

**Report of: the Chief Officer (Partnership, Development, and Business Support)  
Childrens Services**

**Report to: The Director of Children Services**

**Date: November 2015**

**Subject: Permission to Procure for the Travel Buddies Scheme**



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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input 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**

1. The aim of this report is to seek permission from the Director of Children's Services (DCS) to procure the Travel Buddies scheme.
2. The contract is for a supply of staff to act as 'travel buddies' who will support and assist young people or adults with learning difficulties in travelling, over short periods of time until they gain the confidence to travel independently following a final assessment by Leeds City Council's Passenger Transport team. The scheme focuses upon support to enable independent travel, largely but not exclusively, between home and school.
3. In the case of vulnerable adults, Adult Social Care is currently considering the level of funding that they will provide to the support travel training scheme. Adult Social Care (ASC) will determine the nature and type of journeys in respect of travel training for vulnerable adults. Adult Social Care will refer candidates into the scheme and be recharged by Children's Services for any buddying time and associated costs incurred. In addition to fulfilling our value of working as a team for Leeds, this joined-up approach reflects the most cost-efficient way of procuring and delivering a service in which Children's Services is the lead partner.
4. A subsidiary aim with any new contractual arrangement is to provide children, young people and vulnerable adults with transferrable independence and life skills

in order to encourage independence to the fullest extent appropriate for the individual. This element will be reflected in the new specification.

5. One of the principal aims is to reduce the level of transport costs and support vulnerable young people, etc., to travel independently, and develop greater levels of self-confidence, resilience, self-esteem and personal independence skills. The annual budget for this work is substantial (in the region of £250 K per annum, minus any applicable recharges to ASC for buddy time and associated costs incurred by adult learners), subject to final determination of the contract value by Children's Services).
6. Payments to the service provider are made on the basis of each client going through the training and support programme. In this respect, it may be the case that annual expenditure is actually less than the allocated budget, dependent upon the number of clients referred to the programme. The suitability of potential clients for the programme is assessed by Passenger Transport team assessors, as is the final client outcome.
7. Every pound spent on the programme, in tandem with successful outcomes, simultaneously reduces spending on taxis and other transport methods, leading to a situation where overall spending on transport assistance for SEND adults and young people is achieving significant transport related cost savings.

## **Recommendations**

1. The Director of Children Services is requested to approve permission to procure an appropriate provider in order to facilitate the Travel Buddy scheme, via a full and open commissioning process.
2. The Director of Children Services is requested to conditionally approve a budget of £250, 000 per annum (based upon Children Services expenditure for the financial year 14-15), subject to final determination of the budget by the Directorate.

## **1 Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 The aim of this report is to seek permission from the Director of Children Services (DCS) to procure the Travel Buddies scheme.
- 1.2 The contract would be to facilitate a supply of staff to act as 'travel buddies' that will support and assist young people or adults with learning difficulties in travelling, for a time limited period, in accordance with their needs, until they gain the confidence to travel independently. The outcome will be assessed by Leeds City Council's Passenger Transport team on behalf of Children's Services.
- 1.3 The scheme focuses upon support to enable independent travel, largely but not exclusively, between home and school, colleges, day centres, etc. Adult Social Care (ASC) will stipulate travel arrangements for vulnerable adults.
- 1.4 The aim with any new contractual arrangement is to provide children, young people and vulnerable adults with transferrable independence and life skills in order to encourage independence to the fullest extent appropriate for the individual. This element will be reflected in the new specification.
- 1.5 The aim of the contract is to reduce the level of transport costs and support vulnerable young people, etc., to travel independently, and develop greater levels of self-confidence, resilience, self-esteem and personal independence skills.

## **2 Background information**

- 2.1 The Travel Buddies scheme has been running since 2012. The contract for the supply of Independent Travel buddies has proved very successful.
- 2.2 The recent Children & Families Act (2014) states that councils need to ensure that "the aspirations for children and young people will be raised through an increased focus on life outcomes, including employment and greater independence".
- 2.3 The scheme has run successfully since 2012 and has evidenced significant savings;

	Number of Young people successfully Trained	Gross in Year Saving  £000	Full Year Effect of Saving  £000
2012/13	74	161	308
2013/14	103	219	465
2014/15	121	298	607

- 2.4 Whilst making significant savings the main thrust of the work is to develop independence skills to, as a minimum, travel independently to and from school rather than dependency upon, for instance, taxis.

### **3 Main issues**

- 3.1 The current contract for this work ends on 31.03.16; ideally the new contract should be in place to run from 01.04.16, contract value will be in the region of £250, 000 per annum, subject to final confirmation.
- 3.2 The annual budget for this work is substantial; however payments to the service provider are made on the basis of each child going through the training and support programme. In this respect, it may be the case that annual expenditure is actually less than the allocated budget, dependent upon the number of clients referred to the scheme.
- 3.3 Every pound spent on the programme simultaneously reduces spending on taxis, and other forms of transport, leading to a situation where overall spend on transport assistance for SEND young people is achieving significant cost reductions, subject to successful outcomes.
- 3.4 The suitability of the client for this programme is assessed by the Passenger Transport team assessors. Similarly, the outcome is also assessed by the assessors.
- 3.5 It is proposed that the new contract runs from 01.04.16 for three years plus the option for two possible extensions of 12 months each (3+1+1).
- 3.6 In funding terms this will amount to an overall potential value of £750, 000 (subject to final determination of the contract value) for the initial three years, plus a further £500, 000 for the potential 2 x 12 months extensions.

### **4 Corporate Considerations**

#### **4.1 Consultation and Engagement**

- 4.1.1 This is an established piece of work over a number of years; extensive consultation in relation to the concept took place prior to the establishment of the original contract.

#### **4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration**

- 4.2.1 The nature of this work given its aims, to support the independence of young people, and others, with special needs and mental health issues, enhances equality, diversity and integration.

#### **4.3 Council policies and Best Council Plan**

- 4.3.1 The proposal indicates good value, as per the savings outlined at 2.3 above.

- 4.3.2 In line with the best council plan objective, and the Children & Young Peoples Plan, building a child friendly city; “children and young people do well at all levels of learning and have the skills for life.
- 4.3.3 That children and young people develop independence skills and maintain these skills for as long as possible, particularly as in this case, children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.
- 4.3.4 That the local authority is as efficient as possible in its use of resources.

#### **4.4 Resources and value for money**

- 4.4.1 The contract value will be in the region of £250, 000 per annum (subject to final determination of the contract value). Adult Social Care will refer candidates into the scheme and be recharged by Children’s Services for any buddying time and associated costs incurred. In addition to fulfilling our value of working as a team for Leeds, this joined-up approach reflects the most cost-efficient way of procuring and delivering a service in which Children’s Services is the lead partner.
- 4.4.2 It is proposed that the new contract runs from 01.04.16 for three years plus the option for two possible extensions of 12 months each (3+1+1).
- 4.4.3 This will amount to an overall potential value of £750, 000 for the initial three years, plus a further £500, 000 (subject to final determination of the contract value) for the possible 2 x 12 months extensions.
- 4.4.4 The table at 2.3 above suggests that this proposed contract would constitute good value for money.
- 4.4.5 The focus of the current contract is upon the number of travel buddies in place to facilitate the training, for the new contract it is proposed that the specification expressly states the number of children and young people to be trained rather than the number of travel buddies to be employed.

#### **4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In**

- 4.5.1 A full and open commissioning process will be undertaken should the DCS approve the request to procure, and approve the conditional budget (subject to final budget deliberations).
- 4.5.2 Advice has been taken from Procurement colleagues, who have indicated that there are no legal issues that may affect the proposed way forward.
- 4.5.3 Given the value of this proposed contract the proposal will be subject to call-in.

#### **4.6 Risk Management**

- 4.6.1 Funding at the level indicated may not be available, which would inevitably affect the scope of the proposal. This could be considered a medium risk at this stage pending the budget decisions.
- 4.6.2 A lack of tender applicants may affect the viability of the proposed way forward, this would be considered a minor risk.

- 4.6.3 In order to counter this particular risk, a soft market test was run in September 2015; the test elicited a deal of interest from a number of providers (11 potential providers in total).
- 4.6.4 The proposed new contract will be effective from 01.04.16.

## **5 Conclusions**

- 5.1 Notwithstanding any possible risks the DCS is requested to approve the request to procure the Travel Buddy Scheme.
- 5.2 A project group will be established in order to facilitate the commissioning and procurement process.

## **6 Recommendations**

- 6.1 The DCS is requested to approve the request for permission to procure in favour of the Travel Buddy scheme.
- 6.2 The DCS is also requested to conditionally approve the funding for this project, namely up to £250 K per year for 3 years in the first instance, with options to extend this for up to two periods of 12 months each (subject to final determination of the contract value).

## **7 Background documents<sup>1</sup>**

- 7.1 None

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<sup>1</sup> 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.