

# Request to vary the contract end date and extend for a period of 12 months for the Women's Counselling and Therapy Service.

Date: 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2021

Report of: Deputy Director, Integrated Commissioning

Report to: Director of Adults and Health

Will the decision be open for call in?  Yes  No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?  Yes  No

## What is this report about?

### Including how it contributes to the city's and council's ambitions

- This report requests permission to vary the existing contract end date and extend the contract for Women's Counselling and Therapy Services (WCTS) for a period of 12 months from 1st July 2021 at a cost of £143,340.
- The requested additional 12 month period is required in order to ensure continuity of service whilst a competitive procurement exercise is undertaken. This follows the completion of a market sounding exercise (MSE) in May 2021 which has demonstrated that there is a potential market for this provision.
- The service makes significant contributions to a range of the City Priority Plans, but particularly the Health and Wellbeing Plan and its priority to make Leeds the best City for Health and Wellbeing by 2030. This is achieved through supporting clients to make healthy lifestyle choices and to live safely. The proposal in this report directly contributes to the Best Council Plan's overarching vision of tackling poverty and reducing inequalities.

## Recommendations

- a) The Director of Adults and Health is recommended to approve the variation to the contract end date and extend the contract for Women's Counselling and Therapy Services (WCTS) for a period of 12 months from 1/7/2021 at a cost of £143,340.
- b) The Director is recommended to note to outcome of the MSE which has demonstrated that there is a potential market for this provision.

## Why is the proposal being put forward?

- 1 The proposal is being put forward to ensure continuity of service whilst a full procurement exercise is undertaken. This follows a market sounding exercise (MSE) which was carried out between March and May 2021, which demonstrated that there is a potential market for this type of provision.
- 2 The MSE involved the publication of a short specification which gave an overview of the key service requirements, including a need for interested providers to have appropriate accreditation to deliver counselling and therapy services. In addition, interested parties were asked to describe their direct experience in delivering counselling and therapy to women who have experienced complex trauma. The Council received five responses to the MSE, and Procurement colleagues have advised that this therefore warrants a full and rigorous test of the market through open procurement.
- 3 A further report to the Director of Adults and Health will be presented in due course to seek the required authority to procure.
- 4 The variation to the contract end date will allow for a 12 month extension period bringing the contract expiry date to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2022. This 12 month period will allow sufficient time to carry out a full procurement exercise with an appropriate mobilisation period, should there be a change in provider.
- 5 The counselling service offered by WCTS is a unique service commissioned by Adults and Health since 1983. It offers a free or low cost accessible counselling and psychotherapy service for Leeds women on low incomes. Venues are in the city centre and in communities around Leeds. The organisation's counselling and psychotherapy provision is commissioned by LCC to provide both group and individual therapy to women with moderate to severe mental health problems, often of long standing duration. The service describes clients as being traumatised and at high risk of self-harm or suicide. The service supports those with experience of inequalities including deprivation, poverty, discrimination, and marginalisation from services. WCTS's clients face multiple disadvantages and experience complex health and social situations.
- 6 The provider's monitoring data shows that they are working with a higher number of women than ever before; with more complexity. Due to the complexity presented by the women accessing WCTS, the women are often unable to access the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) programme as it is not able to meet their needs as IAPT does not provide long term psychotherapy.
- 7 There are other counselling services available in Leeds but they do not provide the specialism for women offered by WCTS. Many of the women have experienced historical sexual abuse as well as multiple disadvantage. Leeds does not have a rape crisis service and WCTS fulfils this role in supporting women who have been raped or experienced sexual violence. There is no other service in the city that offers this specialised counselling and support service for women.
- 8 During the financial year 2019/20, the service worked with 141 women over the course of the year, including 108 assessments, significantly exceeding the target of 90 women. All women accessing the service are on low incomes or live in poverty. 458 women accessed the service as a whole which is an increase on the average of 400 over the previous three years. During the COVID period, the service largely moved to online/telephone provision to ensure continuity of support for clients. Face to face support has now begun to be delivered once again.

- 9 All women accessing the service are on low incomes or live in poverty, the numbers of women living in the most deprived areas of Leeds continue to increase. 59% in 2019/20 compared to 54% and 46% for the two years previous. In 2019/20, 26% of clients resided in areas in the lowest 3% of areas in multiple index of deprivation of England, a further 33% live in the lowest 10% of areas in the multiple index of deprivation. 31% of women consider themselves to live with a disability, compared with 25% and 20% for the two years previous.
- 10 In 2019/20, 35% of women using the service were from BAME communities. Again, this is an increase from 30% the previous year. Approximately 17% of the service's clients identify as LGBTQ+.

### What impact will this proposal have?

#### Wards Affected:

Have ward members been consulted?       Yes       No

- 11 This proposal will ensure that the services delivered by WCTS will continue to be delivered during the procurement exercise. A 12 month period is being requested in order to allow sufficient time for both the procurement (6 months) and any possible mobilisation period, should there be a change in provider (6 months).
- 12 WCTS provide a very unique and specialist service to women, the majority of whom experience multiple disadvantage. The counselling and therapy offered is not available for this length of time through the NHS, and the WCTS service provides an essential complementary service that supports the wider mental health system in terms of avoiding A&E presentations and acute admissions. The positive impact of the service is demonstrated through the providers 'distance travelled' outcomes tool which measures a client's progress in relation to a range of key indicators.

### What consultation and engagement has taken place?

- 13 Clients and other stakeholders have been consulted through the service review which was undertaken in February 2019, and this feedback will inform the new service specification and procurement exercise going forward. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with clients particularly appreciating the women-only nature of the service. Stakeholders noted how effectively the organisation contributes to other provision within the city and works positively to reduce more acute mental health admissions.
- 14 The Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Adults was briefed on the 18<sup>th</sup> June 2021.

### What are the resource implications?

- 1 The service is commissioned by Adults and Health and the additional value to the contract will be a maximum of £143,340 for the proposed 12 month period. There is provision within the Adults and Health Directorate base budget to cover the cost of this service.
- 2 An efficiency saving of at least 10% will be sought through the proposed procurement exercise which will commence shortly.

- 3 The organisation receives a number of different funding streams for the services which they provide, including from NHS Leeds Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and independent charitable trusts.
- 4 Financial information has been provided to Officers in the form of a completed Service Cost Analysis Form (SCAF).

<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>£</b>	<b>% of total</b>
Direct Staffing	102,881	72%
Direct Non-Staffing	16,369	11%
Business Support	18,438	13%
Overheads	5,651	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>143,340</b>	

- 5 Direct staffing is the main area of contract spend at 72%, and overheads are kept very low at 4% which is positive. Basic unit costs were calculated at £54.30 per session. This figure was based upon 2640 sessions being delivered during 2019/20 (30 one to one sessions and 30 women in groups each week for 44 weeks).
- 6 It is difficult to accurately compare this session cost as there are no other specialist counselling services for women operating locally. At the time of the last service review, the review team compared the session cost (which was then £47.32) with the Personal Social Services Research Unit (PSSRU) Health and Social Care Unit Costs 2009. The nearest comparator was counselling services in primary medical care. Whilst the review team noted considerable difference between primary care counselling, this was the closest comparison. The unit cost based upon a 55 minute counselling session, was £42 per client contact. The PSSRU's most up to date information for 2018 includes details of the cost of each care contact for IAPT services (which includes counselling). This is £95 per care contact. WCTS's session cost of £54.30 compares favourably, especially given the very specialist nature of its counselling provision.
- 7 Significant added value for money is provided by the organisation's long standing history of working with this very complex client group, and the range of additional, complementary services which they also provide and which women can benefit from. The organisation is also part of strategic partnership work across Leeds, most notably their involvement with the Women's Lives Leeds consortium who deliver a range of services for women in the city.
- 8 The current contract and service offers value for money as it often exceeds its targets of the number of women supported in one year within the available budget. In addition, the inclusion of key performance indicators in the service specification provides a mechanism by which the council, if necessary, can withhold payment where the service may not being delivered in accordance with the service specification requirements, thereby further ensuring value for money.

## What are the legal implications?

- 9 This is a Significant Operational Decision which is not subject to call-in as the maximum cost of the service within this decision is less than £500K.
- 10 This report does not contain any exempt or confidential information under the Access to Information Rules.

## What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

- 1 There are significant risks associated with not approving this proposal and ceasing investment in this service. Disinvestment would place a significant amount of additional pressure on other mental health care and support services commissioned by both A&H and CCG partners, and would further disadvantage a vulnerable group of women who would struggle to access this type of specialist counselling provision elsewhere.
- 2 Extending the duration of this contract to the existing provider in this way could leave the Council open to a potential claim from other providers, to whom this contract could be of interest, that it has not been wholly transparent. However, this risk will be mitigated by subjecting this service to the proposed competitive procurement exercise during 2021/22, at which point other providers will be able to express their interest.
- 3 Using the provision under CPR 21 in this manner will allow for service continuity during the period of the service being competitively procured. The procurement exercise will be undertaken in a fair, open and transparent way and in adherence with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and the Council's own Contracts Procedure Rules. Procurement project risks will be reviewed on a regular basis and the project team responsible for undertaking the review and subsequent procurement exercise will continue to do this during the procurement process.

## Does this proposal support the council's 3 Key Pillars?

Inclusive Growth

Health and Wellbeing

Climate Emergency

- 4 In order to support the Council stated ambition of working towards a carbon neutral city by 2030, the impact on the climate should be considered across all officer work. Through ongoing contract management, the provider will be encouraged to actively engage with the climate change agenda. Examples could include adhering to and working within the values of Council policy and guidance in relation to climate change, a reduction in carbon emissions through, for instance, decreasing private vehicle usage, using and/or investing in 'eco-friendly' resources.
- 5 During the COVID 19 pandemic, the provider has wholly embraced technologies allowing for remote service provision such as Zoom. This remains an option for clients even now face to face support is resuming. Supporting individuals at home reduces carbon emissions through less travel time to face to face appointments.
- 6 The service directly contributes to the Council's Health and Wellbeing Plan and its priority to make Leeds the best City for Health and Wellbeing by 2030. This is achieved through supporting clients to make healthy lifestyle choices and to live safely.

## **Options, timescales and measuring success**

### **a) What other options were considered?**

- 7 Commissioning officers considered the option to proceed with a direct contract award to WCTS following the market sounding exercise, without carrying out a full procurement. However, advice received from Procurement colleagues suggests that the risk of challenge from other providers in relation to this course of action could be high. Therefore, the option being pursued now is to undertake a full and rigorous procurement exercise to fully test the market. The variation and extension of contract being requested in this report is to allow the service to continue whilst this exercise is undertaken.

### **b) How will success be measured?**

- 8 The service is subject to the WAA Commissioning Team's contract management processes. This includes regular contract management meetings between the provider and LCC officers to discuss operational issues, service quality, and to gauge the service's performance against the targets set out in the service specification. The provider has a long history of exceeding performance targets.

### **c) What is the timetable for implementation?**

- 9 The decision in this report requires implementation prior to expiry of the existing contract on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021.

## **Appendices**

- Equality Impact Assessment screening tool.

## **Background papers**

- None.