Domestic Abuse Service Consultation

Have your say

kent.gov.uk/domesticabuseservice
Consultation closes 15 July 2016
Kent Domestic Abuse Consultation

Background

Domestic Abuse Support Services in Kent are currently funded through a mixture of commissioned services, grant funding and charitable funds. The landscape of service provision is variable, with disparities in available support evident.

The three largest commissioned services are Women’s Refuges, Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVA) and Floating Support. Refuges and Floating Support are commissioned by Kent County Council. The IDVA service is partnership funded, with the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) holding the contract.

All three contracts are due to end in 2016, presenting an opportunity to review and improve how the services are commissioned and delivered to ensure good levels of access and provision across the county.

Current Service Provision

There are 10 Women’s Refuges commissioned in various locations across Kent, offering safe accommodation and housing related support to women and children fleeing domestic abuse. Stays in refuge are limited to a maximum of 2 years, after which families are expected to move on to more permanent accommodation. These refuges have the capacity to support up to 100 women and their children at any one time. 169 households accessed refuge accommodation in Kent during 2014/15.

Floating Support covers the whole of Kent and offers housing related support to 164 standard or medium risk victims of domestic abuse at any one time. This service is limited to a maximum of 1 year, and is delivered in the community to both male and female victims. Risk is calculated using a nationally agreed tool which assesses how likely the victim is to suffer harm or death based on the abuse they are experiencing. Floating Support is offered to those who are assessed as suffering from, or at risk from suffering domestic abuse, but are not considered to be at significant risk of harm or death.

The IDVA service is a predominantly court and telephone based support service available to high risk victims of domestic abuse. The service covers all of Kent and Medway, but has experienced unexpected levels of demand and is considered to be unsustainable in its current format without additional funding. The intention is to review current provision to commission a more holistic model, to deliver greater efficiencies within this element of service delivery and deliver a sustainable model of support.

In addition to the commissioned services identified above, there are a number of additional services available, but these vary in coverage and accessibility due to the reliance on individual organisations to attract grant and charitable funds. Interventions delivered by domestic abuse services in Kent vary and deliver a range of different outcomes. There is sometimes overlap between services, they are
required to report their performance on different areas and in different formats which increases the amount of administration.

The historic trend of commissioning services individually has led to a service landscape which is not joined up and does not offer clear pathways for clients requiring support. This can result in duplication of effort in some cases, and in others, the absence of a support option, depending on the location of the client.

This service landscape means that there is not a clear ‘pathway’ for clients to follow to access services. Clients sometimes have to go through multiple referrals and assessment processes which can delay the time it takes to start receiving support and often means that clients have to repeat their story to a number of professionals.

The repeated movement of clients between services increases the risk of clients ‘slipping through the cracks’ and not accessing support because they aren’t seen quickly enough, and do not know how to get the help they need.

Some areas have developed strong local arrangements and clients in these areas benefit from a range of services. This is not consistent across the County and has resulted to some degree in a ‘postcode lottery’ whereby the level of service available varies greatly between areas, resulting in clients either missing out on support or having to travel to access services.

Commissioning Options considered when developing this proposal

Option 1 – Recommission services in the existing configuration when contracts expire

This option would have the benefit of a simple commissioning process and minimal disruption to service delivery.

Current services deliver good outcomes to service users and following this option means that existing quality would most likely continue.

However, this option lacks flexibility and would not address the current issue of complex and unwieldy pathways.

The IDVA service has experienced a reduction in financial contributions from some funding partners, which will result in reduced capacity to support clients should contracts be recommissioned in their current format.

This option does not present any opportunities to gain efficiencies through combining administration and assessment process.

Option 2 – Integrate services on a locality basis

This option would see budgets pooled to commission a number of integrated services, bringing together current provision to deliver a holistic service to clients across a set geographic location within Kent.
This would offer the benefits of smoother pathways of support for clients and some efficiencies in commissioning.

By following this option, services would be able to focus on local priorities and tailor the support available to local communities, responding swiftly to changing needs and demands.

By commissioning smaller, local solutions, however, funding will be clearly linked to specific areas and there will be insufficient flexibility to move resources around the county to address shifting need and demand. This model would not completely eradicate the fragmentation of domestic abuse services and could pose challenges for clients who wish to move between areas in Kent.

**Option 3 – Integrate services into a single county-wide basis**

This option delivers a joined up, consistent support offer to clients regardless of their location in the county, thereby eliminating the ‘postcode lottery. Clients will receive consistent standards of support wherever they live in Kent and will be able to move around the County, confident that service will continue seamlessly without having to navigate complex referrals in order to continue receiving support.

By bringing together a range of services, it will be possible to identify areas of good practice and roll this out across all areas, to drive up quality of support where necessary.

A holistic triage and assessment service, in collaboration with other Kent and Medway agencies, will be developed to identify risk, support needs and divert service users to the appropriate elements of the service. This will give clients and referring professionals the benefit of a single access route to support and will eliminate the current arrangements where clients often have to undergo multiple referrals and assessments in order to access the support they need. A ‘no wrong door’ approach will allow people to approach any area of the service and be assured that they will benefit from the full range of support available to them, without arduous administrative processes, and being passed between multiple service providers unnecessarily.

Resources will be able to be flexibly deployed across the county, depending on demand, to minimise waiting times in busy areas and maximise use of resources in other areas that have additional capacity.

Collaboration and partnership working will eliminate fragmentation in services and deliver improved pathways for service users, with a clear, single referral route. This option would also put services on a more sustainable long-term footing, with provision secured for the duration of the contracted period.

This option does, however, pose the risk that the contract is awarded to a single, large organisation, which could jeopardise some of the smaller, local organisations.
The Future Vision for Services

Having carefully considered the different commissioning options open to KCC, it is proposed that option 3, an integrated county-wide support service, is commissioned to incorporate the offer made by existing commissioned services into one holistic, flexible model of support.

This will offer the benefit of a more joined up approach to service provision, with simplified and improved pathways for service users.

The service will concentrate on three clear domains:

- Accommodation
- Community Interventions
- Training and Education

Through a cohesive integrated model with service providers working collaboratively, this service will support the introduction of a coordinated community response to domestic abuse across Kent, allowing clients and their families to benefit from joined up, holistic support to move away from abuse and reintegrate with local communities.

By bringing together services, the impact of reducing funding to the current IDVA service will be minimised, and clients will benefit from flexible, tailored provision which responds to their needs and is able to deliver more joined up community support to clients, regardless of their level of risk and need.

Commissioners recognise the risk that this approach may pose to smaller Voluntary and Community Services and plan to mitigate against this risk through encouraging collaborative and partnership working, facilitating this through a number of market engagement events to support the conversations between providers.

The tender process will also have a clear focus on local knowledge and the capacity to work well with local communities. KCC recognises that this is needed to ensure that the specialist knowledge and expertise of local organisations is captured and that these organisations have support and opportunity to be involved in the model.

This approach will also bring together a number of currently disparate services, to minimise the administrative burden on service providers and reduce the costs to the County Council in contract management. This will enable more of the resources available to be used on front line support of clients rather than lengthy and costly ‘back office’ functions.

The proposed integrated service will also incorporate an ‘education and training’ aspect to ensure that professionals and communities have a robust knowledge of the issues of domestic abuse and the confidence to access services easily and quickly. Service providers tendering for this service will also be asked to consider innovative ways to reach out to communities, improving access to support for those who may have previously not approached ‘traditional’ services for support. This is expected to be particularly beneficial to those clients who are considered ‘hard to reach’, such as
male victims, those from lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities and minority ethnic victims.

A single service is proposed, with service providers, through various mechanisms of subcontracting and partnerships, working together to deliver the key outcomes which include:

- To support victims of domestic abuse in coping with the immediate aftermath of abuse and empower them to recover from the long term effects of that abuse, with consideration to:
  - Mental and Physical Health
  - Shelter and Accommodation
  - Family, friends and children
  - Education, skills and employment
  - Drugs and alcohol
  - Finances and benefits
  - Outlook and attitudes
  - Social interactions
- Improved capacity to establish and maintain independent living.
- A reduction in the need for interventions by Families and Social Care Services.
- A reduction in level of harm caused by domestic abuse.
- A reduction in homelessness/repeat homelessness and placement in temporary/ emergency accommodation amongst people at risk of Domestic Abuse in Kent.
- Effective promotion of the wider impact of domestic abuse.

A summary of the proposed service as attached to this document as Appendix 1.

**Domestic Abuse Consultation Case Study**

To help explain the improvements we seek to achieve through commissioning an Integrated Domestic Abuse Service, we have prepared the hypothetical case study below that sets out how services operate currently and how we expect the service to operate differently in the future.

**Current Service Landscape:**

Sarah is a victim of domestic abuse, who reported an incident to the Police. The Police completed a risk assessment and identified her as ‘medium’ risk. They signpost her to the ‘One Stop Shop’ and Victim Support for support and advice.

Sarah attends the One Stop Shop and receives initial advice and is signposted to floating support and the ‘Freedom Programme’. Referral forms are completed and Sarah is assessed separately and accepted onto the waiting lists for these programmes of support.
Whilst Sarah is waiting for support, there is another incident of abuse and the Police assess her as now being high risk. She is referred to the IDVA service, and undergoes an assessment for acceptance to this service.

The IDVA starts to work with Sarah, but identifies that it is not safe for her to remain in her current accommodation. A referral to refuge is made through the National Domestic Violence Helpline, and Sarah is accepted at a refuge service.

On entry to the service Sarah undergoes a full assessment of risks and need and a support package is devised. Because Sarah has moved to a different area of Kent, a new referral to the ‘Freedom Programme’ is needed.

In the meantime, floating support workers have been attempting to make contact with Sarah to begin support. They are unable to do so because she has changed her telephone number, and after a number of attempts to contact her, her case is closed.

During her stay in refuge, it is identified that Sarah’s children require some support services, so a referral is made to Early Help for specialist support.

Sarah is supported to resettle in the local community.

**Proposed Service Landscape:**

Sarah is a victim of domestic abuse, who reported an incident to the Police. The Police completed a risk assessment and identified her as ‘medium’ risk. She is referred directly to the integrated domestic abuse service.

Sarah attends the domestic abuse service for holistic triage and assessment. The needs of Sarah and her children are fully assessed and Sarah is diverted to the outreach service for support in meeting her needs, and a suitable ‘Freedom Programme’ course is identified for Sarah, which fits in around her childcare needs. A referral to Early Help is completed to meet the needs of her children.

There is then a further incident, which the Police attend. Sarah contacts her outreach worker for additional support following the incident, and she is reassessed as being high risk.

The outreach worker supports Sarah by discussing possible options for keeping her safe. Sarah decides that she would like to go into refuge, and the outreach worker provides her with details of refuges in Kent with vacancies. Sarah chooses to move to a refuge near to some extended family so that she can maintain some family connections.

As domestic abuse services in Kent are integrated, Sarah is able to join a ‘Freedom Programme’ closer to the refuge, and she doesn’t have to reapply.

Sarah is supported to resettle in the local community when her stay in refuge has completed.
**Benefits of the proposed model:**

In the case study of the current landscape, Sarah undergoes 4 separate referrals, and the associated assessments. This involves her telling her ‘story’ to a number of different professionals during her time receiving services.

The proposed model has the benefit of being fully joined up, which means that Sarah is able to undergo a single, holistic assessment, which then diverts her to the areas of support that she, and her family, require.

Due to the nature of domestic abuse, levels of risk can change dramatically in a short space of time. Because Sarah has already been assessed for support, she does not have to go through a separate referral process every time something changes, and there is continuity in the support that she receives.

By bringing together the key elements of domestic abuse provision, Sarah is able to receive information about the full range of support available to her, and has greater choice about what suits her needs best, rather than being limited by the remit of individual support providers.

The flexible, integrated model is better able to respond to Sarah’s changing need, and there is less time and money spent by support providers repeating assessments and referring on to alternative services. This builds efficiencies into the service, increasing the number of clients that can be helped.

**Consultation and Engagement approach**

Consultation on proposals for this service began in May 2015 when key stakeholders including the OPCC, District and Borough councils, criminal justice agencies and healthcare agencies were consulted on proposals and had the opportunity to contribute to the development of the model. 40 individuals from over 20 organisations attended an event where the requirements of the new service were discussed, with workshop sessions to develop the model and incorporate the views of partner agencies. Partners also had the opportunity to raise any concerns, and address any barriers to the success of domestic abuse services in the future.

This work was then built on when the market was consulted with during August 2015, during an all-day event aimed at introducing the proposals and allowing service providers to identify any issues with the proposed model, to explore collaboratively the scope of the proposed service and to look at how the model could work. 39 professionals from a range of provider agencies attended this session, and contributed to the further development of the model.

A dedicated domestic abuse commissioning email address was set up in April 2015 to provide a mechanism for stakeholders, partners and service providers to put forward questions and observations about the project. This has served to act as a central, consistent point for the collation and response to queries and suggestions, which has ensured that the proposal has been developed in partnership with key stakeholders, with all views captured and incorporated where possible.
Public consultation will run for 6 weeks, and will include direct engagement through events for service users, key stakeholders, service providers and communities to explore the model and identify any changes that should be made.

**Responding**

If you want to submit a response to the consultation, please visit the consultation page on [Kent.gov.uk/domesticabuseservice](http://Kent.gov.uk/domesticabuseservice) where you can fill in the online questionnaire.

Alternatively, you may use the paper questionnaire which can be downloaded from the website or requested by using the contact details below:

**domesticabusecommissioning@kent.gov.uk**

Emily Matthews  
Commissioning Officer, Community Support,  
3rd Floor Invicta House  
County Road  
Maidstone  
Kent ME14 1XX

03000 417130

Alternative formats may also be made available upon request by calling 03000 421553. This number goes to an answering service which is monitored during office hours.

After the consultation has closed, all responses will be analysed and the feedback will be used to decide how to progress our commissioning of domestic abuse services. The consultation responses will also be used to update the service specification with any appropriate changes. After the amended specification has been agreed, the service will then be competitively tendered to ensure delivery of a quality, value for money offer.

An update on the outcome of the consultation will be published on [kent.gov.uk](http://kent.gov.uk).
Appendix 1 - Specification Consultation – Kent Integrated Domestic Abuse Service

The Service Will

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<tr>
<th>The Service Will</th>
<th>By Providing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improve capacity to establish and maintain independent living.</td>
<td>Flexible support which responds in a timely fashion to the changing needs of service users and their families,</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reduce the need for interventions by Social Care, Health and Wellbeing Services.</td>
<td>A holistic triage and assessment service, in collaboration with other Kent and Medway agencies, to identify risk and support needs and divert service users to the appropriate elements of the service,</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reduce the level of harm caused by domestic abuse</td>
<td>Appropriate, tailored support to meet the needs of ‘hard to reach’ groups, including, but not limited to those from LGBT communities, male victims, those from Minority Ethnic Communities and gypsy travellers, including the provision of safe accommodation as required,</td>
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<td>Reduce homelessness/repeat homelessness and placement in temporary/ emergency accommodation amongst people at risk of Domestic Abuse in Kent.</td>
<td>Through partnership working, delivery of outreach support to domestic victims residing in the community,</td>
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<tr>
<td>Effectively promote the wider impact of domestic abuse.</td>
<td>Coordinated, suitable access points in local communities across Kent to facilitate access to information and support</td>
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- Mental and Physical Health
- Shelter and Accommodation
- Family, friends and children
- Education, skills and employment
- Drugs and alcohol
- Finances and benefits
- Outlook and attitudes
- Social interactions

The availability of qualified IDVAs to support high risk Domestic Abuse victims

Working with local partnerships, delivery and facilitation of therapeutic and supportive activities to promote independence and future healthy relationships

Clear links and referral pathways to specialist support services for children and young people affected by, or at risk of, domestic abuse

Through partnership working, access to a Sanctuary Scheme to facilitate greater safety for service users choosing to remain in their accommodation

Support for victims and their children in a variety of accommodation settings, based across the County to include refuge and ‘safe’ accommodation,

A Private Sector Rented Access Scheme (to incorporate deposits, bonds and guarantees as appropriate) predominantly to support people moving on from refuge accommodation to obtain suitable move on accommodation,

Resettlement provision to support people moving on from refuge and temporary accommodation,

Innovative social marketing campaigns and activities to raise awareness of domestic abuse issues within the wider community

Contribute towards the Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Training Programme