration funding for implementing the duty (for tier 1 and 2 authorities)
- support funding for the cost of the commissioned services (for tier 1 authorities only).

1.8 The Government has recently announced a £6m capacity fund for tier 1 authorities to prepare for the new duty, with an equal split across authorities of £50,000 each. It has also issued guidance on the aims of the fund.

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

2.1 The £50,000 capacity funding received by the GLA will be to ensure that the organisation is at an appropriate stage and ready to implement the duty in April 2021. This will involve:

- engagement with key partners, to facilitate expertise and information-sharing in relation to the new duty and identify and address potential challenges in implementation, to plan the approach to the needs assessment and strategy and to enable early identification of potential members for the Partnership Board;
- mapping all existing local domestic abuse safe accommodation support providers and their services, both commissioned and non-commissioned;
- reviewing and planning for local frameworks for delivery, including governance and delivery structures, strategies and commissioning arrangements; and
- establishing and agreeing tier 1 and tier 2 respective roles, including around information sharing and commissioning.

2.2 The contractor will be required to undertake significant engagement with stakeholders, produce a detailed written report covering all elements of the new duty, devise documentation (such as procedures, structure charts and draft terms of reference) to support its implementation and provide practical support to the GLA in the set up/mobilisation period during the early months of the duty being in place.

3. Equality comments

3.1. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, as public authorities, the Mayor and GLA are subject to a public-sector equality duty and must have 'due regard' to the need to (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not; and (iii) foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not. Protected characteristics under section 149 of the Equality Act are age, disability, gender re-assignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, and marriage or civil partnership status (all except the last being "relevant" protected characteristics).

3.2. Characteristics of victims of domestic abuse (national figures):

- gender: women are much more likely than men to be the victims of high risk or severe domestic abuse;
- age: younger people are more likely to be subject to interpersonal violence. Most high-risk victims are in their 20s or 30s. Those under 25 are the most likely to suffer interpersonal violence;
- pregnancy: nearly one in three women who suffer from domestic abuse during their lifetime report that the first incidence of violence happened while they were pregnant;
- separation: domestic abuse is highest amongst those who have separated, followed by those who are divorced or single;

- drug and alcohol use: victims of abuse have a higher rate of drug and/or alcohol misuse (whether it starts before or after the abuse): at least 20 per cent of high-risk victims of abuse report using drugs and/or alcohol; and
- mental health: 40 per cent of high-risk victims of abuse report mental health difficulties.

3.5 Given the above, the proposals in this paper are likely to have positive impacts on a number of groups with protected characteristics. Specifically, the work outlined above will focus on arrangements to facilitate improvements in accommodation and support for victims of domestic abuse (who are more likely than the general population to be women and to have mental health support needs).

3.6 The contractor will be required to ensure that:

- equality and diversity considerations are fully taken into account during the work to prepare for the new tier 1 duty; and
- the equalities impacts of the options and recommendations they devise are considered and shared with the GLA throughout the development phase.

4. Other considerations

a) *Key risks and issues*

Risk description	Rating	Mitigating action
There is a lack of contractors with appropriate knowledge and experience.	Green	A robust procurement process will be followed. This will include a detailed specification being issued to potential contractors known to have the relevant knowledge and experience.
£50,000 is insufficient to fund the work required.	Amber	There will be some support for the contractor from GLA and MOPAC officers.

b) *Links to Mayoral strategies and priorities*

4.1 The objectives of the proposals are in line with

- the Mayor's London Housing Strategy policy 7.2c
- the Mayor's Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy.

c) *Impact assessments and consultations.*

4.2 Both the [London Housing Strategy](#) and the [VAWG Strategy](#) were subject to public consultation and equalities impact assessments.

Conflicts of interest

4.3 The officers involved in the drafting and clearance of this form have identified no known conflicts of interest.

5. Financial comments

5.1 This decision requests approval:

- to receive £50,000 of revenue funding from MHCLG to prepare for the new duty on the Greater London Authority to assess the need for and commission support to victims and their children in domestic abuse safe accommodation in London; and
- to expend up to £50,000 to procure a contractor and other services to support the preparation for the new duty. The indicative profile is £35,000 in 2020/21 and £15,000 in 2021/22.

6 Planned delivery approach and next steps

- 6.1 A GLA/MOPAC project team to steer all work around the new duty has been set up. This comprises officers from the GLA's Housing and Land Directorate and MOPAC's Area, Policy, Partnerships and Services unit. There will be regular reporting on and monitoring of progress and issues through GLA and MOPAC governance structures.
- 6.2 A contractor will be appointed to undertake the bulk of the work to plan for the new duty and to support the set up and mobilisation of the new arrangements. They will be project managed by officers from the GLA Housing and Land Directorate's Housing Programmes and Services unit, and supported by officers both from the GLA and MOPAC.

Activity	Indicative timeline
Procurement of contractor	Mid November 2020
Detailed project plan	November 2020
Draft report	11 December 2020
Final report	15 January 2021
Set up/mobilisation	31 March 2021
Post-set up/mobilisation period	1 April to 31 May 2021

Appendices and supporting papers:

Public access to information

Information in this form (Part 1) is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FoIA) and will be made available on the GLA website within one working day of approval.

If immediate publication risks compromising the implementation of the decision (for example, to complete a procurement process), it can be deferred until a specific date. Deferral periods should be kept to the shortest length strictly necessary. **Note:** This form (Part 1) will either be published within one working day after it has been approved or on the defer date.

Part 1 - Deferral

Is the publication of Part 1 of this approval to be deferred? NO

If YES, for what reason:

Until what date: (a date is required if deferring)

Part 2 – Sensitive information

Only the facts or advice that would be exempt from disclosure under FoIA should be included in the separate Part 2 form, together with the legal rationale for non-publication.

Is there a part 2 form – NO

ORIGINATING OFFICER DECLARATION:

Drafting officer to
confirm the
following (✓)

Drafting officer:

Debra Levison has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms the following:

✓

Corporate Investment Board

This decision was agreed by the Corporate Investment Board on the 2 November 2020

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE:

I confirm that financial and legal implications have been appropriately considered in the preparation of this report.

Signature



Date: 2 November 2020