

Report of Commissioning and Market Management team

Report to Director of Children's Services

Date: 14th December 2016



Subject: Future Youth Work and Leeds Guarantee Arrangements, Leeds Youth Pathways - 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 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. It is proposed that the Leeds Guarantee fund and low value Targeted Youth Work contracts be combined within one programme to provide a wide range of youth work support and intervention with vulnerable young people. These programmes will either support and prepare young people into existing readiness for work programmes or support or prepare new programmes.
2. This widens the scope of existing work with vulnerable NEET (not in employment, education or training) young people to develop a well defined pathway for young people who are NEET or likely to become NEET into EET destinations.
3. It is proposed that a range of new programmes are commissioned by way of a competitive grants process to commence delivery on 1st April 2017.

Recommendations

- 1 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 £310,000 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 Youth Pathways grants, and to seek approval to spend £310,000 on eligible grants.

2 Background information

- 2.1 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'. £250,000 was allocated to the Leeds Guarantee during 2015/16 and 2016/17, the spending of which was overseen by the Care 2 Work group, which is focused on improving EET levels for care leavers.
- 2.2 This grant process fits into the wider direction of travel across the youth offer to better demonstrate impact. Each of the 8 low value youth work contracts represent less than 25% of the total delivery of youth work in their localities. Incorporating them into Leeds Youth Pathways will ensure that providers will be working to well defined aims and outcomes, while being able to utilise their skills in engaging hard to reach young people in their localities.
- 2.3 The budgets for the Leeds Guarantee and the low value Targeted Youth Work contracts will be combined under the management of the Head of Service – Learning for Life. The new programme will be titled Leeds Youth Pathways, in reference to its links with the Leeds Pathways support and the importance of youth work to this demographic.
- 2.4 Merging the two budgets into one means that the grants can provide best practice in engagement with our most vulnerable young people. This builds on good youth work with young people by utilising the outreach skills and local knowledge of youth work organisations to create a wider range of assertive outreach which can be more effective for young people.
- 2.5 Due to the underspend in the Leeds Guarantee process in 2016/17, a budgetary saving of 15% is able to be realised for Leeds Youth Pathways, while enabling the council to offer approximately 3% more money to the market than is currently being spent. In the context of wide scale budgetary cuts, including to externally contracted providers, this indicates the council's intention to continue to fund services for young people.
- 2.6 A project group has been formed including representatives from Virtual School, Employment and Skills Service, Youth Offer Team and Commissioning Team to plan for use of the funding during 2017/18.

3 Main issues

- 3.1 The Leeds Youth Pathways Grant Fund primarily aims to support vulnerable young people most at risk of becoming NEET or young people who are NEET.
- 3.2 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
- Willingness to learn and develop
- Positive attitude with regards to self and their future
- Confidence, self-esteem and independence in life and work
- Development of resilience and longer term goals
- Awareness of opportunities and how to aspire to a better future

- 3.3 Successful grant applications will deliver programmes that are in addition to existing arrangements. The programmes will build on existing youth work support for young people in the vulnerable groups.
- 3.4 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.
- 3.5 The proposed competitive grant process is an appropriate way to identify and fund projects and will maximise impact for the use of the funding. It will allow providers to be innovative rather than limiting delivery to previous models. A grant in contrast to a tendered contract 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.
- 3.6 The project group will welcome bids for grants between £10,000 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 a wide range of young people.
- 3.7 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. Providers will also be assessed by a panel of young people.
- 3.8 The grants evaluation panel will be made up of representatives from the Virtual School, Employment and Skills Service, Learning for Life Team and the Youth Offer Team, as well as a representative from Voluntary Action Leeds.
- 3.9 Applications will receive 80% of their score based on the quality of their application and 20% of their score based on the price element. This gives a greater emphasis on quality than the standard 60% and is in recognition of the need to ensure quality provision which delivers successful intervention to achieve positive directions of travel within Leeds City Council's obsession to reduce the number of NEET young people.
- 3.10 The outcome of this tender will be to have a number of grants in place by 1st April 2017. This provision will help ensure that Leeds is able to deliver a variety of

programmes to develop the personal capabilities of vulnerable young people in Leeds, in order to increase their likelihood of becoming EET.

- 3.11 It is anticipated that the opportunity is advertised to potential providers in mid-January. The grant application process would then close on Friday 17th February and the evaluation panels would be held the following week, so as to have project implementation from Monday 3rd April.

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, Youth Offer Team and Commissioning Team to plan for use of the funding during 2017/18.
- 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 has consulted with the Executive Member for Children, Young People and Families, and subsequently initiated communication with elected members who have existing small contracts for youth work provision in their wards.
- 4.1.4 The project team have engaged with the market through a discussion event around the priorities of the grant programme.

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 City Priorities

- 4.3.1 The guarantee provided by Leeds Youth Pathways 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 £310,000.
- 4.4.2 The Leeds Youth Pathways budget for 2017/18 is in place. This budget is under the Head of Service – Learning for Life.

- 4.4.3 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.
- 4.4.4 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. Providers will also be assessed by a panel of young people.
- 4.4.5 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.
- 4.4.6 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.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

- 4.5.1 Given the value of this proposed grant fund, the proposal will be subject to call-in and has been published on the forward plan.

4.6 Risk Management

- 4.6.1 The grant allocation process will be managed by the Children's Services Commissioning and Market Management Team. Applications will be submitted through the YorTender procurement portal, and assessed against objective selection criteria. These practices ensure that risk of challenge from ineligible or unsuccessful providers has been minimised.
- 4.6.2 The total value is below the threshold for EU procurement regulations to apply.
- 4.6.3 The move from contracts to grants means that existing providers will be required to enter a competitive process. Support will be made available through Voluntary Action Leeds to assist all applicants, including providers whose contracts are coming to an end.
- 4.6.4 The 2016/17 round of Leeds Guarantee grant received a high number of bids which failed to reach the required minimum quality threshold. To mitigate this risk, a workshop on bid writing has been jointly delivered with Voluntary Action Leeds. In addition, application information will signpost potential applicants to the support offered by Voluntary Action Leeds on better bid writing.
- 4.6.5 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 Leeds Youth Pathways Grant will provide for a number of youth work programmes to support vulnerable young people most at risk of becoming NEET or young people who are NEET.
- 5.2 Using a grant funding process will drive the innovation and quality of these programmes in order to achieve the best outcomes for these vulnerable young people.
- 5.3 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 1st April 2017.

6 Recommendations

- 6.1 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 £310,000 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.