

Gloucester City Council

Meeting:	Cabinet	Date:	13 January 2021
Subject:	Vulnerable Women with Complex Needs Project Update and Contract Extension		
Report Of:	Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods		
Wards Affected:	All		
Key Decision:	No	Budget/Policy Framework:	No
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Appendices:	1. Case Studies July to September		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To note progress of this project benefiting a cohort of vulnerable women with complex needs in Gloucester, and approve a 12 months contract extension funded from existing budgets.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Cabinet is asked to **RESOLVE** that:

- (1) the success and impact of this co-commissioned project be noted
- (2) a contract extension with the County Council of 12 months be approved.

3.0 Background and Key Issues

- 3.1 For two years, Gloucester City Council has been working with Gloucestershire County Council, Gloucester City Homes, the Office for the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Clinical Commissioning Group with the common aim of improving outcomes for extremely vulnerable women by changing the practice in the way services are offered. The target group are women who have experienced significant trauma and a multitude of other challenges such as displacement from housing, criminal activities, sex working, addiction to drugs and alcohol and who struggle to maintain relationships and look after their children. These women are generally not supported through primary care services but attend A&E. They are in contact with many different services ('revolving door syndrome'), often without real impact but with significant costs to the system which continues to fail them. The aim of the project has been to deliver a step change in the provision of services to these women. The project takes an asset based approach by focusing on and developing further the existing motivations, passions and skills of the cohort and building their

resilience. The methodology is informed by Gloucestershire's pioneering work on adverse childhood experiences (www.actionaces.org) and uses a trauma-informed approach to support this cohort of vulnerable women. ACE's are specific traumatic events, for example witnessing domestic abuse, occurring before the age of 18 years. High or frequent exposure to ACEs, without the support of a trusted adult, can lead to toxic stress. Research shows that the more ACEs a child experiences, the greater the chances of health, educational and or social problems in later life. The contract is delivered by the award-winning Women's Centre of Gloucestershire based Nelson Trust.

- 3.2 The complex challenges faced by this cohort of women mean that they very often only present to receive services at times of extreme crisis, then disengage until the next crisis episode. This puts pressure on services to respond individually to the crisis rather than having a more joined up, holistic response to the complexities that these women present. The project provides trauma informed and strengths based holistic support delivered by highly skilled case workers. Case workers will develop high quality relationships with this cohort and provide practical and emotional support to individual women, as well as supporting them in engaging meaningfully with appropriate services.
- 3.3 The project commenced in March 2018 with investment of £10k per annum from each of the commissioning partners, plus an additional contribution from the County Council who also let and managed the contract with Nelson Trust. This enabled the Nelson Trust to work with a cohort of up to 20 women who are referred through the partner agencies. As expected, a number of women were referred by two or more agencies.
- 3.4 The project is achieving very positive outcomes. Following a period of intensive engagement and assessment with key workers and other professionals, each women will be supported in developing a bespoke development. Individual progress for each woman is measured across any of nine appropriate pathways:
 - Drugs and Alcohol
 - Sex working
 - Health
 - Attitudes, Thinking and Behaviour
 - Abuse, Domestic Violence and Rape
 - Children, Families and Relationships
 - Accommodation
 - Finance, Benefit and Debt
 - Skills and Employment

For the current cohort, the % successful progress against each pathway ranges from 57% (sex working) to 88% (drugs and alcohol).

- 3.5 Whilst performance measures are important, they don't do justice to the impact of this project on the lives of individuals, their families and their communities. Appendix A includes two case studies (names have been changed) that capture the impact of this work.
- 3.6 Work is on-going to ascertain financial savings to individual commissioning partners and will be shared in due course. At this point in time initial estimates highlight that of a cohort of 10 women, cost avoidance due to an absence of arrests or incidents

would result in Police savings of over £18,000 during the contract period. Service costs such as a visit to A&E (£117); complex eviction costs per incident (£7,276); Weekly costs of temporary accommodation (£120) and a 6 months placement for a baby (£32,410) give an idea of the financial benefits to individual organisations and the system as a whole of working in this joined up way.

4.0 Social Value Considerations

4.1 The contract is held by Gloucestershire County Council so the City Council's social value policy does not apply. However, the substantive purpose of the project is to create social value by co-commissioning holistic and trauma informed support for a cohort of vulnerable women with complex needs.

4.2 The project reflects the Council's asset-based approach not only how the project is delivered but also how it is commissioned. Pooling funding from five commissioning organisations to an integrated, person centred and holistic support service and where success is measured by outcomes as opposed to inputs is innovative. It supports the Council's commitment to become a Local Authority Centre for Excellence for strengths based approaches as per our commitment in the Council Plan.

5.0 Environmental Implications

5.1 None directly resulting from this report

6.0 Alternative Options Considered

6.1 Terminate the contract and cease this work – there is a high risk that some of the cohort will disengage or any positive progress made during the past two years will be lost as individuals revert back to past behaviour patterns.

7.0 Reasons for Recommendations

7.1 (see above)

8.0 Future Work and Conclusions

8.1 Extend the contract by 12 months in order to successfully conclude the work with the current cohort and put in place measures to provide less intensive community based support. The 12 months extension period will also be used to consider how we can scale up this innovative commissioning approach so that it can benefit a larger cohort and influence a larger number of commissioning organisations to adopt a more joined up and outcome based approach to service delivery. We will consider other contract models, including a Social Impact Bond. We will also evaluate the outcomes, including financial benefits and identify changes to mainstream service provision.

9.0 Financial Implications

9.1 The investment of an additional £10k for one year will come from existing budgets in the Housing and Homelessness service
(Financial Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report.)

10.0 Legal Implications

10.1 As the County Council appointed the Nelson Trust, it will be for the County Council to extend that appointment. The County Council and the City Council entered into an agreement on 30th November 2018 relating to this initiative which set out the responsibilities of each Council. The agreement can be extended by a further 12 months pursuant to the provisions of clause 2.2. Officers have been given advice about how to document the extension.

(One Legal have been consulted in the preparation of this report.)

11.0 Risk & Opportunity Management Implications

11.1 Key risks and mitigating actions include:

- Nelson Trust do not wish to extend the contract – unlikely

12.0 People Impact Assessment (PIA) and Safeguarding:

12.1 This is a specific service for women with high vulnerabilities.

13.0 Community Safety Implications

13.1 There are no direct community safety implications

14.0 Staffing & Trade Union Implications

14.1 There are no staffing & trade union implications

Background Documents: None