

Report of Commissioning and Market Management team

Report to the Director of Children's Services

Date: 26th April 2016

Subject: Leeds Guarantee Permission to Undertake a Competitive Grant Process



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

1. Leeds Children's Services currently supports a number of external organisations to deliver programmes, known collectively as the Leeds Guarantee, to the most vulnerable young people to improve EET levels.
2. The existing programmes ended on 31st March 2016.
3. With funding in place for a second year it is proposed that a range of new programmes are commissioned by way of a competitive grants process, to start on 4th July 2016.

Recommendations

- 1 The Director of Children's Services is recommended to approve the commissioning of a number of impactful, innovative programmes by way of competitive grants process. The total budget for this grant process would be £230,000 for one year of programme delivery across the range of projects.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 To outline the requirements for the commissioning of the Leeds Guarantee.

2 Background information

- 2.2 As part of Leeds City Council's budget planning for 2015, the Leeds Guarantee was introduced, initially to improve the employment prospects of Care Leavers as part of the Council's ambition to be the first 'NEET Free City'.
- 2.3 £250,000 was allocated to the Leeds Guarantee and during 2015/16 planning for this funding was overseen by the Care 2 Work group, which is focused on improving EET levels for care leavers.
- 2.4 The Ready for Work programme was commissioned for CLA/care leavers— including internal and externally contracted provision. Funding also supported undergraduate mentors to provide academic support for our Key Stage 4 pupils.
- 2.5 Discussion has taken place on the type of projects required to engage young people from other priority groups into learning (those under the supervision of the YOS and teen parents) with the service leads for those areas.
- 2.6 Alternative methods of accrediting care leaver progress have been sought; this is in the form of Digital Badges, provided by Digital Me. This provides the accreditation for soft skills to enable young people to demonstrate the acquisition of their skills to employers and education providers.
- 2.7 A licence for 5 years to support a "Care 2 Work Academy" has been purchased and this will be the first Academy to sit under the Leeds City Council Directory. This will continue into 2016/17.
- 2.8 Ready for Work programme was set up to deliver a programme that built on existing keyworker support. This was delivered by the provider of the Connexions service. Changes to the Connexions service arrangements means the provider will no longer be able to deliver this work.
- 2.9 New provision needs to be identified to meet needs to CLA / care leavers to improve take up of EET opportunities for this cohort. This provision will build on the existing keyworker support delivered by the Children's Social Work Service.
- 2.10 A project group has been formed including representatives from Sufficiency & Participation Team, Virtual School, Employment and Skills Service and Commissioning Team to plan for use of the funding during 2016/17.
- 2.11 There has been significant change in the learning offer to young people as a result of national policy and funding changes. It has been identified that there is a need to equip vulnerable young people with the skills and abilities to access the new learning offer. An informal development offer should support young people to develop skills to increase their employability.

3 Main issues

Comment [BM]: have we got data for offsite learners?

3.1 The Leeds Guarantee is to support vulnerable young people. The fund aims to support target groups or individuals aged 16 to 21 who are currently NEET, primarily:

Young people at risk of offending/known to the Youth Offending Service
children looked after / care leavers

- teenage parents (mums and dads)
- Year 11 leavers of offsite learning provision and who do not have an EET destination

3.2 As of end of February 2016 (the latest audited data) there were 6.0% of the 16-19 cohort in Leeds who were NEET (not in education, employment or training), this equated to 1326 young people. Of this group, 127 were teenage parents, and 30 were known to the youth offending service. There are also approximately 160 Looked After Children and Care Leavers (aged 16-21) who are NEET. The intention is to award grants which will engage with approximately 200 young people who fall within the NEET group to improve their skills in order to increase their chances of engaging in EET

3.3 Evidence suggests that these groups of vulnerable young people experience high rates of NEET and are more likely to be long term NEET. Historically, 75% of young people leaving 11-19 Offsite Learning Provision will become NEET, for example. They are less likely than the general NEET population to transition to employment as an adult and as a result, those vulnerable young people who are NEET are likely to experience poor outcomes in the longer term. This makes them a priority for intervention.

3.4 The main outcomes to be delivered will be the development of personal capabilities which will enable the identified cohorts to be work and/or learning ready at the end of the programme. Grants will be awarded to programmes which can support the development of capabilities which include:

- Self awareness; a realistic view of their career options, responsibility for their own learning and development; have aspirations in line with their own attributes
- Willingness to learn and develop
- Positive attitude with regards to self and their future
- Confidence, self-esteem and independence
- Development of resilience and longer term goals
- Awareness of availability of relevant opportunities for themselves and how they may aspire to better futures

3.5 Successful grant applications will deliver programmes that are in addition to existing arrangements. The programmes will build on existing keyworker support for young people in the vulnerable groups.

3.6 Grants will not fund provision that is already supported through other public sector funding such as Skills Funding Agency (SFA) / European Social Fund (ESF) funded provision.

- 3.7 The Ready 4 Work element of the Leeds Guarantee offer in 2015/16 will not be continuing. A competitive grant process allows us to select the best providers of new programmes as the grant application process will welcome innovation from providers in order to identify the best provision available to fill this need.
- 3.8 Advice from PPPU was that a competitive grant process would be an appropriate way to identify and fund projects for this funding. A competitive process would identify projects which can maximise impact for the use of the funding, and will allow providers to be innovative rather than limiting delivery to previous models. A grant will allow flexibility in the arrangements put in place as the project group will be able to negotiate with providers on the size of projects after proposals are submitted.
- 3.9 The project group will welcome bids for grants between £30,000 and £50,000 in order to ensure that providers reach a large enough cohort of young people, but that the Council is able to provide a range of programmes which can reach all of the intended categories of young people.
- 3.10 The selection of providers will be based on assessment of the design of the delivery model, their experience and ability to deliver to similar groups of young people and working within outcomes-based arrangement, and their referral, identification and performance measure procedures. Prospective providers will also be assessed on the cost per person or cohort, in order to ensure best value for money.
- 3.11 The grants evaluation panel will be made up of representatives from the Sufficiency & Participation Team, the Virtual School, Employment and Skills Service and Commissioning Team, as well as a representative from Voluntary Action Leeds.
- 3.12 The outcome of this tender will be to have a number of grants in place by 4th July 2016. This provision will help ensure that Leeds is able to deliver a variety of programmes to develop the personal capabilities of the most vulnerable young people in Leeds, in order to increase their likelihood of becoming EET.
- 3.13 The development of these programmes will be part of the development of new pathways for young people in the context of a changing offer of post 16 education in Leeds.
- 3.14 It is proposed that a bidder's event would be held on Friday 13th May in order to explain the aims of the grant and the application process. The grant application process would then close on Friday 3rd June and the evaluation panels would be held the following week, so as to have project implementation from Monday 4th July.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

4.1.1 A small project group has been formed including representatives from Sufficiency & Participation Team, Virtual School, Employment and Skills Service and Commissioning Team to plan for use of the funding during 2016/17.

4.1.2 The project team will aim to involve all relevant stakeholders, and have already secured the involvement of Voluntary Action Leeds in any potential grant evaluation process.

4.1.3 The project team believe that a provider event would be valuable to consult and engage the market.

4.1.4 This decision is Significant Operational because the annual value is below £250k.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

4.2.1 An equality impact screening form has been completed and is attached as appendix 1.

4.3 Council policies and Best Council Plan

4.3.1 The Leeds Guarantee to the most vulnerable young people supports one of the Children & Young People's Plan's (CYPP) obsessions: "Reduce the percentage of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). It will also contribute to achieving the outcome: "All children and young people do well at all levels of learning and have the skills for life".

4.4 Resources and value for money

4.4.1 The grant process would cover one year of delivery, with a maximum combined grant total of £230,000.

4.4.2 The Leeds Guarantee budget for 2016/17 is in place. This budget is under the Sufficiency & Participation team.

4.4.3 The competitive grant process represents value for money as payment will be made against agreed milestones, requiring providers to display engagement and progression by young people.

4.4.4 The competitive grant process represents value for money as we will be asking bidders to demonstrate their experience and track record of working with the relevant groups of young people and delivering contracts with performance based incentives.

4.4.5 Quality will be assessed by way of written submissions, evaluated by representatives from the relevant service areas and the third sector. Price will be evaluated on cost per cohort, recognising that there is a need for a mix of high volume and high intensity work programmes.

4.4.6 Successful bidders will be required to evaluate their project/programmes, including providing case studies, to enable good practice to be implemented across the sector to support these vulnerable groups long term.

4.4.7 Resources will be identified for evaluation to take place of the programmes. This would include feedback from young people and the Leeds City Council professionals supporting those young people.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

4.5.1 This decision is not subject to Call In under the provisions made in the Council Constitution. The annual value is below the threshold for a key decision of £250k per annum.

4.6 Risk Management

4.6.1 The risk of challenge to the award of grants is low, the opportunity will be advertised on YORtender and through Young Lives Leeds with clear information on the assessment process. The total value is below the threshold for EU procurement regulations to apply.

4.6.2 The risk of outcomes expected not being achieved through the grants will be mitigated by utilising contract management resources to ensure providers are appropriately monitored on use of the funding.

5 Conclusions

5.1 The Director of Children's Services is recommended to note the content of this report and provide permission to enter a competitive grants process to provide a number of programmes to begin from 4th July 2016.

6 Recommendations

6.1 The Director of Children's Services is recommended to approve the commissioning of a number of impactful, innovative programmes by way of competitive grants process. The budget for this grant process would be £230,000 for one year of programme delivery.

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.