

DMPC Decision – PCD 754

Title: COVID-19: Supporting an Emergency Response for Victims of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)

Executive Summary:

COVID-19 is an international pandemic which has affected all of the UK. The Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime is aware that current measures in place in response to COVID-19 are likely to lead to increases in levels of domestic abuse and other forms of VAWG, and that providers need to be ready and able to respond to increases in demand for support.

This decision builds on PCD742 where the DMPC approved the creation of an emergency response fund through transfer of funding from MOPAC's reserves to support MOPAC's partners to respond to COVID-19, and to enable them to maintain service delivery and availability throughout this period. This is the next step in the response and will enable additional, critical pathways to safety.

Recommendation:

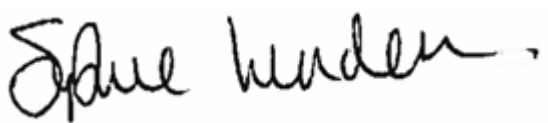
The Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime is recommended to:

1. approve the next phase of the emergency response fund of up to £1.5m, to enable MOPAC to respond effectively to the emerging needs of victims and survivors of VAWG in London as the COVID-19 crisis develops, including working with providers, local authorities and the police to ensure appropriate emergency surge accommodation and support is available to safeguard victims; and
2. delegate the approval of detailed arrangements for these additional funds to the Chief Executive Officer.

The Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime

I confirm I have considered whether or not I have any personal or prejudicial interest in this matter and take the proposed decision in compliance with the Code of Conduct. Any such interests are recorded below.

The above request has my approval.

Signature**Date** 1/5/20

PART I - NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1. The current unprecedented circumstances that surround the global COVID-19 pandemic have led to an urgent need to establish additional crisis support and accommodation for those needing to flee VAWG in London. The current 'lockdown' measures are likely to reinforce barriers to appropriate routes to safety due to the increased contact with perpetrators and decrease in opportunity to access support and intervention.
- 1.2. This situation is further compounded by reduced staff levels across all sectors and the remote working landscape which has created less opportunity for moving victims and survivors on from existing emergency/temporary accommodation due to restrictions including physically viewing properties. Additionally, there is a need to ensure those who contract the virus in emergency accommodation can adequately be self-isolated in line with Public Health England guidance.
- 1.3. It is also clear from emerging reports and data that when the Government's 'lockdown' period eases, frontline services are very likely to experience a surge in demand as those needing to flee and seek help will be able to more freely access support and advocacy.
- 1.4. Therefore, those fleeing violence to access safe and suitable accommodation will require appropriate wrap around support. MOPAC has acknowledged already strained specialist services require additional capacity and resource to ensure the safety of those in need during this crisis.
- 1.5. MOPAC has convened a Pan London Programme Board, comprised of statutory and voluntary sector partners as the Pan-London VAWG COVID-19 board to urgently drive and deliver a COVID-19 crisis response.
- 1.6. These emergency measures include supporting a number of specialist Providers to mobilise COVID-19 crisis accommodation which is designed to supplement existing refuge accommodation or other emergency/temporary accommodation which Local Authorities or others may supply. They also crucially include the wrap around support needed to effectively support victims. This may include, but is not limited to:
 - crisis accommodation;
 - food packs;
 - suitable specialist support;
 - care packages; and
 - advocacy and support to progress homelessness applications, health and social care access, legal advice, therapy and longer-term support, as required.
- 1.7. Where appropriate, these emergency measures may also include relocating those perpetrating violent/abusive behaviours alongside appropriate safeguarding mechanisms.

2. Issues for consideration

- 2.1. The UK has seen a steady increase in reports of domestic abuse with CrimeStoppers seeing an increase of up to 50% in domestic abuse reports to police since the Government's lockdown measures began, while the National Domestic Abuse helpline has

seen a 25% increase in calls. Local and national helpline services are reporting increased demand along with most frontline support services. They have also noted an increase in the complexity of cases coming through.

- 2.2. In London, the Met have found a year-on-year 9% increase in the number of recorded domestic abuse incidents despite the decrease in reporting. All MOPAC funded services are reporting an increase in volume and complexity in the cases they receive.
- 2.3. Due to a general and specialist shortage of refuge bedspaces, coupled with the lack of 'move-through' for those in refuge available during this time, there is a clogging up of emergency bedspaces in the capital. Data from Routes to Support suggests that successful placements for women has decreased from the same point last year and women from marginalised backgrounds are disproportionately featured in unsuccessful placements¹. Women with three children or more are significantly disadvantaged and only able to access 6.5% of refuge accommodation in the capital². The COVID-19 'lockdown' has impacted already limited available options, therefore it is vital that an additional temporary crisis solution is made available for those at greatest risk.
- 2.4. MOPAC have acknowledged that the COVID-19 crisis is creating unique and urgent pressures on existing specialist services and pathways for victims and survivors of VAWG which were already strained. In order to sustain these life-saving services, it is clear that establishing safe crisis accommodation with suitable wrap around support is critical. This may also include relocating those perpetrating violent/abusive behaviours where appropriate and underpinned by suitable safeguarding mechanisms and support.
- 2.5. It is also clear from emerging reports and data pictures that when the Government's 'lockdown' period eases, frontline services will experience a surge in demand as those needing to flee and seek help will be able to more freely access support and advocacy. Therefore, the need to bolster and support specialist services to respond and not be further overwhelmed will require additional capacity and resource to ensure the safety of those most in need during this pandemic.

3. Financial Comments

- 3.1. The recommendation of this decision will commit MOPAC to incur up to £1.5m of expenditure during the 20/21 financial year which is not currently included within the approved budgets. It is intended that the £1.5m will be funded by re-purposing the Mayoral Growth Funds of £21.9m allocated to MOPAC to further its commissioning activity.

4. Legal Comments

- 4.1. MOPAC's general powers are set out in the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 (the 2011 Act). Section 3(6) of the 2011 Act provides that MOPAC must "secure the maintenance of the metropolitan police service and secure that the metropolitan police service is efficient and effective." Under Schedule 3, paragraph 7 MOPAC has wide incidental powers to "do anything which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the exercise of the functions of the Office." Paragraph 7(2) (a) provides that this includes entering into contracts and other agreements.
- 4.2. Section 143 (1) (b) of the Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014 provides an express power for MOPAC, as a local policing body, to provide or commission services

¹ <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/london-councils/#1554898569514-5ad13bc2-8d00>

² Ibid.

“intended by the local policing body to help victims or witnesses of, or other persons affected by, offences and anti-social behaviour.”

4.3. The recommendations in this decision are in line with the legislation and MOPAC’s Scheme of Consent and Delegation. In line with section 4.8 of the Scheme, the DMPC has the authority for the:

- approval of business cases for revenue or capital expenditure of £500,000 or above;
- the award of grants; and
- transfers to and from reserves.

5. Commercial Issues

5.1. The current outbreak of COVID-19 is unprecedented and having adverse effects on the support given to vulnerable people in the community. The emergency measures proposed in this decision paper relate to providing additional funding, via the award of grants to a number of specialist providers, to support an increased demand on services and accommodation provision aligns with the Cabinet office policy statement that government bodies should support infrastructure in the community where it is possible. The commercial proposals in this decision are consistent with this approach.

6. Public Health Approach

6.1. Not applicable, as this decision relates to the provision of emergency funding to support the sustainability of MOPAC’s grant-funded and commissioned services providers.

7. GDPR and Data Privacy

7.1. MOPAC will adhere to the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and ensure that any organisations who are commissioned to do work with or on behalf of MOPAC are fully compliant with the policy and understand their GDPR responsibilities.

8. Equality Comments

8.1. The Equality Act 2010 puts a responsibility on public authorities to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination and promote equality of opportunity.

8.2. This requires MOPAC to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations by reference to people with protected characteristics. The protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

8.3. Domestic Abuse is a form of violence against women and girls. It is prolific across the U.K. and London with an estimated 4.2% of men and 7.9 % of women reporting domestic abuse in the UK during 2018. Women are more likely to be victims with those aged 16 – 24 more likely to be victimised, rising significantly to 1 in 3 for women with a disability. Women from BME backgrounds continue to be disproportionality represented in domestic abuse and related victimisation figures³

³ https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/london_rape_review_final_report_31.7.19.pdf

9. Background/supporting papers

9.1. None.

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 MOPAC website following approval.

If immediate publication risks compromising the implementation of the decision it can be deferred until a specific date. Deferral periods should be kept to the shortest length strictly necessary.

Part 1 Deferral:

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

If yes, for what reason:

Until what date: [Insert date]

Part 2 Confidentiality: Only the facts or advice considered as likely to be exempt from disclosure under the FOIA should be in the separate Part 2 form, together with the legal rationale for non-publication.

Is there a **Part 2** form – NO

ORIGINATING OFFICER DECLARATION

Tick to confirm statement (✓)

Financial Advice

The Strategic Finance and Resource Management Team has been consulted on this proposal.

✓

Legal Advice

The MPS/TfL [delete as applicable] legal team has been consulted on the proposal.
OR Legal advice is not required.

✓

Equalities Advice:

Equality and diversity issues are covered in the body of the report.

✓

Public Health Approach

Due diligence has been given to determine whether the programme sits within the Violence Reduction Unit's public approach to reducing violence. This has been reviewed and supported by a senior manager within the VRU.

✓

Commercial Issues

The Contract Management Team has been consulted on the commercial issues within this report. The proposal is in keeping with the GLA Group Responsible Procurement Policy.

✓

GDPR/Data Privacy

GDPR compliance issues are covered in the body of the report and the GDPR Project Manager has been consulted on the GDPR issues within this report.

✓

Director/Head of Service

The Head of Service has reviewed the request and is satisfied it is correct and consistent with the MOPAC's plans and priorities.

✓

Chief Executive Officer

I have been consulted about the proposal and confirm that financial, legal and equalities advice has been taken into account in the preparation of this report. I am satisfied that this is an appropriate request to be submitted to the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime.

Signature

Date 01/05/20

