

Summary of Outline Proposal

Lancashire County Council – Tendering of Domestic Abuse Refuge Provision in Lancashire

Tender Lots

The proposal is to tender for refuge provision in one county wide lot.

The current scale of provision across Lancashire, which currently includes nine separate refuges, suggests that this is an appropriate scale on which to consider the procurement of county wide provision.

The high level commissioning intentions which have informed this approach have been outlined in a separate document. We believe that these intentions will be most effectively met through the delivery and management of one contract.

We believe that this approach will enable devolution of effective strategic, financial and operational management to the successful tenderer and should lead to greater leverage in the market for the successful tenderer who will be better placed to take advantage of future opportunities as they arise. This is on the basis that looking forward we anticipate that any future additional funding for new or enhanced domestic abuse services in the medium term is very unlikely to be available internally from Lancashire County Council and is far more likely to be available through national funding opportunities, including competitive bidding.

Eligibility for Bidding

Potential bidders will need to demonstrate a track record in the delivery of housing related supported accommodation for vulnerable people including refuge accommodation or similar services

Level and Use of Available Resources

We aim to make all the refuge funding we currently have available to the successful tenderer through the tender. This currently amounts to £871,000 per annum.

The intention is that the successful tenderer will have, to an agreed extent, autonomy in respect how they use resources in meeting the requirements of the service specification. This will mean effective day to day operational control of budgets to allow flexible use within agreed levels of performance. For more major changes the successful tenderer will be asked to make recommendations to the council on future changes that need to take place to make sure that service delivery is appropriate to meet both current and emerging needs and represents best possible use of resources.

The proposed flexible approach in the use of resources takes account of two critical restraining factors which we cannot ignore:-

1. We are not likely to have a sufficient level of total resources to meet all needs to the extent that we might wish to do so therefore the specification needs to be realistic for the budget.
2. We cannot realistically meet all presenting need as this often reflects issues around national levels of demand and supply

Review and Governance

The Authority intend to build in a requirement for the successful tenderer to lead on a regular, ongoing review of service provision. And link this to a need to report annually on management of service provision and market shaping activity by the service provider.

The Authority intend to include a requirement for the successful tenderer to make formal recommendations to Lancashire County Council on any significant changes to the shape of local service provision. In order to fulfil statutory functions the Authority will not agree to any changes that, in our opinion, would be detrimental to overall service provision or would run counter to our duties under the Equality Act and other Council of Europe general directives.

The type of internal governance applied by the successful tenderer to the administrative management of the contract will be for them to determine. This will need to be outlined in the tender submission.

Whatever approach is chosen by the successful tenderer the Authority will require the successful tenderer to appoint an overall accountable contract manager to lead on the delivery of the contract.

Tendering Approach and Transition to Devolved Management

We aim to achieve a flexible, transitional approach to the delivery and management of domestic abuse services over the life of the proposed three year contract with an option to extend for up to a further two years using the following approach:-

- The Authority may include minimum requirements regarding service capacity. Tenderers may be required to source accommodation for tender submissions.
- Prior to issuing the tender we will be consulting with property owners around properties which are currently used as refuges to see if the owner agrees that they can be made available for open tendering. Our aim is to ensure open and fair competition based on equal access to accommodation wherever possible. Fundamentally we want to facilitate the use of high quality accommodation and procure high quality support provider(s) as per the award criteria.
- Where it is not possible to make current refuge accommodation available for a variety of reasons and there is a potential shortfall/reduction in refuge capacity across Lancashire we may take a

flexible approach to the commissioning of the number of units in order to ensure fair competition for all tenderers. We may develop a mechanism to ensure appropriate pricing of the tender based on the service capacity offered by provider(s) in order to safeguard the use of resources.

- There will not be a requirement to use any existing refuge provision. In order to ensure fair competition for all tenderers we will be obliged to allow potential bidders to identify alternative accommodation that would be suitable for the delivery of refuge accommodation and which fulfil the requirements of the tender.
- All refuge accommodation will need to meet the definition of specified accommodation for the purposes of qualifying proposed new refuge building with the relevant district council prior to submitting a bid. as supported accommodation under the current DWP regulations. This essential restriction is to ensure that refuges are eligible for housing benefit at the required levels of funding and that the refuge provision is financially viable for the successful tenderer and affordable for service users. Should this change prior to issuing the tender or during the tendering period the Authority will publish any changes to the tender requirements.
- There will be additional requirements in terms of property standards for available. The current Lancashire all refuge buildings identified by tenderers. This may include some restrictions on houses in multiple occupation in certain district council areas and the application of private sector housing standards as needed. Potential bidders will be advised to check the suitability of any proposed refuge building with the relevant district council prior to submitting a bid.
- The current refuge accommodation used for the Pendle Borough Council's women's refuge service is expected to be available for use by tenderers. Borough of Pendle have expressed a wish to withdraw from direct management of the refuge service and wish to pass management to an alternative provider as part of this proposed tender. Borough of Pendle recognise that their current refuge accommodation has some limitations in terms of space and layout. Moreover the current service is limited to predominantly day time cover and therefore cannot meet higher levels of presenting need. Borough of Pendle have indicated that that they would welcome a takeover of the service at the current accommodation with a longer term aspiration that the refuge could be re-provided in the borough with improved facilities should additional capital and revenue funding become available. The current Lancashire County Council revenue funding for the Borough of Pendle refuge will be included in the total sum available under this tender.
- Our intention is to make only one award in the single county wide lot to facilitate the new model of devolved service delivery.
- We will reserve the right not to award any contract.
- Amendments to current service provision will be accepted providing the requirements of the service specification are met therefore transition will be possible from the outset of any new contract.
- We are proposing that one of the features of the new contract from the outset will be that the service will seek to have one contact

number for a domestic abuse helpline for night cover with the possibility that this may also extend to day time service in due course. As part of this proposal we are proposing that the successful tenderer will be affiliated to Women's Aid and will use their national vacancy helpline.

- Longer term we anticipate that there may be scope for new and enhanced services, selective closure, re- provision of services and other remodelling of service delivery to meet needs in localities and at county wide level. Whilst in principle we would like to see some form of refuge provision in each district local authority area we recognise that this has not so far been possible and may continue to be impossible for a range of reasons. This proposal implicitly recognises the reality that refuges exist to meet presenting needs from a wider area including within and from outside Lancashire. Our commissioning intentions outline that we will work to ensure accessibility across Lancashire and this reflects that refuges will increasingly be seen as national and county wide level resources.

Specialist Refuge Provision

We wish to consult with the market on whether there is a need for future specialist provision in Lancashire for specific groups of people affected by domestic abuse eg

- BME women
- Men
- People with complex needs
- People with learning disabilities or other longer term social care needs
- Adults with social care needs and /or mental capacity issues.

Any feedback will be considered during the development of the service specification.

Performance Management:

Initial thoughts on performance management are that we will apply a performance related measure in respect of available capacity/utilisation levels and staffing delivery with a proportionate financial clawback provision attached to ensure that we achieve value for money in the use of devolved resources.

The targets will be set post contract award depending on the offer of the number of units/ bed spaces and service delivery hours submitted by the successful tenderer.

There is no intention to apply performance related criteria to achieving individual outcomes as we do not believe this would be appropriate given the nature of provision.

Quality Standards, Outcomes Measurement and Tools:

We are interested in knowing what quality standards, outcomes and monitoring tools are going to be most appropriate to use within delivery of supported accommodation based provision going forward.

As these support services are not currently subject to any form of national regulation eg CQC, Oftsed, and we do not yet know the form of any proposed regulation system for supported housing, we will potentially need to adopt an approach that allows the Authority to manage quality across all areas of refuge activity.

In addition we are keen to ensure that we contribute to the development of improved strategic oversight of refuge provision nationally. We may consider devolving the future collection of strategic level data for the whole of Lancashire to the service provider under a service level agreement as part of the tender.

Current domestic abuse refuge contracts in Lancashire include the Supporting People Quality Assessment Framework (QAF) and the Every Child Matters based National Outcomes Framework used by Supporting People.

Potential alternative or additional tools might include Women's Aid National Standards, On Track Case management and outcomes database, and Empowerment Star among others. We would like to have more detailed discussions with the market as part of the development of the final service specification on all suitable options.