

PFCC Decision Report

Please ensure all sections below are completed

Report reference number: 200-23

Classification: Not protectively marked

Title of report: Essex synergy contract extension 2024-25

Area of county / stakeholders affected: Countywide

Report by: Greg Myddelton

Date of report: 14 March 2024

Enquiries to: greg.myddelton@essex.police.uk

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. This decision report recommends the PFCC uses the final available extension to the existing contract for provision of sexual violence and abuse support services with the Synergy rape crisis consortium from April 2024 to end-March 2025.

2. Recommendations

1. Approval to instruct 7F procurement to arrange for the extension of the existing sexual abuse support contract from 2024 to 2025.
2. Approve the allocation of £2,096,633 for this service to be delivered in 2024-5.

3. Background to the Proposal

- 3.1. In 2020, following an open and competitive tender exercise, the PFCC commissioned the Synergy rape crisis consortium to deliver sexual abuse support services, including ISVA services, therapeutic support, advocacy and counselling. This is an all-age, all-gender service that operates across the whole of Essex.
- 3.2. The contract term was for 5 years in total, with an initial 3-year period (2020-23) followed by 2 annual extensions of 1 year each.

- 3.3. During the contract term Synergy have also been commissioned to provide a range of other services beyond those originally agreed and these have been incorporated into the contract. The services and relevant decision reports are listed in the table at 3.7.
- 3.4. The first extension for 2023-4 was approved via DR87-22 with a further decision report DR57-23 confirming the incorporation a several further additional services.
- 3.5. This proposal relates to the second and final extension of the sexual abuse support contract covering 2024-25. The services included in this contract are listed in the table set out in paragraph 3.7 and have a total value of £2,096,633.
- 3.6. In 2024, the PFCC will undertake a formal procurement process for a new contract to commence in April 2025.
- 3.7. As set out above the contract includes the core element of the service as well as additional grants, which have been received from central government since the contract commenced, for additional, complementary sexual abuse support services. The table below summarises the funding streams, timescales, and associated decision reports:

**Synergy Funding
Breakdown 2024-5**

Value	PFCC Income Stream	From	To	DR
£1,056,331	Devolved Rape Support Fund	2020	2024/5	175-19 & 87-22
	Child Sexual Abuse Uplift			
	Core Victims Grant*			
£246,840	Additional RSF ISVAs	2020-21	2025	77-21 & 57-23
£176,476	Additional ISVA/IDVAs (700)	2020-21	2025	77-21 & 57-23
£144,633	Additional ISVA/IDVAs (200)	2022	2025	96-22
£89,866	Additional ISVA/IDVAs (50)	2023	2025	85-23
£100,000	MOJ DA/SV Fund	2022	2025	95-22
£147,709	Rape Support Fund Uplift	2022	2025	158-22 & 45-23
£134,778	SV Fund Uplift	2022	2025	158-22 & 45-23

£2,096,633

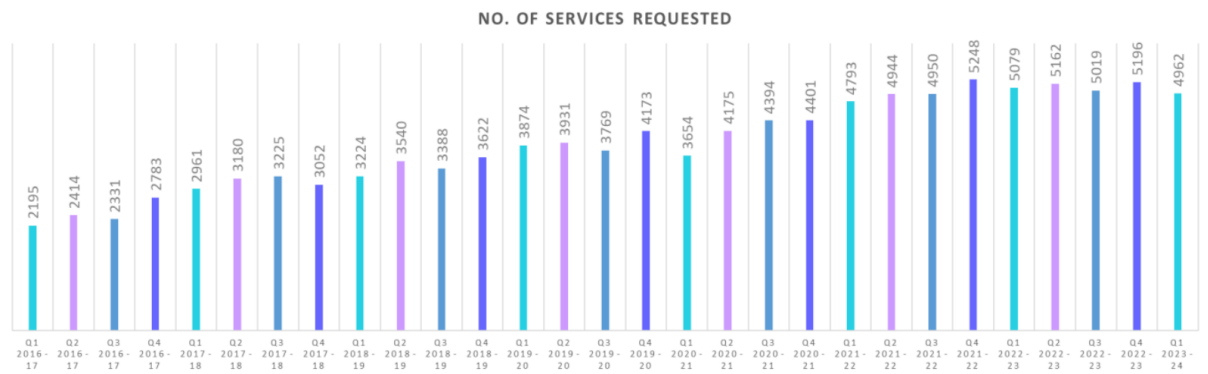
* Awaiting confirmation from MoJ about continuation and the value of this fund in 2024-5

4. Proposal and Associated Benefits

- 4.1. This service delivers specialist support for all victims and survivors of any form of sexual abuse, whether that occurred recently or in the past, providing direct access to appropriate support in a timely way that recognises and responds to their needs, enabling and empowering them to cope, and as far as possible, recover from their experience.
- 4.2. The following improved outcomes for victims are sought by the service;
- Improved mental and physical health, including improved emotional wellbeing
 - Reduced reliance on drugs and alcohol

- Improved relationships with family, friends and children
- Improved ability to manage financial difficulties
- Improved social interactions and social relationships
- Improved ability to work and study
- Increased feelings of safety
- Resumption of or development of opportunities for education, skills and employment
- Improved outlook for the future

4.3. As shown in the graph below, the Synergy partnership has responded to the increasing demand for specialist support services in recent years. Last year (2022-3) saw a quarterly average of 5,114 services requested, compared to 2,431 per quarter in 2017-18.



4.4. This decision will ensure the continued availability of specialist support services whilst we generate discussion about partner (local authority) investment in sexual abuse support services.

4.5. In the most recent reporting period (Q1 2023-4) the partnership recorded the following outcomes;

OUTCOMES - Quarter 1				
	Adults		Young People	
Wrap around Community based services outcomes - Cases closed during the reporting period where feedback has been returned	%	No:	%	No:
Outcome: More able to access further support	96	181	100	41
Outcome: Feel more able to take back their power and control	87	182	94	42
Outcome: Develop better support networks and relationships	85	181	95	41
Outcome: Feel more able to assert themselves	97	182	84	41
Outcome: Survivors have better health and wellbeing	88	181	87	41
Satisfaction with service - Cases closed during the reporting period	%	No:	%	No:
Got the info wanted	94	186	100	42
Got the support wanted	94	186	100	42
The physical environment(s) used felt safe and welcoming	75	186	84	42
Valued being in a single sex space (if applicable)	71	186	87	42
The support was sensitive to needs and situation	96	186	98	42
The group was facilitated in a supportive way (if applicable)	93	104	34	2

4.6. These high rates of satisfaction and positive outcomes have been replicated in previous reporting periods and demonstrate that the current supplier is able to deliver both the capacity and the quality of support required to give victims in Essex the best chance to cope and recover from their experience.

4.7. When this contract was most recently tendered (2020) only 1 bid was received, despite considerable market engagement. The local and national market has not become significantly more competitive in recent years. This suggests an open and competitive tender process would be unlikely to result in any significant benefit at this time. The PFCC has only recently successfully appointed a commissioning lead, which meant a full procurement exercise in 2023 would not have been deliverable.

4.8. Confirming extension arrangements early will mitigate the risk of any staff leaving the Synergy partnership due to uncertainty about TUPE or the continuation of roles during a tender process. This will ensure retention of skilled staff and reduce the likelihood of any recruitment issues affecting the ability of the supplier to deliver continued support.

5. Options Analysis

5.1. The PFCC has the option to allow the contract to lapse at end-March 2024 and undertake a competitive tender exercise. For the reasons outlined in section 4 it is advantageous to extend this contract for a final year.

5.2. The PFCC could revert to a grant funding arrangement (rather than a formal contract) for these services, but it is believed that formalising this agreement

has had numerous benefits including providing stability and assurance for the supplier, building a robust offer for victims/survivors, and giving the PFCC greater scope and control in contract monitoring and management.

6. Consultation and Engagement

- 6.1. This proposal was discussed at the PFCC's Senior Management Team meeting on 5th December 2023.

7. Strategic Links

- 7.1. This specialist sexual abuse support contract is a critical element of our Police & Crime Plan priority to improve support for victims of crime, protect vulnerable people and break the cycle of abuse, and reduce violence against women and girls.

8. Police operational implications

- 8.1. Essex Police refer into this service, and benefit from improved retention rates of victims and survivors that receive support from our specialist providers.

9. Financial implications

- 9.1. The PFCC will allocate £2,096,633 funding to Synergy Rape Crisis Partnership to facilitate the 1-year extension of this contract. Funding will be allocated from the PFCC's 2024-5 Victims' commissioning fund. At the time of writing this decision report, the PFCC awaits confirmation from MoJ about the value of the 2024-5 Core Victims' Fund.

10. Legal implications

- 10.1 This funding is covered by a contract, arranged by 7F procurement. The contract reference is 2019/077

11. Staffing implications

- 11.1. The PFCC's Commissioning Lead commenced employment in November 2023. It is anticipated that this individual would take on responsibility for monitoring and managing this contract as well as supporting the recommissioning of a new contract/service from April 2025.
- 11.2. Extending this contract as soon as possible reduces the likelihood of skilled practitioners leaving the Synergy service due to concerns about the service not continuing when the current contract expires in early 2024. We have provided assurances about our intentions to our suppliers, but the contract extension will give greater certainty and confidence to staff.

12. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion implications

- 12.1 This support service is available to all victims of sexual abuse in Essex. We collect demographic information as part of our performance information which can be used to track how well we are offering and delivering support to all communities and groups across Essex. The original contract was subject to a detailed Equality Impact Assessment.

13. Risks and Mitigations

- 13.1. There is a risk that performance slips between now and the end of the extension period. This will be mitigated by closely monitoring the performance information at quarterly performance reviews.
- 13.2. Around £800,000 of the value of this decision report is reliant on MoJ Core grant funding, which remains unconfirmed for 2024-25. Whilst it is highly unlikely that the MoJ would remove this core grant entirely, there is a risk that the value may reduce. In that case, the PFCC would be required to either negotiate a phased decommissioning, or reduction, of the service, or to meet the costs of the service from other funding sources. We have confirmed we could do this through a grant variation with 7F and have also discussed this risk, and any implications, with the provider. Options will be evaluated when more information is made available from MoJ. We expect clarity from MoJ in March 2024.
- 13.3. There is a risk that if the PFCC does not choose to extend this service, or waits until MoJ funding is confirmed, that there will be disruption and possibly a reduction to the service offered from April 2023 due to staff leaving or being deployed elsewhere. This would mean victims and survivors of sexual abuse either facing long waits to access support or some victims being unable to receive support if thresholds need to be established to limit demand.

14. Governance Boards

- 14.1 This proposal was discussed at the PFCC's Senior Management Team meeting on 5th December 2023.

15. Links to Future Plans

- 15.1 This service supports the Essex Sexual Abuse strategy 2020-23 and delivery of the Police and Crime Plan.

Background Papers and Appendices

- 16.1 n/a

Report Approval

The report will be signed off by the PFCC's Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer prior to review and sign off by the PFCC / DPFCC.

Chief Executive / M.O.

Sign: 

Print: Darren Horsman - Deputy MO

Date: 19.3.2024

Chief Finance Officer

Sign: 

Print: Janet Perry

Date: 18 March 2024

Publication

Is the report for publication?

YES	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
NO	<input type="checkbox"/>

If 'NO', please give reasons for non-publication (Where relevant, cite the security classification of the document(s). State 'None' if applicable)

.....
.....

If the report is not for publication, the Chief Executive will decide if and how the public can be informed of the decision.

Redaction

If the report is for publication, is redaction required:

1. Of Decision Sheet?	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>	2. Of Appendix?	YES	<input type="checkbox"/>
	NO	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		NO	<input type="checkbox"/>

If 'YES', please provide details of required redaction:

.....
.....
.....

Date redaction carried out:

Chief Finance Officer / Chief Executive Sign Off – for Redactions only

If redaction is required, the Treasurer or Chief Executive is to sign off that redaction has been completed.

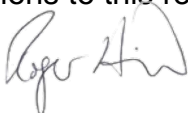
Sign:

Print:

Chief Executive / Chief Finance Officer

Decision and Final Sign Off

I agree the recommendations to this report:

Sign: 

Print: Roger Hirst

PFCC

Date signed: 22/03/2024

I do not agree the recommendations to this report because:

.....
.....
.....

Sign:

Print:

PFCC/Deputy PFCC

Date signed: