

**Report of Head of Service, Commissioning & Market Management**

**Report to the Deputy Director of Children & Families**

**Date: 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2019**

**Subject: Equipment for Local Authority Foster Carers, Residential Homes and Leaving Care Accommodation**



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. This decision is seeking the permission of the Director of Children and Families to waiver contract procedure rules 9.1 and 9.2 for the above provision.
2. The waiver of rules 9.1 and 9.2 will allow the continuation of the current interim arrangement of a temporary framework of three providers who supply a range of equipment to foster carers, residential homes and leaving care accommodation. It will also allow the commissioning team to ensure the provision is fully reviewed and best value for money achieved in relation to the proceeding commission.
3. The value of the waiver will be £162,945.88. This is calculated on the basis of an overall contract value of £325K. The duration of the interim contract is approximately 153 days. However, more time has been allowed in case of any delays and the value given has been calculated at 183 days (6 months) as a contingency. The contract is administered on a 'call off' basis and the contract value is notional.
4. The Local Authority runs a number of residential homes for children and young people and maintains a register of approved foster carers for the purposes of providing care for these children and young people.
5. To enhance the environment in which the children and young people are placed it is necessary to provide a range of supplies and equipment to ensure that children and young people are cared for in homes that are adequately furnished and maintained to a good standard.

6. The current arrangement is due to expire on 31st March 2019. The project team has set a timeline to undertake a full commissioning process to ensure the highest quality supplies and value for money going forward. The implementation of the full commission is due to commence in September 2019. Therefore, this waiver seeks a temporary framework to be implemented for no longer than 6 months.
7. This service fulfils an important function in allowing the most vulnerable to be supported to achieve their potential and the authority to maintain its legal obligation and vision as part of the overall vision of Leeds being the best city for children.

### **Recommendations**

8. The Deputy Director of Children and Families is requested to approve the waiver of contract procedure rules 9.1 and 9.2 in order to facilitate the continuation of the temporary framework and allow the commissioning team to ensure the provision is fully reviewed and best value for money achieved in readiness for the full framework to be implemented in September 2019.

## **1 Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 To seek approval for the implementation of a temporary framework of three providers who supply a range of equipment to foster carers, residential homes and leaving care accommodation in order for the LA to meet its statutory obligation to children and young people in care.

## **2 Background information**

- 2.2 LCC operates several residential homes and recruits its own Foster Carers to care for children in the care of Leeds City Council.
- 2.3 To enhance the wellbeing of children that are looked after and young people placed in the care of foster carers, residential homes and leaving care accommodation, Children's Services has a budget to provide a range of necessary supplies and equipment. This ensures a good standard in their living environment.
- 2.4 Purchases had been undertaken on an ad-hoc basis in the past. Foster carers often sourced items directly from Argos or other big store themselves and presented social care with the bill. Some chose brand named items which although more expensive, were not the always best quality. Managing the quality and expenditure of provision was challenging.
- 2.5 An interim arrangement was set up to consolidate a few selected suppliers while a review of provision was undertaken with a view to commissioning a service which would ensure that all equipment supplied meet the needs of the young people placed through identifying the best available quality and price for the products. This service was extended to cover equipment for all children in care or leaving care.
- 2.6 The three companies currently in this arrangement are EPS Supplies, Mother care and Yorkshire B Ltd where these offer best value and are not in contradiction of other contractual obligations. Officers engage with these providers in dialogue to obtain the best product available, the best price and an appropriate timescale that will meet the needs of the young person placed.

## **3 Main issues**

- 3.1 Leeds has a key priority to ensure children remain in safe and supportive families wherever possible. If the right equipment can be provided to foster carers following a child being placed in their care or a young person leaving and moving into their own accommodation, the nurturing aspect of our aspiration will be achieved.
- 3.2 The local authority may not be able to effectively control expenditure without an alternative arrangement in place, as equipment purchased off contract may not be subject to the same pricing schedule and efficiency savings.
- 3.3 The Council wishes to ensure robust, outcomes focused, contract arrangements are in place for the delivery of the future provision. The waiving of contract procedure rules will ensure that there is no break in service and will allow the commissioning

team sufficient time to put a more structured and robust provision in place in September 2019 for which approval has already been received.

## **4 Corporate Considerations**

The local authority may not be able to effectively control expenditure without an alternative arrangement in place, as equipment purchased off contract may not be subject to the same pricing schedule and efficiency savings.

### **4.1 Consultation and Engagement**

4.1.1 Consultation with service colleagues and officers within the social work service has been undertaken and will continue to inform the future specification and recommendations to be implemented in September 2019.

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

4.2.2 The Equality Impact Assessment screening exercise has been undertaken and indicated no adverse equality impact to the service users, staff and the wider community.

4.2.3 Equality, diversity, cohesion and integration will continue to be considered throughout the commissioning program.

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

4.3.1 The outcomes the service will be commissioned against those within the Leeds Children and Young People's Plan, and lines with the best council ambition to be a child friendly city.

4.3.2 The delivery of the service will contribute to a number of the outcomes and priorities within the plan including:

- Ensuring all young people have fun growing up, are safe from harm and stay in safe and supportive families. The needs of Children Looked After is a key obsession of children and families.
- Ensuring that the most vulnerable are protected.
- Helping children and parents to live in safe, supportive and loving families that the local authority is as efficient as possible its use of resources.

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

4.4.1 There is a budget in place sufficient to implement the value of this decision.

4.4.2 This will be a call off framework contract with all expenditure approved by a Service Delivery Manager.

4.4.3 The quality and value for money of the contract will continue to be monitored by the Commissioning and Market Management Team, Children and Family Services. Intelligence gained through contract monitoring service will be used to inform future provision.

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

4.5.4 This is a Significant Operational Decision and will not be subject to call-in.

## **4.6 Risk Management**

4.6.1 In the event that the action required in order to deliver the contract is not approved, LCC duties will remain and therefore alternative delivery arrangements will need to be put in place which may prove to be quite expensive. This could therefore have an impact on the council's priorities as outlined in the children and Young People's plan.

4.6.2 The local authority will be in danger of failing to meet their statutory duty to children and young people in care if this request is declined due to the contract expiring.

## **5 Conclusions**

5.1 The Director of Children & Families is requested to note the contents of this report and approve the permission to waive contract procedure rules 9.1 and 9.2 in order to ensure provision remains available as part of our statutory responsibilities

## **6 Recommendations**

6.2 The Deputy Director of Children and Families is requested to approve the waiver of contract procedure rules 9.1 and 9.2 in order to facilitate the continuation of the temporary framework and allow the commissioning team to ensure the provision is fully reviewed and best value for money achieved in readiness for the full framework to be implemented in September 2019.

## **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.