

Report of Commissioning Programme Manager

Report to Deputy Director (Learning, Skills and Universal) – Children’s Services

Date: 4th March 2015

Subject: Waiver to Contract Procedure Rules in order to enter in to an agreement with Booktrust for the provision of bundles of books for Children Looked After



Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

- Booktrust is a national charity that runs the Letterbox scheme. The scheme is a national scheme that increases literacy amongst looked after children. The packages of books provided are charged at a lower rate than it would cost for the local authority to purchase the same books, so the scheme provides value for money for Leeds City Council. The Letterbox scheme has been running for a number of years nationally and provides bundles of books (and other learning materials and games) at less than the cost of the books themselves. Each child in year 3, year 5 and year 7 receives six, age-appropriate bundles of books across the year. Independent research shows that the Letterbox Scheme has a positive impact on looked after children’s learning:
<http://www.letterboxclub.org.uk/research-and-evaluation/>
- Leeds City Council have purchased bundles of books from Booktrust through the Letterbox Scheme for a number of years, this forms part of the support offered to improve the educational outcomes of looked after children and has worked effectively. There is no

other provider who offers the Letterbox Scheme or anything akin to it. Children's services does not have the capacity internally to provide the service ourselves at the same price.

Recommendations

3. The Deputy Director of Children's Services is recommended to approve the waiver of the following Contracts Procedure Rule(s):

Contracts Procedure Rules No 8.1 and 8.2 – Intermediate value procurements

and award a contract to Booktrust in the sum of £34,190 (inclusive of VAT). The contract shall commence on the 16th March 2015 and expire on the 31st August 2015.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1. Setting out the reasons for a waiver to Contract Procedure Rules 8.1 and 8.2 in order to enter in to an agreement with Booktrust for the provision of bundles of books for Children Looked After (CLA).

2 Background information

- 2.1. Booktrust is a national charity that runs the Letterbox scheme. The scheme is a national scheme that increases literacy amongst looked after children. The packages of books provided are charged at a lower rate than it would cost for the local authority to purchase the same books, so the scheme provides value for money for Leeds City Council.
- 2.2. The Letterbox scheme has been running for a number of years nationally and provides bundles of books (and other learning materials and games) at less than the cost of the books themselves. Each child in Year 3, Year 5 and Year 7 receives six, age-appropriate bundles of books across the year.
- 2.3. Independent research shows that the Letterbox Scheme has a positive impact on looked after children's learning: <http://www.letterboxclub.org.uk/research-and-evaluation/>
- 2.4. The evidence from the research undertaken by the Trust shows that the bundles have a positive effect on looked after children's self-esteem and progress in learning. The scheme has been a factor in driving up looked after children learning outcomes in Leeds and, as such, should remain as part of the virtual school offer to close the gap between CLA and their non-looked after peers.

3 Main issues

Reason for Contracts Procedure Rules Waiver

- 3.1 Leeds City Council have purchased bundles of books from Booktrust through the Letterbox Scheme for a number of years, this forms part of the support offered to improve the educational outcomes of looked after children and has worked effectively.
- 3.2 The packages of books provided are charged at a lower rate than it would cost for the local authority to purchase the same books, so the scheme provides value for money for Leeds City Council.
- 3.3 There is no other provider who offers the Letterbox Scheme or anything akin to it. Children's services does not have the capacity internally to provide the service ourselves at the same price.

Consequences if the proposed action is not approved

- 3.4 Children's Services would not have arrangements in place to purchase bundles of books for looked after children if the contract waiver is not agreed. This would mean a gap in comparison to the current educational support offer to those children.

Advertising

- 3.5 This contract opportunity has not been advertised.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

4.1.1 Booktrust have been informed of the proposal to sign up to the Letterbox scheme for 2015/16.

4.1.2 The decision to use the Booktrust scheme has been agreed by the Head of the Virtual Schools for Children Looked After.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

4.2.1 The scheme is specifically for Children Looked After. It will be put in place for all children in the identified school year groups.

4.3 Council Policies and City Priorities

4.3.1 The contract will support the delivery of the Children and Young Peoples Plan, specifically the priorities to

- Improve behaviour, attendance and achievement
- Support children to be ready for learning

4.4 Resources and Value for Money

4.4.1 The cost of these book packages is £130 per child.

4.4.2 The contract value of £34,190 is inclusive of VAT. The actual cost to the virtual school budget is the net value of £28,491.67 which is within the budget provision set aside for this expenditure.

4.4.3 The expenditure will be met from the Virtual School budget and is fully funded from Dedicated Schools Grant.

4.4.4 The packages of books provided are charged at a lower rate than it would cost for the local authority to purchase the same books, so the scheme provides value for money for Leeds City Council.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

4.5.1 Children's Services will be signing up to the terms and conditions offered by Booktrust, these will be reviewed by the procurement unit before an arrangements is signed with Booktrust.

4.6 Risk Management

4.6.1 No significant risks have been identified in relation to this contract award. The value is below the threshold for European Union procurement regulations to apply and the supplier has an established track record of delivering the good effectively.

5 Conclusions

5.1 It is appropriate to award a contract to Booktrust and sign up to the Letterbox Scheme in order to purchase bundles of books for Looked after children.

6 Recommendations

6.1 The Deputy Director of Children's Services is recommended to approve the waiver of the following Contracts Procedure Rule(s):

Contracts Procedure Rules No 8.1 and 8.2 – Intermediate value procurements

and award a contract to Booktrust in the sum of £34,190 (inclusive of VAT). The contract shall commence on the 16th March 2015 and expire on the 31st August 2015.

7 Background documents¹

7.1 None

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.