

STATES OF JERSEY



FUNDING FOR WOMEN'S REFUGE (P.124/2014): COMMENTS

Presented to the States on 9th September 2014
by the Minister for Health and Social Services

STATES GREFFE

COMMENTS

Reports of domestic violence have increased notably in recent years, and growing concern about the impact on individuals and families has led to the issue being a focus for the Police, Health and Social Services and other key agencies, in efforts to address the problem.

As part of this focus, and following a request from the States of Jersey Police, in 2013, the Children's Policy Group (CPG) agreed proposals to develop a Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Committee (MARAC).

Jersey's Women's Refuge (JWR) was involved in detailed discussions about the proposals, including the important role of the Independent Domestic Violence Advisers (IDVAs) to support the initiative.

At the time, JWR had people performing a similar role to the IDVAs, and they were asked to consider retaining that responsibility within the MARAC. JWR, however, declined to agree a variation of the existing agreement, which would see them adapting their current provision of that service to deliver the MARAC IDVA role.

Background

In January 2013, following the request from the Police (in response to a notable rise in reports of Domestic Violence) the Children's Policy Group (CPG) agreed the business case for the establishment of a MARAC. The development of an Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) was a key element of this agreed business case, and the CPG noted that there would be no new money available, so funding for the initiative would need to be met through existing budgets.

CPG Ministers and Officers met with 4 JWR representatives on 1st July 2013 to discuss MARAC. As part of those discussions, the Women's Refuge was again offered the opportunity to take on role of the IDVA service as part of a revised version of their current SLA, held by the Health and Social Services Department on behalf of the States. However, the JWR Trustees were reluctant to take on the role.

Having established that the JWR did not wish to retain and develop the IDVA responsibilities, it was determined that funding to support the initiative within the MARAC would be jointly met from budgets held by the States of Jersey Police and the Health and Social Services Department.

CPG noted, in its minute of 26th July 2013, that £50,000 of the current Health and Social Services funding for the Women's Refuge should be redirected to the MARAC to support the creation of an IDVA role in Jersey.

Following further discussions with the JWR, it was agreed that funding for its 2014/2015 Service Level Agreement (SLA) would be reduced by a total of £50,000 per annum, with that funding transferring to Home Affairs to support the costs of the IDVAs.

The establishment of a MARAC as an effective way to approach to domestic violence issues in Jersey, and as part of it, the establishment of the IDVA role was further endorsed by the CPG at its meeting on 26th July 2013. The CPG noted (as they did in

January 2013) that the funding would need to be funded from existing resources used to fund JWR.

On 30th September 2013, the Ministers for Home Affairs and Health and Social Services met again with the JWR representatives to advise them that, in line with the MARAC proposals and their decision not to take on the IDVA role, a proportion of their annual grant funding – £50,000 – was to be redirected towards the cost of funding the new IDVA post within MARAC. JWR was advised that the change in funding would take effect from January 2014.

In May of this year, 2014, a 2 year SLA was signed by all parties, which included the revised (reduced) funding.

It was subsequently agreed to phase the amendment to funding, with final agreement that the Health and Social Services funding for JWR would be reduced by £20,000 in 2014 and £50,000 in 2015.

Issues

At present, an SLA for 2014 to 2015 has been signed by Health and Social Services and the JWR. This provides for the payment and monitoring of a service for women who are the victims of domestic abuse, and the service is set out in an agreed service specification.

The Deputy of St. Martin proposes to increase the value of that negotiated service level agreement by reinstating the funding position that existed in 2013 for services that were in place at that time. The proposition effectively calls for the current level of funding for JWR to be increased by £20,000 in 2014 and £50,000 in 2015.

Although JWR has a current revenue deficit of around £112,000 per annum, as a consequence of a reduction in charitable contributions, the organisation has in excess of £1 million in reserves. Whilst no charity should be denied appropriate funding on the grounds that it has reserves – indeed it is considered a principle of good commissioning to work with financially secure charities – it is also clear that this proposed reinstatement of funding is not required as a form of emergency grant aid.

JWR can continue to operate, whilst it reviews its business model, with a view to achieving a long-term sustainable financial position without any need for additional emergency investment.

Summary

Should States Members support the proposition to increase the value of the existing service level agreement between Health and Social Services and the JWR for 2014 and 2015, it would be the intention of the Minister to have a formal agreement in line with Financial Directions and would require the Jersey Women's Refuge to make a firm commitment to further improvements, including –

- (a) consistently producing metrics to enable evaluation of their services;
- (b) constructively working with commissioners to review JWR services to identify opportunities for cost savings;

- (c) working with Jersey Property Holdings to establish a sustainable position regarding tenure of premises;
- (d) establishing operational procedures to ensure an appropriate interface between JWR, MARAC and the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH);

and

- (e) developing a sustainable 5 year funding model which includes explicit targets for increasing charitable income.

It is recognised that JWR has already indicated a firm commitment to comply with these requirements. However, any agreement to increase the value of a service level agreement that is already in place, by reinstating public funding for services that are no longer being provided by the JWR, could be considered as inappropriate and contrary to the principle of the commissioning process.

Statement under Standing Order 37A [Presentation of comment relating to a proposition]

These comments were received by the States Greffe after the deadline set out in Standing Order 37A due to an administrative error in the Livelink process within the presenting Department.