Report author: Jancis Andrew

Tel: 07891272298

Report of Head of the Virtual School for Children Looked After

Report to Director of Children's Services

Date: 18th March 2015

Subject: Development of Virtual School Team

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

1   Summary of main issues

1.1   Although in recent years in Leeds the gap has narrowed between the attainment of children looked after (CLA) and those children who are deemed not to be disadvantaged (i.e. not eligible for pupil premium), significant challenges remain to ensure that CLA always achieve their educational potential in a city whose ambition is to be child friendly.

1.2   In July 2014, the DfE published new statutory guidance on the responsibilities of local authorities to promote the educational achievement of children looked after, that included the requirement to have a role designated as Virtual School Head (VSH).

1.3   The statutory guidance states clearly that as leaders responsible for ensuring that the local authority discharges its duty to promote the educational achievement of their CLA, Directors of Children's Services and Lead Members for Children's Services should ensure that closing the attainment and progress gap between looked after children and their peers and creating a culture of high aspirations for them is a top priority.

1.4 This guidance also makes it a statutory requirement that "VSHs are in place and have the resources, time, training and support they need to discharge the duty effectively".

1.5 At present, the virtual school in Leeds comprises the head of the virtual school, an education co-ordinator and an education mentor managing a population of more than 800 children and young people, where a significant minority are also educated outside of Leeds. This level of resource compares unfavourably with smaller authorities.

1.6 The virtual school requires capacity and resources in order to enable Leeds to deliver on its promise to the children in its care, to secure the most effective allocation and use of the pupil premium and to deliver robust procedures for monitoring the attendance and progress of CLA in order to intervene where children are failing to achieve their educational potential.

2 Recommendations

2.1 The Director of Children's Services is recommended to approve the proposals for the development of the Virtual School in Leeds. This would be achieved by (please see Appendix 1):

2.2 The re-designation of the post of Quality Manager 11-19 to Virtual School Education Advisor.

2.3 The re-designation of the posts of Virtual College Education Resource Coordinator and Quality Assessor 11-19 to Virtual School Education Consultants.

2.4 The re-designation of the post of Quality Protects Support to Virtual School Education Mentor.

2.5 A post of Applications and Information Officer funded through existing budget (retained following ELI) to enable the required level of monitoring, tracking and reporting on pupil progress linked to the allocation of the pupil premium and the capacity of the Virtual School to intervene when children looked after are not making expected levels of progress and educational attainment/achievement. (please see Appendix 2)

2.6 Waiver of CPR 8 to allow the procurement of an on-line pupil progress tracking solution that will enhance the ability of the virtual school to assess the impact of pupil premium spend, enable better accountability of schools to the attainment of children who are looked after and contribute to high quality personal education plans that are effective in driving up attainment and achievement (please see Appendix 3).

2.7 To accommodate the re-designation of posts from the 11-19 Quality Team into the virtual school, the commensurate re-alignment of the post of 11-19 Quality Support Officer from the 11 – 19 School Improvement team to the School to Work Transition team.

1   Purpose of this report

To set out proposals to secure the appropriate structures and capacity of the virtual school in Leeds to fulfil our statutory duties and the Leeds Care Promise.

2   Background information

2.1   On 1 April 2014 the amount of pupil premium attracted by children looked after (CLA) increased to a maximum of £1900 and is available to any child looked after from their first day of care. The VSH is wholly responsible for allocating this budget, expected to be in the region of £1.8m for 2014/15, and must be able to hold schools and settings to account in demonstrating the impact on increasing the educational attainment and achievement of CLA.

2.2   In order to drive educational progress and attainment, every CLA must have a robust personal education plan (PEP) that also secures the effective use of the pupil premium. The Virtual School must ensure the local authority is compliant with the statutory guidance on promoting the educational achievement of CLA through care planning and review processes. All corporate parents are challenged to champion the educational entitlement of CLA in the same way as they would for children of their own.

2.3   The statutory duty also extends to supporting transitions from care and so the Virtual School plays a crucial role in reducing the numbers of CLA who become NEET and securing successful transitions for care leavers between the ages of 16-18 and beyond where young people have exercised their right to 'Stay Put', potentially moving into further and higher education.

2.4   To deliver this statutory duty the Virtual School is leading the 'From Care2Work' programme and progressing to Leeds achieving the quality mark award for the programme.

2.5   Since the Off-site Learning Framework was developed, there has been a significant and proven improvement in the quality of learning that young people are receiving. This has significantly increased the learning experience and progression opportunities for many young people. However, in recent years the volume of young people accessing off-site learning through the Framework, and the breadth of providers on the Framework has reduced. In addition, many of the young people accessing off-site learning are at risk of being NEET and/or are looking to progress to the labour market and into work at the earliest opportunity.

2.6   In recognition of these changes, it is proposed the functions of the service move into the Schools to Work Team as part of the teams remit in reducing NEET and managing the successful transition from learning to the workplace. It is also proposed the current staffing level of 3 FTE's plus administrative support should be reduced to 1 FTE. This reduction in capacity poses some risk as to the extent to which the current level of quality assurance can continue to be delivered, but it is believed the

risk is manageable given the providers and processes are now well established and the reduction in learners and provision highlighted above.

2.7 The anticipated changes highlighted in 2.5 and 2.6 present an opportunity to realign existing postholders from that area into the VS to increase capacity. Leeds VS has significantly fewer resources than other authorities with smaller CLA cohorts. (It is critical to note that conditions of grant mean that pupil premium cannot be used to fund central services or staffing.) The proposals do not create the displacement of any employees.

2.8 The data and information needs of a VS of this size are significant. For the VS to meet Leeds' statutory requirements to track and monitor pupil progress, ensure that the pupil premium impacts on levels of attainment and achievement and intervene when children are not making progress and the gap is not closing, system resources and human resources are required that are not yet in place.

3   Main issues

3.1 The educational achievement of CLA in Leeds at Key Stage 4 has improved over the last three years and is better than the national average, our statistical neighbours and other core cities. However, for Key Stages 1 and 2 the gap between Leeds CLA and their peers is widening.

3.2 Care leavers are also over represented in the cohort of young people who are not in education or employment with training between the ages of 16-18 and under represented in the numbers of young people moving into further or higher education.

3.3 Appendix 1 sets out the proposed re-designation of existing postholders (no new posts are being requested) into the Virtual School staffing structure. Job descriptions have been graded/evaluated and provide the capacity to address the statutory requirements to drive improvements in the educational attainment of CLA.

3.4 In addition, the Virtual School draws on a range of other services and teams that provide additional capacity and expertise. The role of the VSH is to provide the leadership required to bring the core team and extended services together into a functioning whole where there are effective systems for communication, governance and accountability that drive improvements in the educational outcomes for every CLA.

3.5 The virtual school must maintain data and information that mirrors that of a 'bricks and mortar' school which must include child details, attendance, progress and attainment. As an interim measure and to link with greater accountability for the allocation of pupil premium, progress information has been collected manually from schools on a termly basis. Whilst enabling some analysis and intervention, the process is resource intensive for central services, is not integrated into PEP processes and has only realised approximately a 50-60% return rate and does not facilitate the scrutiny and reporting on impact and effectiveness that the city requires.

3.6 The continuous development and maintenance of integrated data management systems across Frameworki, Synergy Gateway and so on, the reporting/analysis required to track effective use of the pupil premium and pupil progress at an individual/whole school level means that a role to manage this will be critical to the Virtual School to fulfil its duties.

4 Corporate Considerations

5 Consultation and Engagement

5.1 Training sessions and consultation meetings were held on 30th June and 3rd July with officers from across education and social care and formal meetings with staff potentially impacted by these proposals have begun.

5.2 The Have a Voice Council will be involved in the development of roles and functions within the virtual school.

5.3 Proposals have been shared with union colleagues and no issues have been raised.

6 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

6.1 An equality impact screening has been completed (please see Appendix 4)

7 Council policies and City Priorities

7.1 Leeds City Council has agreed the Leeds Care Promise for all the children whom we look after which is integral to Leeds' ambitions to become a child friendly city.

7.2 Outcomes for children who were looked after and failed to achieve their educational potential are poor across a whole range of indicators.

7.2 The duty of Corporate Parents extends across all directorates in Leeds City Council who must have the highest aspirations for the educational achievement and successful future lives of all our CLA and the statutory guidance is clear that the achievement of CLA must be given the highest priority.

8 Resources and value for money

8.1 The need to improve the life chances of CLA is of paramount importance for a city with the vision and ambition of Leeds, besides being a statutory responsibility.

8.2 In addition to re-aligning specific posts with appropriately matched job descriptions, a number of other services provide key support functions to the virtual school, enhancing its capacity including the educational psychology service, youth offending services and so on.

8.3 The procurement of and investment in an on-line tracking system that can directly inform the PEP process, supported by an Applications and Information Officer role will reduce the data collection burden on schools and central services, including children's social work teams.

8.4   It is crucial to note the conditions of grant associated with the pupil premium prevent its use for the funding of posts within the virtual school.

8.5   The proposed staffing structure for the core Virtual School team is being funded by realignment of existing posts within Learning Improvement teams as shown in Appendix 1. The postholders to four posts will be assimilated to the new roles and associated grades with the remaining post being appointed through internal recruitment.

8.6   It is assumed that the Learning Mentor post will continue to be eligible for Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) funding at the slightly higher rate for the revised grade.

8.7   The restructure proposals are anticipated to be budget neutral and the revised grades of the four posts funded from Children's Services base budget will be absorbed within the existing Virtual School staffing budget.

8.8   The purchase of a suitable IT system to replace current manual processes has been identified through IT Services at an approximate cost of £30k for a 3 year licence (£22,528 purchase outlay and £6k to £8k implementation and testing cost). This is considered to be essential expenditure and is envisaged to be met by the Children's Services IT budget.

9   Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

9.1   All local authorities are now statutorily required to have a VSH who is responsible for the management of the pupil premium and fulfils a key corporate parenting role in promoting the educational achievement of CLA by the authority.

10   Risk Management

10.1   The statutory guidance is clear that VSH must be provided with sufficient resources to fulfil the authority's statutory duty. The current capacity of the virtual school to discharge its duties effectively is a risk in that other authorities have significantly greater resources for a much smaller cohort, which could be identified through the Ofsted safeguarding inspection.

10.2   Despite significant improvements over the past 3 years, the current attainment gap in Leeds is unacceptable in a city that seeks to be Child Friendly.

11   Conclusions

11.1   As an authority, Leeds must discharge its statutory duties in respect of CLA. The increased PPG mean that the VSH will be responsible for the management of a budget of approximately £1.8m which must be used solely, and effectively, to improve the educational achievement of CLA so that all CLA achieve their educational potential and make successful transitions into adult life.

12   Recommendations

12.1   The Director of Children's Services is recommended to approve the proposals for the development of the Virtual School in Leeds. This would be achieved by (please see Appendix 1):

12.2 The re-designation of the post of Quality Manager 11-19 to Virtual School Education Advisor.

12.3 The re-designation of the posts of Virtual College Education Resource Coordinator and Quality Assessor 11-19 to Virtual School Education Consultants.

12.4 The re-designation of the post of Quality Protects Support to Virtual School Education Mentor.

12.5 A post of Applications and Information Officer funded through existing budget (retained following ELI) to enable the required level of monitoring, tracking and reporting on pupil progress linked to the allocation of the pupil premium and the capacity of the Virtual School to intervene when children looked after are not making expected levels of progress and educational attainment/achievement. (please see Appendix 2)

12.6 Waiver of CPR 8 to allow the procurement of an on-line pupil progress tracking solution that will enhance the ability of the virtual school to assess the impact of pupil premium spend, enable better accountability of schools to the attainment of children who are looked after and contribute to high quality personal education plans that are effective in driving up attainment and achievement (please see Appendix 3).

12.7 To accommodate the re-designation of posts from the 11-19 Quality Team into the virtual school, the commensurate re-alignment of the post of 11-19 Quality Support Officer from the 11 – 19 School Improvement team to the School to Work Transition team.

13 Background documents[1]

13.1 None

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[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.

Appendix 1

Virtual School Team Proposals 2014

PROPOSED POST	PROPOSED GRADE	ANNUAL SALARY (Inclusive of on-costs)		PROPOSED FUNDING	EXISTING POST BUDGET	PROJECTED FINANCIAL IMPACT
		GRADE MIN £	GRADE MAX £		£	£
Virtual School Education Adviser	JNC DIR 45%	58,364	64,423	Realignment of existing Quality Manager 11 -19 from Secondary School Improvement team (Soulbury 8 - 11 +3 SPAs – Base funded)	59,031	846
Virtual School Education Consultant	PO6	46,066	51,697	Realignment of existing Education Resource Coordinator, Virtual School (Spot salary Soulbury 8 – Base funded)	49,700	862
Virtual School Education Consultant	PO6	46,066	51,697	Realignment of existing Quality Assessor 11 -19 from Secondary School Improvement team (NJC PO5 – Base funded)	49,417	1,145
Virtual School Learning Mentor term-time 0.87 fte	C3	23,533	25,164	Realignment of existing Quality Protects Support post, Virtual School (NJC C1 term- time 0.87 fte – DSG funded)	22,763	770
Applications & Information Support Officer	SO2	33,257	35,255	Existing budget for new post, internal recruitment.	42,714	-7,459
TOTAL		**207,286**	**228,236**		**223,625**	**-3,836**

NB: Above costs are based on current pay scales and therefore exclude any potential pay award settlement for 2014/15.

APPENDIX 2

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Leeds City Council

Job Description

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Job Title:	Applications and Information Support Officer	**Salary**	
Service Area:	Learning, Skills and Universal - Virtual School	**Grade**	SO2
Directorate:	Children's Services	**Date:**	24/04/2013
Responsible To	Senior Applications Officer		

Responsible For

Job Purpose:

To provide a professional ICT Application Support Service based on industry best practice, on behalf of the virtual school for children looked after and partner organisations.

To be responsible for a broad range of technical administration functions required to support the Leeds virtual school.

To provide day to day management of designated applications, which includes all aspects of System Administration functions e.g. creation of user profiles, data cleansing etc.

To ensure system availability and maintenance of vendor supplied software. This support activity relates to both critical and non-critical applications. This includes application support and troubleshooting.

To provide a source of expertise and advice on the use of the application and associated data sets and where appropriate, manage large and complex data collections from third parties.

To support the Senior Applications Support Officer with Problem Management; identifying solutions, through to resolution. This may include technical liaison with users, vendors and service providers, including participation on conference calls to resolve operational issues with production applications.

To ensure that incidents, problems and changes to the systems are managed and maintained through the ICT helpdesk. To ensure that where relevant these are recorded on the suppliers helpdesk systems in accordance with the Service Level agreement (SLA)

Ensure all work is performed in accordance with the quality standards and procedures ensuring all changes comply with quality system requirements.

To utilise disciplined methodologies, defined by the organisation, to move all new or revised vendor applications into production (Configuration management, change management, defined system test)

Create and maintain application "Responsibilities," user access and all security elements within the application, which define the scope of functionality within each application that an end user will have access to.

Predominantly support one or more critical systems and/or multiple other systems.

Responsibilities:

The post holder also has the following responsibilities in the effective delivery of the service.

- **Application Support (SFIA Level 2)** – Assists in the investigation and resolution of issues relating to applications. Assists with specified maintenance procedures.
- **Service Desk and Incident Management (SFIA Level 2)** – Receives and handles requests for support following agreed procedures. Responds to common requests for support by providing information to enable incident resolution and promptly allocates unresolved calls as appropriate. Maintains records and advises relevant persons of actions taken.
- **Change Management** (**SFIA Level 2**) – Applies change control procedures.
- **Continuity Management (SFIA Level 4)** – Provides input to the service continuity planning process.
- **Requirements Definition and Management (SFIA Level 2)** – Uses established techniques as directed to identify current problems and elicit, specify and document business functional, data and non-functional requirements for simple subject areas with clearly-defined boundaries.
- **Human Factors Integration (SFIA Level 6)** – Achievement of optimum levels of product or service usability, by ensuring that project and enterprise activities take account of the user experience.
- **Release and Deployment (SFIA Level 3)** - Uses the tools and techniques for specific areas of release and deployment activities. Administers the recording of activities, logging of results and documents technical activity undertaken. May carry out early life support activities such as providing support advice to initial users.
- **Testing (SFIA Level 2)** - Defines test conditions for given requirements. Designs test cases and creates test scripts and supporting data, working to the specifications provided. Interprets, executes and records test cases in accordance with project test plans. Analyses and reports test activities and results. Identifies and reports issues and risks.
- **Information Analysis (SFIA Level 3) -** Undertakes analytical activities and delivers analysis outputs, in accordance with customer needs and conforming to agreed standards.
- **Data Management (SFIA Level 4) -** Takes responsibility for the accessibility, retrievability and security of specific subsets of information. Provides advice on the transformation of information from one format/medium to another, where appropriate. Maintains and implements information handling procedures. Enables the availability, integrity and searchability of information through the application of formal data structures and protection measures. Manipulates specific data from information services, to satisfy local or specific information needs.

Economic Conditions:	
Annual Leave:	26 days plus 5 days pa for 5 years local government service pro rata plus statutory holidays
Hours:	37 hours per week - Normal office hours are 8.30 am to 5.00 pm
Flexitime:	Eligible to participate in flexi-time scheme
Conditions of Service:	NJC Conditions apply

PROSPECTS

Promotion: Whilst no guarantee can be given to subsequent promotion, there are currently a number of higher graded posts within the Council which potentially provide the opportunity for career progression within the Council. Any subsequent vacancies will be filled in compliance with agreed Council procedures.

Training: The Council has a positive commitment to the training and development of employees in all areas of its activities. Similarly employees are also expected to adopt a positive attitude to any training provided and also to their own personal development.

Relationships: The post holder will maintain effective relationships with staff at all levels within the Directorate, other Council Directorates, Elected Members, external agencies and the general public.

Qualifications At least 2 years related work experience.

Physical Conditions The post holder will be based at [Enter Base] or any other Council Location however, will be required to attend meetings across the City.
Leeds City Council has a no smoking policy.

Job Description Prepared / Reviewed by:	Job Description Approved by: Human Resources
Name Girish J Solanki – Senior Business Relationship Manager, Children's Services Steve Hayes – ASC Applications' Manager	Name
	Designation
Date: 24th April 2013	Date:

PERSONAL SPECIFICATION ESSENTIAL REQUIREMENTS: It is essential that the Candidate should be able to demonstrate the following criteria for the post within the context of the specific role duties and responsibilities: Candidates will only be shortlisted for interview if they can demonstrate on the application form that they meet all the essential requirements.

Method Of Assessment (MOA) – A = Application Form   T = Test   I = Interview   C = Certificate

Skills Required	MOA
a) Ability to develop implementation plans for dealing with complex requests for change.	**A/I**
b) Ability to balance competing priorities.	**A/I**
c) Ensuring that appropriate action is taken to investigate and resolve incidents and problems in systems and services and guarantee that such incidents and problems are fully documented within the relevant reporting system(s).	**A/I**
d) Proven ability to create simple test cases and test scripts. Interpreting and executing moderately complex test scripts, mapping back to pre-determined criteria, recording and reporting outcomes.	**A/I**
e) Providing specialist advice and support to others.	**A**

f) Analysing and reporting test activities and results. Identifying and reporting issues and risks.	**A**
g) Perform first level problem analysis and resolution.	**A/I**
h) Coordinate the escalation of problem events to the next level, including direct communication with 3rd party support organisations.	**A/I**
i) Develop customized solutions in support of complex business needs using vendor tools.	**A/I**
j) Assists with the coordination of all system errors to provide a resolution with vendor where necessary	**A/I**
k) To provide a source of expertise and advice on the use of the systems and data sets	**A/I**
l) Support project management methodology, as defined by ICT Standards, to accomplish all vendor installations.	**A**
m) Ability to configure test and install, 3rd party software products.	**A**
Knowledge required	**MOA**
a) Knowledge of complex systems and able to isolate and resolve routine issues.	**A/I**
b) Must have application development knowledge.	**A/I**
c) Understanding of application interfaces and data transfer methodologies between systems.	
d) Understanding of information or systems analysis skills preferably gained in a Social Care or similar environment, with strict deliverable targets and objectives, dealing with a complex range of stakeholders.	**A/I** **A/I**
e) Knowledge of different data structure models.	**A/I**
f) Understanding of data quality issues and their impact on the business.	**A/I**
g) Understanding of Data Protection principles.	**A/I**
h) Understanding of issues and challenges in the management of various environments e.g. Test, Training, Development etc.	
Experience required	**MOA**
a) Has experience of predominantly supporting one or more critical systems and/or multiple other systems.	**A/I**
b) Experience in ensuring that appropriate action is taken to investigate and resolve incidents and problems in systems, services and guarantee that such incidents and problems are fully documented within the relevant reporting system(s).	**A/I**
c) Experience of supporting the release packages into the Live environment.	**A/I**
d) Experience of contributing to the service continuity planning process and implementing resulting plans.	**A/I**
e) Experience of working with large and complex data sets	**A/I**
f) Experience of sharing skills and knowledge with other team members.	**A/I**
Behavioural & Other Related Characteristics required	**MOA**
a) Committed to continuous improvement.	**A**
b) Ability to understand and observe the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy.	**A/I**
c) To carry out all duties having regard to an employee's responsibility under the Council's Health & Safety Policies.	**A/I**
d) Willingness to actively participate in training and development activities to ensure up to date knowledge, skills and continuous professional development.	**A/I**
e) Ability to manage conflicting priorities and work to tight deadlines.	**A/I**
f) Ability to work on own initiative and take accountability for area of responsibility.	**A**
g) Works with the team to resolve issues.	**A/I**

PERSONAL SPECIFICATION DESIRABLE REQUIREMENTS: It is desirable that the Candidate should be able to demonstrate the following criteria for the post within the context of the specific role duties and responsibilities: Candidates are not required to meet all the Desirable requirements however these may be used to distinguish between acceptable candidates   **Method Of Assessment (MOA) – A = Application Form   T = Test   I = Interview   C = Certificate**

Skills Required	MOA

a) Contributing to the overall design of the service.	**A/I**
Knowledge required	**MOA**
a) Understanding of Social Care provision.	**A/I**
b) Understanding of the role of IT/IS in a large organisation.	**A/I**
Experience required	MOA
a) Proven analytical, evaluative, and problem-solving abilities.	**A**
b) Experience of working in a team-oriented, collaborative environment.	**A/I**
c) Previous experience of working with Management Information reporting tools.	**A/I**
d) Previous experience in the provision of Application Support.	**A/I**
Behavioural & Other Related Characteristics required	**MOA**
a) Prepared to work outside normal office hours, including weekends, when required.	**A**

APPENDIX 3

Guidance Notes

Introduction

The following Contract Procedure Rules can be waived in **exceptional circumstances** and only with the prior written approval of the Relevant Chief Officer –

Contracts Procedure Rule No 3.1.1 – Category Plan and approved budget

Contracts Procedure Rule No 3.1.6 – Requirement to use existing suppliers

Contracts Procedure Rule No 3.1.7 – Requirement to use an Approved Framework Agreement

Contracts Procedure Rule No 3.1.15 – Requirement to use the Council's standard tender documents

Contracts Procedure Rule No 3.1.22 – Procurements not to be undertaken by consultants

Contracts Procedure Rule No 3.1.23– Post tender negotiations

Contracts Procedure Rules No 8.1 and 8.2 – Intermediate value procurements

Contracts Procedure Rules No 9.1 and 9.2 – High Value Procurements

Contracts Procedure Rule 15.2 – Tender evaluation

Waivers cannot be made retrospectively in any circumstances and failure to comply with Contract Procedure Rules may result in disciplinary action.

A report is required to meet the Council's obligations of transparency and openness and to show that the matter referred for consideration properly falls within Contracts Procedure Rules.

Officers are recommended to seek advice from the Chief Procurement Officer when completing the Waiver Report.

Report author: Jancis Andrews & Lisa Powell

Tel: 07891 272298 / 07891

Report of Jancis Andrew

Report to Children's Services Leadership Team

Date: 27.10.14

Subject: Looked After Children Tracking Software

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

Summary of main issues

1. **The current process for tracking the educational attainment and attendance of Children Looked after (CLA) is inefficient *(not operational)* and costly. The service has identified an 'off the shelf' *solution* package which would significantly improve the process and request the support of the Deputy Director of Children's Services to progress this.**

2. **The software identified is supplied by a company called Schools Opt-In (SOI). This report requests that we purchase this system without entering a formal tender process on the following grounds:**

   2.1. **Potential suppliers of this specialist software were identified by an external Consultant. SOI *was* one of three companies recommended**

   2.2. **Demonstrations by the Company indicate it provides LCC with everything they require plus additional features which would enhance their ability to track CLA and monitor the effectiveness of the Pupil Premium Payment**

   2.3. **Schools have been consulted *as part of the demonstrations and indicated* that they would prefer to use the system**

   2.4. **The quotation provided for the system set up was the lowest of the three**

   2.5. **LCC have worked with SOI previously and so they have an understanding of our business.**

2.6. SOI, like any supplier, will need to demonstrate their system is secure through passing an appropriate Penetration Test. They will also need to demonstrate that they meet our needs in relation to Information Governance through a Privacy Impact Assessment.

Recommendations

3. This report recommends the Deputy Director of Children's Services agrees to submit a Contract Waiver in relation to Contract Procedure Rule 8 to enable the purchase of software and support from SOI.

1   Purpose of this report

1.1   To request permission for Contract Procedure Rule 8 to be waived to enable the purchase of an 'off the shelf' *application* to track the attendance and attainment of CLA who are the responsibility of Leeds City Council (LCC) as the Corporate Parent, without having to enter into a formal tender process.

2   Background information

2.1   Leeds currently has 853 CLA that are on roll at 198 schools within Leeds and 142 out of Leeds Schools. Tracking the attendance and attainment of the children has proved difficult. The need to more effectively undertake this was identified some time ago both internally and by Ofsted. Work was undertaken by the former Virtual Head, Alun Rees (AR), with SOI but this ceased when AR left the authority. The investment to date equates to £7,000.

2.2   *An external consultant was commissioned* by the *Head of Learning Improvement* Gail Webb to provide *a review and options appraisal* for improving tracking LAC in June 2014. The Consultant's recommendations included three possible providers, these were reviewed, options were explored by the service and two were discounted based on cost and additional level of development work required to meet the basic requirements. SOI were seen as the most viable supplier.

2.3   The new Virtual Head appointed in September acknowledged the reports recommendation recognising the need to improve the current process of gathering and analysing CLA information; *which involved a blank spreadsheet being sent to schools requesting information on their CLA* – not sure we need this. This is now a priority for the service given the up and coming Ofsted Inspection and previous recommendation to improve CLA information in Leeds.

3   Main issues

3.1   Reason for Contracts Procedure Rules Waiver

3.1.1   <u>Consultant Recommendation</u> – A Consultant who specialises in this field identified that only a small number of suppliers could potentially meet LCC's needs. His recommendations included an off the shelf package be procured. Suitable suppliers identified included:
- E-Peps
- Essex Target Tracker
- Schools Opt In

Further work was undertaken with the three suppliers to determine costs, time and suitability. E-Peps was ruled out due to the significant costs of the system, negative feedback from other authorities and the fact that they were offering something similar to what LCC already had through Framework-i. Essex Target Tracker, whilst relatively competitive on costs, was still more expensive that SOI and offered no more functionality than SOI did.

Any tender exercise would only be of interest to these suppliers due to the specialist nature of the work they are undertaking therefore entering into a "formal" tender exercise would not add any additional value to this process, but instead delay the process.

3.1.2 Alternative Options Explored
Outsourcing– In addition to the off the shelf option, the business explored outsourcing the collection and management of data. Three companies offer this:
- Contact Group (Looked After Call)
- Call Group
- Welfare Call

These *providers* gather data through a combination of installing software onto the Schools server and phone calls to the schools. Costs are calculated on a per pupil *and/or* per school basis which proves expensive. Annual costs vary from £27,900 - £61,543.

Outsourcing the service was discounted as an option due to cost and feedback from Schools representatives were that they were reluctant to install software on to their servers due to security risks. One of the suppliers, Contact Group, did provide a demonstration. Unfortunately some of the basic business requirements are unavailable at this time and the security for accessing the system didn't meet the basic 2 tier authentication required.

Using Current LCC Systems - The possibility of using a Synergy (TRIBAL) module was explored however this was discounted due to additional development work required, which would delay the process.

3.1.3 Investment Already Made – The Council have worked with SOI to develop this under the old Virtual Head. As such, SOI have a good understanding of our business and therefore would be better placed to meet our needs within the timescales required compared to the other two suppliers.

3.1.4 Cost – On cost, the SOI software and support package is the lowest of the three, even when including the £7k already invested. This is based on an annual rolling contract. The costs below are based on a three year package. SOI have also offered to give a further reduction if we are prepared to pay up front for a three year deal. This would reduce the total cost to £22,528.

System	Year 1 Cost	Year 2 Cost	Year 3 Cost	Total Cost
Essex Target Tracker	£13,000	£10,000	£10,000	£33,000
E-Peps	£43,000	£39,000	£39,000	£121,000
Schools-Opt-In	£10,812	£7,720	£7,720	£26,252

Other costs include:
- Penetration Testing which would be required with any of the three systems. The cost of this is £6-8000.

- Additional support from Procurement / IT estimated at £2500 (a detailed quote will be provided when we have a detailed brief of what is required).

3.1.5 <u>Timescales for Delivery</u> – The current system for collecting data is time consuming and inefficient. Each termly collection takes approximately 25 person days to collect, match and cleanse the data using excel spreadsheets. The SOI package will eliminate much of this and increase the emphasis on Schools to provide more contextual information on activities they are undertaking to support the child and better inform the allocation of the Pupil Premium, which equates to over £1.6 million (£1900 per child) per year.

Also, an external consultant currently undertakes this work on behalf of LCC which is costly. Ideally the system needs to be in place before the January collection to minimise spend on contractors. Entering into a formal tendering process would incur additional costs along with delaying delivery of a solution.

In addition, this is an interim until the outcome of the Learning Information System Project is known.

3.2   Consequences if the proposed action is not approved

If the proposed action is not approved, this will result in a delay in the ability of the service to effectively track CLA and manage the issuing of the Pupil Premium to schools. In addition, the service will incur additional costs through the need to continue the current arrangement with the consultant.

3.3   Advertising

No formal advertising was undertaken. Contact with the identified suppliers was made through the Consultant and then directly by the Business Engagement Manager.

4   Corporate Considerations

4.1   Consultation and Engagement

A number of stakeholders from across the business have been involved with this work to date at various stages. Methods of consultation included meetings and system demonstrations. Stakeholders included:

- Representatives from the schools

- ICT Services: Security Team, Business Engagement Manager

- Information Management & Technology: Data & Information Supply Manager, Performance Programme Manager LSUS, Information Access Manager.

- Virtual School Team – Project Assistant, Head of Virtual School

Consultation with the Schools was critical as they will be using the system. Four representatives from schools across the City were invited to attend a system demonstration.

The consensus was that the software would be an improvement on the current system and would help them to better manage their CLA.

The ICT Security team were also present at one of the two demonstrations provided. Subject to the necessary Penetration Testing, the information provided indicated the system would meet our needs from a security perspective.

Information Governance is aware of the potential procurement. Initial indications are that suitable agreements can be reached in terms of data management and security.

4.2   Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

4.2.1   A formal Equality Impact Assessment is thought to be inappropriate at this stage in the process. Considerations will be given to the appropriateness of including the collection of equality characteristics data as part of the data collection process however this will need to be considered in the context of Information Governance rules.

4.3   Council Policies and City Priorities

4.3.1   The procurement of the SOI software will enable a better system for tracking CLA thus contributing to a number of Council and City Priorities including:

- Improving behaviour, attendance and achievement (City Plan – Best City for Children and Young People)

- Improving school attendance (Best Council Plan – Building a Child Friendly City)

4.4   Resources and Value for Money

4.4.1   Agreeing to this Contract Waiver will provide greater value for money that entering into a tender process. The nature of our requirements limit the number of providers to those already identified. Based on the information gathered, SOI provide what the service need at a lower cost than any other provider. Not entering into a formal tender process will reduce time and cost.

The current process requires a significant number of man hours. The system will reduce this significantly, freeing up time to enable greater analysis of the information on our CLA, informing decisions on where to target resources.

Signing up to a 3 year contract provides a year on year reduction in the support contract provided for the same level of service. The three year cost equates to £7509.33 per year on average. Charges will be applied for any additional licences required at a rate of £20 per licence however they are transferable. Any additional reporting / system changes will be made at the rate agreed with the Contract.

4.5   Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

4.5.1   The costing's included in this report are confidential.

This decision is not subject to call in.

The value of the contract is £26,252 over three years and therefore can be waived under EU procurement rules, provided the decision maker is satisfied that the action represents best value for the Council given that the contract opportunity has not been formally exposed to competition.

4.6   Risk Management

4.6.1   Penetration Testing – As this system is hosted externally, a penetration test will need to
be conducted to test security. The cost of this is approximately £6k, dependent on the level of testing required. If the system fails this, further development work will need to be undertaken to bring the system up to our required standards. This may be costly. We have tried to mitigate the risk of this by including ICT Services in the system demonstration and requesting specific information from SOI, but we will not know for definite the outcome of this testing until the system is tested.

Timescales – A system to track CLA is business critical. The service need to implement this as soon as possible.

Potential Challenge of the Decision - Whilst the market is small, there is a still a risk that those suppliers not selected may challenge any decision not go through a formal tender exercise.

5   Conclusions

5.1   The key players in this specialist market have already been identified. Undertaking a formal tender exercise would not change this outcome and would instead delay the service's ability to track CLA. SOI can provide LCC with a system that meets their needs at a cost that is cheaper than their competitors. They have also had experience of working with the former Virtual Head and as a result understand our business.

6   Recommendations

6.1   The report recommends the Deputy Director of Children's Services agrees to submit a Contract Waiver in relation to Contract Procedure Rule 8 to enable the purchase of software and support from SOI.

7   Background documents

7.1   None