

DECISION ITEM

REPORT OF	MEETING	DATE	ITEM NO
HEAD OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND HOUSING	EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE	25 APRIL 2024	9

DOMESTIC ABUSE ACT 2021 - PART IV DUTIES FUNDING 2024/25

PUBLIC ITEM

This item is for consideration in the public part of the meeting.

RELEVANT LEAD MEMBER

This item is within the remit of Lead Member for Social Wellbeing, Councillor Chris Dixon.

PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

- To update the Executive Committee on the work of the Housing Service to meet our Statutory Duties under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 (The Act); and
- To request approval of a fully funded revenue budget increase for the total of £35,690 to be met by Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) New Burdens Funding for Accommodation-based support provided by Local Authorities under Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 (2024-25).

Following the introduction of the Act, Fylde Council have been awarded funding in the sum of £33,196 in 21/22, £33,224 in 22/23, £35,030 in 23/24 and in 24/25 this amount has risen to £35,690.

Fylde Council will continue to work in partnership with Wyre Council and Fylde Coast Women's Aid (FCWA) by utilising the provision of a Housing Outreach Worker to engage and support female and male victims and their children. The post is employed by FCWA with the remaining funding being used to enhance other support services in place to enable victims to either, remain in their own homes or set up a new home.

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee are recommended to:

- Approve a fully-funded revenue budget increase for 2024/25 in the sum of £35,690 in respect of the Fylde Coast Women's Aid (FCWA) service, to be met by funding received from DLUHC under Part IV Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

Part IV Duties Domestic Abuse Act 2021

- Four main objectives of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 are to:
 - Promote awareness** – to put domestic abuse at the top of everyone's agenda, and raise public and professional awareness
 - Protect and support** – to enhance the safety of victims and the support that they receive
 - Transform the justice process** – to prioritise victim safety in the criminal and family courts, and review the perpetrator journey from identification to rehabilitation

4. Improve performance – to drive consistency and better performance in the response to domestic abuse across all local areas, agencies and sectors

2. Fylde Council’s duties under the Domestic Abuse Act fall under Part IV under which the new burdens funding is provided. This includes the provision of outreach support, emergency accommodation provision, operation of a sanctuary scheme and assistance with securing accommodation.
3. In order to take forward the duties under Part IV Fylde Council have worked in partnership with Wyre Council and FCWA since November 21 to employ a Housing Outreach Worker across both areas to engage and support female and male victims and their children.
4. Local Authorities split the cost of this role equally and the Housing Outreach Worker equally shares the working week between both Local Authorities and a day a week at FCWA Offices in Blackpool. The proposed costings for the project in 2024/25 are detailed in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Housing Outreach Worker Fylde and Wyre costings 24/25

Housing DA post	2024-2025
Salary	£24,440.00
Ni	£2,117.00
Pension	£1,222.00
Mobile Phone (2 workers)	£850.00
travel	£600.00
Training	£500.00
ITSystem/HR/Insurance	£630.00
Management Uplift/Overhead Costs	£3,000.00
Total	£33,359.00

5. Fylde Coast Women’s Aid (FCWA) offers free advice and support to individuals living in Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre who are experiencing or have experienced domestic abuse. Initially a service level agreement (SLA) was in place for a 12 month period to 31/03/2023 to undertake the Housing Outreach Worker project. A new SLA has been signed to continue the project for a further two years 23/24 and 24/25.
6. This role has been instrumental in providing additional advice and assistance to clients fleeing domestic abuse and all clients who approach the service are referred into the support. In addition to support provided under homelessness and housing advice, clients benefit from the expertise available in house from FCWA, for example; Refuge provision, IDVA workers (Independent Domestic Abuse Advisors), specialist male project, advice on stalking, safe haven support for children and substance mis-use recovery programmes.
7. Referrals into the service come from a number of sources and are not restricted to clients approaching Fylde Council as at risk of Domestic Abuse under homelessness legislation. Clients must have a local connection to Fylde or Wyre and referrals have been received from Children’s Social Care, the IDVA service, (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and from LCC outreach workers.
8. In 2022/23 the Housing Outreach Worker supported 43 clients who were referred into the service. The demand for the service has increased throughout 23/24 to 81 clients.
9. FCWA as part of the project provide training for housing staff and other teams within the local authority who may come across domestic abuse situations and require an insight into the warning signs, support required and actions to take.
10. Initially a legal expenses budget was held by FCWA to assist clients where applicable with non-molestation orders, occupation orders and prohibited steps. The Legal Fund was reduced in the SLA for 2023/24 to £1,000 and FCWA have removed it from the project costings for 24/25. The rationale for this decision is that it is rarely used and comment;

- There is no fee to issue an injunction and workers are trained to help clients complete the forms
 - Most of the clients that FCWA support through child contact orders etc are either on benefits or low incomes and are entitled to legal aid
 - FCWA workers utilise the 30 mins free advice service that solicitors offer
 - FCWA also hold a legal clinic for clients each Thursday when a solicitor attends the office, this must be prearranged.
11. A Sanctuary Scheme is operated via Preston Care and Repair connected to the Handyperson service. This service supports households experiencing domestic violence to remain in their own homes, where it is safe for them to do so and where it is their choice. The service also ensures that when clients move into their new home security measures and external lighting can be installed.
 12. The Sanctuary Scheme will complete home security assessments and complete required works. If the accommodation is owned by a Registered Provider they will complete the works.
 13. Funding is to be allocated to the Housing Outreach Worker and the remaining funding is placed in a budget to provide an emergency temporary accommodation provision, removal and storage costs, Sanctuary Scheme initiatives and assistance with bond and rent in advance if other funding streams are not accessible.
 14. Table 1 overleaf details the support provided for clients since 22/23. Providing emergency accommodation is crucial when clients are forced to leave their homes. Whilst Refuge Placements (if available) are the preferred option due to the specialised support services offered, these placements will often deny accommodation to clients with a history of drug or alcohol misuse. Therefore, there is limited availability for family accommodation at present due to low turnover.
 15. In 2023/24 Fylde Council have supported families affected by domestic abuse with Aldi vouchers for food while in temporary accommodation, Argos vouchers for household essentials, carpets, beds and white goods provided under the Household Support Funding.

Table 1 : Support provided for under Part IV Domestic Abuse Act

	Provision of emergency accommodation (Non Refuge)	Removals, storage and kennelling	Rent Bond/Rent in Advance	Household items	Sanctuary Scheme Health Home Assessments with Security Measures	Supported into alternative accommodation	Advice and Assistance
22/23	5	5	1	4	11	12	43
23/24	36	5	3	3	11	12	81

16. During 2023/24 36 clients have been accommodated in temporary accommodation after they approached the Local Authority seeking assistance to escape Domestic Abuse. Of these households, 15 had dependent children, resulting in a total of 34 children being provided emergency accommodation within families where the main applicant was fleeing domestic abuse.
17. Throughout 2023/24: 12 households have been supported into alternative accommodation; 11 households have had Sanctuary security and lighting measures installed to enable them to remain in their own home or secure their new home; and, 3 households accommodated have only required advice and assistance. A total of 9 households have withdrawn their application as homeless and 3 households have ceased to be eligible for assistance, this will be as a result of returning to the family home or enquiries have determined they are not fleeing domestic abuse.
18. As of the 1st April 2024 Fylde Council are currently accommodating 9 households who have approached the local authority as a result of domestic abuse, with 13 children.
19. Actual expenditure for this support was greater than the available budget in 2023/24 primarily due to the cost of storage. As a result the storage policy has been altered and Fylde Council will no longer fund the cost to

place and remove items from storage, but will fund the actual storage costs. Clients are required to make a £10 per week contribution. In addition storage is restricted to large items of furniture and white goods and not moveable personal items.

20. The Domestic Abuse Act places a Duty on Tier 1 Local Authorities to appoint a Domestic Abuse Partnership Board. Fylde Council attend the Board to represent the interests of Tier 2 Local Authorities from the North region and report back on measures in place in Fylde and Wyre to meet Part IV duties. This is a multi-agency board that undertakes specific functions; assessing the need for accommodation-based domestic abuse support; developing and publishing a Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy for the provision of support in Lancashire; monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the Strategy; and, returning data sets for Lancashire to DLUHC.
21. Fylde Council have received funding under Part IV Domestic Abuse Act 2021 for 2024/25 totalling £35,690 and Committee is requested to approve a fully funded budget increase to enable the continuation of the support as detailed in this report.

CORPORATE PRIORITIES	
Economy – To create a vibrant and healthy economy	
Environment – To deliver services customers expect	✓
Efficiency – By spending money in the most efficient way	✓
Tourism – To create a great place to live and visit	

IMPLICATIONS	
Finance	This report requests approval to a fully-funded revenue budget increase for 2024/25 in the sum of £35,690 in respect of the Fylde Coast Women’s Aid (FCWA) service, to be met by funding received from DLUHC under Part IV Domestic Abuse Act 2021.
Legal	None. SLA in place for 24/25.
Community Safety	None
Human Rights and Equalities	Part IV Duties under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021
Sustainability and Environmental Impact	None
Health & Safety and Risk Management	None

SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS DECISIONS
<p>Executive Committee 19th September 2023 – Domestic Abuse Part IV Duties 2023/24 Approval of a fully funded revenue budget increase for £35,030 to be met by DLUHC New Burdens Domestic Abuse Grant 2023-24</p> <p>Finance and Democracy 30th Jan 23 – Domestic Abuse Act Funding 22/23 Approval of a fully funded revenue budget increase for £33,224 to be met by MHCLG New Duties Funding to continue Part IV Duties under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.</p> <p>Environment, Health and Housing – 24th Jan 2023 – Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Update Recommend to Finance and Democracy approval of a fully funded revenue budget increase for £33,224 to be met by MHCLG New Duties Funding to continue Part IV Duties under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.</p>

[Finance and Democracy Committee – Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Funding for enhanced support](#)

Information Item following a request for a further report to be brought back to Committee advising of recommendations for a separate budget for legal representation.

[Finance and Democracy Committee – 7th October 2021 – Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#)

Approval of a fully funded revenue budget increase for the total of £33,196 to be met by MHCLG New Duties funding to undertake new Part IV duties under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021

[Environment, Health and Housing 2nd September 2021 – Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#)

Recommend to Finance and Democracy approval of a fully funded revenue budget increase for £33,196 to be met by MHCLG New Duties Funding to continue Part IV Duties under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

[Environment, Health and Housing 15th June 2021 – Fylde Council handyperson and sanctuary pilot scheme](#)

Details of the Sanctuary Scheme, for clients experiencing domestic abuse, will comply with new duties placed on Local Authorities under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.

BACKGROUND PAPERS REVELANT TO THIS ITEM

Name of document	Date	Where available for inspection
Domestic Abuse	03/04/2024	Domestic abuse - Lancashire County Council
Domestic Abuse	03/04/2024	Domestic Abuse - Lancashire Safeguarding Children Board
Lancashire Domestic Abuse Services	03/04/2024	lancashire-domestic-abuse-services.pdf

LEAD AUTHOR	CONTACT DETAILS	DATE
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