

BRECKLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL

Report of: Gordon Bambridge, Executive Member for Health & Housing

To: General Purposes Committee, 22nd March 2023

Author: Gill Duffy, Housing Manager

Subject: Domestic Abuse Support Specialist Post

Purpose: To establish a permanent post in the Housing Service

Recommendation:

Option 1: Appoint the existing postholder to a permanent contract

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 placed a new duty on local authorities across England to ensure that victims of domestic abuse and their children can access the right support in safe accommodation when they need it.
- 1.2 Lower tier authorities have a duty to work with the top tier authorities to enable this and were given funding for this in 2021/22 and again for 2022/23. At this point it was not known if the funding would be recurrent so Breckland Council recruited an officer on a temporary basis.
- 1.3 The officer works 0.8 FTE hours the following responsibilities:
- To provide expert, specialist advice on domestic abuse and, in particular, in relation to the statutory duties the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 places upon the local authority.
 - To provide colleagues with positive direction and advice on cases involving domestic abuse, developing policy and procedures based on excellent practice.
 - To lead on the team's ambition to achieve the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance accreditation.
 - To lead on ensuring that good data collection is in place to feed into the county partnership board and to be the primary liaison with the County Council with regards to Breckland Council's duties with regards to the Domestic Abuse Act 2021.
- 1.4 The officer started in post in September 2021 and their temporary contract was extended the following year until March 2023, when funding for 2022/23 was given. Their experience and intervention has been invaluable to the housing team, especially as the number of high risk domestic abuse cases that the service deals with has risen considerably. The postholder also represents Breckland Council at regular countywide meetings, freeing up the time of the team manager who this previously fell to.
- 1.5 The government has committed to continue funding the new burden requirements for 2023/24 and 2024/25, giving local authorities more stability and this commitment can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-authority-domestic-abuse-duty-2023-to-2024-and-2024-to-2025-funding-allocations>

2.0 PROPOSALS

2.1 Option 1: Appoint the existing postholder to a permanent contract

2.2 Option 2: Extend the existing temporary post holder's contract for 2 further years

3.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

To continue the current postholder's post on a temporary basis would take them over 2 years' employment with Breckland Council, giving them the same employment rights as a permanent employee. It is proposed to make the post permanent, giving greater certainty both to the council and the officer, reducing the risk of them leaving for another role elsewhere.

The funding from central government provides enough in the budget to pay for redundancy costs, if these were needed in the future.

4.0 EXPECTED BENEFITS

4.1 Stability and permanence of a specialist role within the housing team.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS

In preparing this report, the report author has considered the likely implications of the decision - particularly in terms of Carbon Footprint / Environmental Issues; Constitutional & Legal; Contracts; Corporate Priorities; Crime & Disorder; Data Protection; Equality & Diversity/Human Rights; Financial; Health & Wellbeing; Reputation; Risk Management; Safeguarding; Staffing; Stakeholders/Consultation/Timescales; Other. Where the report author considers that there may be implications under one or more of these headings, these are identified below.

5.1 Corporate Priorities

Inspiring Communities: (a) We will work to prevent homelessness in the district and (b) We will ensure that our residents have suitable, safe and secure homes

5.2 Financial

Appendix B shows the funding for this role.

5.3 Health & Wellbeing

This service ensures support and positive outcomes for some of the most vulnerable people in our service

5.4 Safeguarding

This role supports the service in safeguarding victims / survivors of domestic abuse.

5.5 Staffing

Whilst it is important to have a stable team, as with many posts in the housing service, the funding is dependent on government grant and this always carries an element of risk. If the grant was discontinued then the staff would have to be made redundant.

6.0 WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED

6.1 All

7.0 ACRONYMS

7.1 FTE = Full Time Equivalent

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Key Decision: No

Exempt Decision: No

This report refers to a Mandatory Service

Appendices attached to this report:

Appendix A Pro forma B