

Report of Head of Communities and Partnerships

Report to Chief Officer of Employment & Skills

Date: 27th November 2018

Subject: Staff Development – IAG Qualifications, Level 3

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. The delivery of high quality Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) is at the heart of Council Jobshops services. The Council has always ensured that its front line delivery team of Community Engagement Officers, is not only experienced in delivering quality IAG but are also appropriately qualified to do so.
2. A recent restructure of Council Hub services has increased the number of staff allocated to delivery within Jobshops. There is now a cohort of new staff requiring the recognised minimum IAG Level 3 training and qualification.
3. The Council has held the prestigious MATRIX award for excellence in IAG services for many years with the next renewal of MATRIX accreditation due in early 2019, led by the Employment and Skills Service. Success at re accreditation is contingent on the Council having appropriately qualified IAG staff. Matrix is the recognised quality standard for information, advice and guidance services. It is a requirement for organisations supported by the Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and many aspects of Service activity are contingent on it being Matrix accredited.
4. In October 2018, a mini competition was published on the Employment and Skills Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) to 43 training providers registered on the DPS system to procure IAG level 3 training courses and qualifications for 22 staff.

5. This report seeks authorisation to award a contract for £20,276.52 to Aspire-IGEN Group Ltd. to deliver the IAG level 3 training and qualifications to commence in December 2018. Authorisation is also sought for expenditure of £8294.94 from the Employment and Skills revenue budget as its contribution to the cost. This pertains to the 9 staff who will be delivering directly within Jobshops for whom the Service has a development responsibility. The remaining 13 staff will be funded by the Communities and Environment directorate.

6. This work will contribute to the Best Council Plan outcomes for everyone in Leeds to earn enough to support themselves and their families and the Best Council Plan priorities around providing skills programmes and employment support; supporting economic growth and access to economic opportunities by ensuring that IAG, helping people to access and sustain employment and learning opportunities is accredited and of high quality.

Recommendations

The Chief Officer Employment and Skills is asked to:

- Award a contract to Aspire-IGEN Group Ltd, the successful bidder in the recent Employment and Skills Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) mini competition, to deliver Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) Level 3 training and qualifications to Council staff to the value of £20,276.52
- Commit £8294.94 from the Employment and Skills revenue budget to cover the costs of the 9 staff delivering Jobshop services specifically

Note that the Head of Communities and Partnerships will oversee the delivery of the contract.

1.0 Purpose of This Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to seek authorisation to award a contract to Aspire-IGEN Group Ltd, the successful bidder in the recent Employment and Skills Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) mini competition, to deliver Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) Level 3 training and qualifications to Council staff to the value of £20,276.52. The report also seeks permission to commit £8294.94 from the Employment and Skills revenue budget as a contribution to the total cost of those staff for whom the Service retains a financial obligation for their development.

2.0 Background Information

- 2.1 The delivery of high quality IAG is at the heart of Jobshop services. The range of vocational and employability programmes available in the city is considerable, and dynamic. There are also different eligibility criteria relating to age, duration of unemployment etc. making the offer difficult to navigate for those seeking to access programmes and services.
- 2.2 The Council has always ensured that its front line delivery team within Jobshops are not only experienced in delivering a quality IAG offer but are also appropriately qualified to do so. MATRIX accreditation requires Council staff in roles where Information Advice and Guidance is provided to service users to be qualified to NVQ Levels 3 and 4. Level 3 is regarded as the expected minimum attainment level for IAG delivery and Level 4 as a desirable attainment level for a provider demonstrating its commitment to service quality and continuous improvement. This has been a key factor in the Service achieving external quality recognition.
- 2.3 Staff from Employment and Skills transferred to the Communities and Environment directorate, as part of the establishment of Community Hubs. Within the joint service agreement between both services, Employment and Skills committed to a period of support for Jobshop staff development costs, where these were directly aligned to the ongoing achievement of the Matrix standard for IAG. A recent restructure of Hub services has expanded the number of front line delivery staff across Hub services. Of the 22 newly appointed staff, 9 will be undertaking a front line role within Jobshops and require training to achieve the recognised minimum Level 3 IAG qualification.

3.0 Main Issues

- 3.1 Jobshops are located in some of the city's most disadvantaged communities, reflecting the Council's commitment to offering those furthest from the labour market support to maximise the opportunity for them to move into employment. It is important that those delivering this key element of Jobshop services are appropriately qualified to deliver, comprehensive, inclusive and high quality services.
- 3.2 The Council has held the prestigious MATRIX award for excellence in IAG services for many years, with the next full renewal of its accreditation due in early 2019. Success at re-accreditation is contingent on the Council having an appropriate IAG qualification profile across Jobshop staff providing IAG to service users. Matrix is the most recognised and prevalent quality standard for information, advice and guidance services and is a requirement for organisations supported by the Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). The Service remains reliant on significant external funding

awards from ESFA and DWP and it must remain Matrix compliant to be able to access such funds. Therefore, many aspects of Service activity are contingent on it being Matrix accredited, including Adult Learning provision and other commissioned activity supported through the European Structural and Investment Fund.

- 3.3 The recent Hub restructure has resulted in 22 newly appointed front line staff. 9 of these have been allocated to Jobshop delivery and 13 have been assigned to more generic roles around Customer Service activity within Hubs. Reflecting the terms of the current service agreement, costs for the 9 Jobshop staff, of £8294.94 will be met by Employment and Skills. The remaining 13 staff, deployed to generic Hub roles will undertake the training as good practice and will be funded by the Communities and Environment directorate. There are economies of scale and opportunities for enhanced learning by offering the training to both staff groups as one cohort, regardless of the specifics of their role and therefore that was a requirement of the IAG provider. Training the 22 staff together realises efficiencies for the Council.
- 3.4 In October 2018, a mini competition was published on the Employment and Skills Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) to 43 training providers registered on the DPS to procure IAG level 3 training courses and qualifications for 22 staff. All IAG training services bidders were required to complete a detailed pricing schedule as well as a method statement to ensure they were able to meet the requirements detailed in the specification within the mini-competition.
- 3.5 Of the 43 pre-approved training providers registered in DPS Category 2, unregulated skills training, two providers returned bids. Both providers confirmed in the bids they could meet the requirements within the specification. However, of the two, Aspire-IGEN's cost per learner represented better value to the Council. Aspire-IGEN has also delivered this training for the service in previous years. It was of high quality with all learners achieving the qualification and they demonstrated a high degree of flexibility in managing their delivery around the service needs of the Hubs. Therefore, this report seeks authorisation to award a contract to Aspire-IGEN Group commencing in December 2018, for a period of 18 months.
- 3.6 A rigorous quality assurance and contract management framework is in place to ensure that as new staff, they are provided with sufficient evidence opportunities and support to achieve the qualification within the designated timeframe.

4.0 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

- 4.1.1 The Executive Board Member for Learning, Skills and Employment has been consulted at the outset of the ongoing, planned programme of staff development, of which this is part and is supportive of this latest proposal to continue upskilling frontline staff. The procurement Manager has been consulted on the approach to the contract.
- 4.1.2 The proposed delivery has also been informed by discussion with the Head of Customer Contact in the Communities and Environment Directorate and with staff teams through appraisal. The Matrix assessor assigned to the next full reassessment

due in early 2019 has also advised on the scale and level of accredited upskilling expected as part of a successful reaccreditation visit.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

- 4.2.1 The Provider was required to submit Equality Diversity and Community Cohesion (EDCC) information as part of their application to join the DPS and in subsequent mini competitions. This met the relevant standard and will continue to be monitored and reviewed throughout delivery.
- 4.2.2 An equality impact screening has been completed and confirmed that the decision to procure the training and authorise expenditure for delivery does not adversely impact any equality group.

4.3 Council Policies and City Priorities

- 4.3.1 The services and support subject to assessment by Matrix contribute to achievement of the Best Council Plan 2018/19-2020/21 outcomes for everyone in Leeds to earn enough to support themselves and their families. It will contribute to the delivery of the priorities to provide skills programmes and employment support; supporting economic growth and access to economic opportunities by ensuring that information, advice and guidance services are accredited and of high quality.

4.4 Resources And Value For Money

- 4.4.1 The total cost (£20,276.52) will be met jointly from Employment and Skills and Communities and Environments Directorate.
- Employment and Skills will pay for 9 staff at a cost of £8294.94
 - The Communities and Environments Directorate will pay for 13 staff at a cost of £11,981.58
- 4.4.2 Budget provision has been made to meet the cost of the Matrix Assessment which will be met in part be met from the Employment and Skills revenue budget. A robust approach to quality assurance and continuous improvement will ensure the most effective use of constrained public resources

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

- 4.5.1 Following an Employment and Skills DPS mini competition, a single training provider was selected and will be awarded an 18 month contract, commencing in December 2018.
- 4.5.2 The Council Procurement Manager advises that the decision to award a contract is an officer delegated Significant Operational Decision, subsequent to the previous DPS setup Key Delegated Decision in December 2017 to establish the DPS, and is not subject to call-in.

4.6 Risk Management

- 4.6.1 The delivery of the provision will be subject to robust financial and quality monitoring procedures in accordance with Leeds City Council regulations to ensure compliance, delivery and agreed outcomes are met.
- 4.6.2 There is a degree of reputational risk for the Council, were it to be unsuccessful in its Matrix reaccreditation. Ensuring an appropriate qualification profile of IAG delivery staff strengthens the Council's position in achieving reaccreditation, upon which a significant amount of its commissioned and delivered activity is contingent.

5.0 Conclusion

- 5.1 A qualified team delivering IAG within Jobshops is a key factor within a successful Matrix accreditation for the Service. It also demonstrates the Council's commitment to the quality of front line services within some of the city's most deprived communities.
- 5.2 Following an open tender process, 43 organisations were appointed to a ten year Dynamic Purchasing System for Category 2 Unregulated Skills or Development training. In November 2018 two of those organisations submitted a bid in a mini-competition to deliver IAG Level 3 training and qualifications to Hub staff. However, of the two, Aspire-IGEN's cost per learner was of better value to the Council and having also used this provider in the recent past there is some familiarity with and confidence in the support offer they will provide.

6 Recommendations

- 6.1 The Chief Officer Employment and Skills is asked to:
- Award a contract to Aspire-IGEN Group Ltd, the successful bidder in the recent Employment and Skills Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) mini competition, to deliver Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) Level 3 training and qualifications to Council staff to the value of £20,276.52
 - Commit £8294.94 from the Employment and Skills revenue budget to cover the costs of the 9 staff delivering Jobshop services specifically
- 6.2 The Head of Service Communities and Partnerships will be responsible for the implementation of this decision.

7.0 Background Documents

- 7.1 There are no background documents.