

**Report of: Chief Officer, Strategy and Commissioning**

**Report to: Director of Environment & Housing**

**Date: October 2014**

**Subject: Extension of the Refuge Service delivered by the Stonham Division of Home Group Ltd**

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

### Summary of main issues

- 1.1 The Refuge Service is managed by the Stonham Division of Home Group Ltd. The contract forms part of the programme of Housing Related Support services commissioned by Strategy and Commissioning on behalf of Environment and Housing.
- 1.2 The contract was put in place after a competitive tender and is for three years with up to two 12 month extensions available. The initial three year period is due to expire on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2014. Approval is being sought for the first extension at a cost of £234,351.
- 1.3 There are no significant concerns in relation to performance, quality or cost of the service which continues to provide a strategically important, quality service to victims of domestic violence or abuse.
- 1.4 The reason for the extension is to ensure continuity of service for clients while a review of domestic violence and abuse services is undertaken.

### Recommendations

- 1.5 The Director of Environment and Housing is recommended to approve a 12 month extension to the existing contract with Home Group Ltd for the Refuge Service with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> December 2014 up to a value of £234,351.

## **2 Purpose of this report**

- 2.1 This report seeks approval to enter into a 12 month contract extension period for the Refuge Service provided by Home Group Ltd.

## **3 Background information**

- 3.1 The contract, for three years with an option of up to two 12 month extensions, has been in place with Home Group Ltd since 1<sup>st</sup> December 2011 at a value of £234,351 per annum. The contract was put in place following a competitive tender exercise. The initial three year period is due to expire on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2014 and approval is being sought to extend the contract for the first available extension period from 1<sup>st</sup> December 2014.
- 3.2 The service provides an emergency short stay refuge service to women and families who have experienced domestic violence. The service focuses on high risk cases where there is an urgent need for refuge accommodation to ensure safety.

The accommodation is provided in a core and cluster model with 11 self-contained units within the main refuge building and 15 self-contained dispersed units across the city. The service delivers short term crisis intervention and links with the resettlement support provided by Leeds Domestic Violence Services (LDVS) through the Integrated Outreach, Resettlement and IDVA service which provides support to women leaving refuge accommodation. The service is accessible to those experiencing violence from a diverse range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds and works with women over the age of 16 and families of all compositions including those with older male children. The Refuge provides 24 hour access at the main site. The service also operates a 24 telephone domestic violence helpline in conjunction with LDVS, which offers advice and information to women and men experiencing domestic violence, concerned others and professionals. The Refuge operates the helpline between the hours of 5pm and 9am.

- 3.3 The overall findings of the last validation visit that took place (October 2013) were positive with the Refuge service performing well against the Quality Assessment Framework in a number of areas. Staff who were consulted demonstrated a good understanding of the issues faced by the client group and there was evidence of good practise and positive joint working in relation to CAF and MARAC.

## **4 Main issues**

- 4.1 A detailed review of commissioned domestic violence and abuse services will be undertaken over the next 12-18 months. The purpose of the review will be to ensure best use of commissioning resources to address the needs of people accessing the services.
- 4.2 The review will be under-pinned by a co-production approach involving: consultation with clients, service providers and key stakeholders; data and performance analysis to identify trends and emerging issues; financial scoping;

identifying equality and risk issues; and examining interfaces with other provision outside the scope of the review.

- 4.3 The contract extension is being requested to ensure continuity of service provision while the review and subsequent procurement of a new service has taken place.

## **5 Corporate Considerations**

### **5.1 Consultation and Engagement**

5.1.1 The Safer Stronger Scrutiny Board recently undertook a wide-ranging and extensive inquiry into domestic violence and abuse. The inquiry involved taking evidence from a wide range of partners, providers of services for both victims and perpetrators, representatives of the third sector and victims themselves. Recommendations resulting from the inquiry will inform the upcoming review.

5.1.2 Providers of the service are engaged in the wider work that is taking place across the city. They are represented at the Leeds Domestic Violence Strategic Group and on the Steering Group for a conference which is being planned. They are involved in work to develop a city-wide approach to measure customer satisfaction of domestic violence and abuse services. They are also being consulted on the proposed co-located multi-agency team to deliver responses to medium and high risk cases.

### **5.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration**

5.2.1 An Equality, Diversity, Cohesion and Integration screening has been completed and included as background information to this report. The screening indicates that a full assessment is not required because extending the contract will not involve any changes which would impact negatively on clients, staff or stakeholders.

5.2.2 A full Equality, Diversity, Cohesion and Integration assessment will be completed in relation to the service review and any subsequent procurement in order to consider the impact of any changes on clients, staff and stakeholders.

### **5.3 Council Policies and City Priorities**

5.3.1 Domestic violence and abuse is linked to the Best Council objective of 'Supporting communities and tackling poverty'. Given the scale of the issue and the significant impact for individuals, children and families, communities and organisations, domestic violence and abuse has recently been identified as one of the cross departmental Breakthrough Projects.

5.3.2 The service is strategically relevant, and contributes to a number of strategies and priorities. This includes the Health & Wellbeing strand of the City Priority Plan by supporting clients to live safely. The service also contributes to the Safer & Stronger Communities strand of the City Priority Plan by reducing the impact of crime across Leeds.

5.3.3 The service supports the delivery of the Vision for Leeds 2011 to 2030's aim to make Leeds the Best City for health and wellbeing where "people are supported

by high quality services to live full, active and independent lives”, and the Best Council Plan 2013/17 outcome of “improve the quality of life for our residents, particularly for those who are vulnerable or in poverty”.

#### **5.4 Resources and Value for Money**

5.4.1 As this is an extension to an existing contract, there is budget provision within Environment & Housing for the service.

5.4.2 The service was subjected to a competitive tender process when it was commissioned and was deemed to represent value for money.

#### **5.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In**

5.5.1 The recommendation within this report is in accordance with Contract Procedure Rules 21.1 and there is provision for this 12 month extension within the original contract.

5.5.2 This report does not contain any exempt or confidential information.

5.5.3 The annual contract value is £234,351 and is therefore not eligible for call-in.

#### **5.6 Risk Management**

5.6.1 This 12 month extension period is required to enable continuation of the services provided by the Home Group Ltd through the Refuge Service. It provides a key part of the services available to support victims of domestic violence and abuse. If this recommendation is not agreed vulnerable people will be left without the support and interventions which they rely on.

5.6.2 There is a very small risk of challenge from other providers if the service is not exposed to competition at this time. However the original contract was awarded after a competitive tender and this extension is being requested to allow continuity of service delivery whilst a service review and subsequent procurement is undertaken. This is likely to generate competitive tendering opportunities.

5.6.3 The contract will continue to be performance managed by officers in Strategy & Commissioning. This includes regular reviewing of performance information and quarterly contract management meetings with the provider, at which any delivery issues are discussed. The service is delivered by a high quality, experienced staff team who are committed to providing the best service possible for a vulnerable client group.

### **6 Conclusions**

6.1 The Refuge Service provided by Home Group Ltd is a good quality service that provides support to people who have an urgent need for refuge accommodation to ensure their safety.

6.2 The current contract period expires on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2014 but there is provision for 2 12 month extension periods and this report seeks approval to extend the contract for the first of these extensions from 1<sup>st</sup> December 2014.

## **7 Recommendations**

- 7.1 The Director of Environment and Housing is recommended to approve a 12 month extension to the existing contract with Home Group Ltd for the Refuge Service with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> December 2014 up to a value of £234,351.

## **8 Background documents<sup>1</sup>**

- 8.1 Equality, Diversity, Cohesion and Integration Screening document

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<sup>1</sup> The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.