

Report of White Rose Strategic Commissioning Group

Report to the Director of Children and Families

Date: 19 June 2019



Subject: to vary the existing regional White Rose Framework Agreement for Independent Fostering Agencies and Supported Lodgings providers following an annual refresh opportunity.

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. This report seeks approval to vary the existing White Rose Framework Agreement (DN219283) following an annual refresh opportunity (see Appendix 1).
2. This process is in line with the terms and conditions of the existing DN219283 – Regional White Rose Framework Agreement for independent fostering agencies and supported lodgings service providers to support local authorities in their statutory duty in relation to the protection, accommodation and care of children and young people looked after and care leavers.
3. The annual refresh process provides the opportunity for existing DN219283 - White Rose Framework Agreement for independent fostering agencies and supported lodgings service providers to re-submit their base costs attributable to their provision of service.
4. The terms and conditions of this variation, DN384744, are aligned with the terms and conditions of the existing framework agreement (DN219283) and the new framework agreement will run from 01/04/2019 to 30/03/2021, with the option to extend for a further period of 12-months from 01/04/2021 to 31/03/2022.

5. The White Rose Strategic Commissioning Group currently consists of 15 Local Authorities, 14 of which actively commissions fostering and supported lodgings care from Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs) and Supported Lodgings providers.

Recommendations

The Director of Children and Families is recommended to vary the existing White Rose Framework Agreement (DN219283) for Independent Fostering Agencies and Supported Lodgings providers in line with its terms and conditions and following an annual refresh opportunity (see Appendix 1).

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report seeks approval to award existing providers to vary prices (Appendix 1) for the White Rose Framework Agreement DN21983 for Independent Fostering Agencies and Supported Lodgings providers in line with its terms and conditions.

2. Background information

- 2.1 In order to meet the statutory duty to look after children who cannot be cared for by their parents or kinship (Children Act 1989, 2004, 2014), each Local Authority provides foster care as a place of safety to nurture each child looked after. The majority of the foster care provided, is through in-house Local Authority fostering services. However, where the needs of the child cannot be met within the in-house services, foster care is sourced from the independent sector through Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs).
- 2.2 The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 amended the Children Act 1989 and this, along with the Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010 increased the powers and duties on Local Authorities to better support Young Persons leaving care through staying put arrangements and supported lodgings placements and is to improve the life chances of young persons living in and leaving Local Authority care. Its main aims are; to delay young persons' discharge from care until they are prepared and ready to leave; to improve the assessment, preparation and planning for leaving care; to provide better personal support for young persons after leaving care; and to improve the financial arrangements for young persons in and leaving care.
- 2.3 The first White Rose Fostering Framework commenced in December 2012, followed by a short interim framework from December 2016 until the end of March 2017. A further fostering framework commenced on 01/04/2017 for six months with agreement to take up the option to extend for six months to 31/03/2018.
- 2.4 The existing regional Framework Agreement (DN219283) commenced on 01/04/2018 to 31/03/2021 with the option to extend for a further 1 x 12-month period (from 01/04/2021 to 31/03/2022); this framework agreement includes, via an annual refresh process, the opportunity for new service providers to join a regional White Rose Framework Agreement and for existing White Rose Framework Agreement for independent fostering and supported lodgings service providers to re-submit their base costs attributable to their provision of service.
- 2.5 In order to comply with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015, the framework agreement for fostering and supported lodgings provision will be tendered from which individual placements are purchased.
- 2.6 A new framework agreement (DN384744), via the refresh process, has been established as a regional framework agreement and is aligned to the terms and conditions of the existing Framework Agreement (DN219283).

The new framework agreement has been established ensuring that all relevant and current law is embedded.

- 2.7 The participating authorities will continue to share resources (including contract management) across the region to ensure that the new framework agreement meets individual needs of children and that providers are managed in a transparent and consistent manner to help deliver quality outcomes for the children and young people placed with the providers on the framework. Strategic issues are also managed through the White Rose Strategic Commissioning Group that has representation from the participating authorities.
- 2.8 Variation to the existing framework agreement and new providers to join a framework agreement has been established with the support of the region's Chief Executives and the Region's Directors of Children's Services.
- 2.9 Currently the participating authorities include:
1. Barnsley
 2. Bradford
 3. Calderdale
 4. Doncaster
 5. East Riding
 6. Hull
 7. Kirklees
 8. Leeds
 9. North East Lincs.
 10. North Lincs.
 11. North Yorkshire
 12. Sheffield
 13. Wakefield; and
 14. York
- 2.10 The decision to undertake the refresh process, in line with the existing framework agreement, was taken by Leeds after due discussion with other authorities. It should be noted, however, that the individual contract established within the framework will continue to be the responsibility of the individual authority at the time of the placement.

3 Main issues

- 3.1 As a collective of Local Authorities, it is necessary to purchase fostering and supported lodgings care from Independent Fostering and Supported Lodgings providers through a framework agreement, in order to meet our legal obligations.
- 3.2 The placement of children and young people and care leavers with the providers of Independent Fostering and Supported Lodgings Providers will continue to exert significant pressure on budgets within children and families services. This refresh opportunity has undergone a robust procurement exercise to enable the best quality and price to be obtained for new placements.

- 3.3 Robust contract management continues to ensure quality service delivery, improved outcomes for children and focussed discussions to ensure value for money is being achieved.
- 3.4 The framework agreement will enable Local Authorities to make placements as required but there is no commitment to any expenditure and offers the IFAs and Supported Lodgings providers no guarantee of placements.
- 3.5 A refresh of the needs assessment of children looked after was undertaken, along with an Equality Impact Screening.
- 3.6 Providers will be monitored according to their performance against the framework and restorative support and challenge will be delivered to ensure the highest standards are achieved and maintained.

3.7 Consequences if the proposed action is not approved

- 3.7.1 The purchase of independent fostering and supported lodgings care for Local Authorities across the Yorkshire and Humber (14 Local Authorities) would continue but it would mean that providers would be outside of the scope of a contract and its terms and conditions against which to deliver quality provision.
- 3.7.2 Contracting authorities may potentially be in breach of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 in the absence of an agreed framework agreement.
- 3.7.3 The absence of a framework would limit opportunities to improve and consolidate best practice.
- 3.7.4 Any ongoing efficiency savings that are anticipated would not be realised.
- 3.7.5 The qualitative benefits would not be realised.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

- 4.1.1 Chief Executives and DCSs have been updated during the progress of the placements programme since its commencement in 2012.
- 4.1.2 The strategic commissioners across the region have been involved in the framework agreement to date and any changes to future direction.
- 4.1.3 Young people were actively engaged in the development of the specification for the 2012 fostering framework agreement, which is closely related to this one.
- 4.1.4 The provider market was consulted and engaged with during the development of the agreement.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

4.2.1 The Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) screening exercise has been undertaken and indicated no adverse equality impact to the service users, staff and the wider community. Any amendments to the specification and future provision will need to be subjected to a further EIA assessment.

4.3 Council policies and Best Council Plan

4.3.1 The council policies and priorities are reflected in the Framework.

4.3.2 One of the key obsessions within Children and Families Directorate is in respect of looked after children and this obsession is reflected in the documentation and the quality evaluation model used within the process. This will continue to be reflected in the ongoing quality assessment of provision.

4.4 Resources and value for money

4.4.1 This Framework Agreement has no guarantee of business for the providers. The tender process was evaluated on a 50:50 price/quality split.

4.4.2 Analysis of business case information for service providers requesting a price increase has been undertaken and negotiations with all providers requesting a price uplift at Appendix 1 have also taken place to ensure value for money was achieved.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

4.5.1 The decision to implement this Framework Agreement is classified as a significant operational decision.

4.6 Risk management

4.6.1 A risk log was implemented during the tendering phase and continues to be maintained during the operation of the Framework Agreement.

4.6.2 The contract management process ensures that value for money continues to be a key assessment during the operational phase of the framework.

4.6.3 The framework agreement includes the opportunity for tenderers, on an annual basis, to re-submit their base costs attributable to their provision of service.

4.6.4 The Quality Assurance Framework within the Framework Agreement ensures that providers are continually monitored in respect of the quality of provision and that placements are only made with those providers demonstrating quality services.

4.6.5 Participating Local Authorities have the option to only refer to IFAs with an Ofsted judgement of 'outstanding' or 'good', should they choose to do so. Any IFA that is judged by Ofsted to be 'inadequate' during the lifetime of the framework will be suspended from the framework until the judgement is improved to at least 'requires improvement'.

5 Conclusions

5.1.1 The commissioning process has taken account of the needs of children and young people who are placed in foster care and supported lodgings provision, and other key stakeholders. The tender process has been conducted using the open procedure and in accordance with Public Contracts Regulations 2015. The commissioning process will be robust and there will be on-going quality assurance assessments of providers throughout the lifetime of the Framework Agreement.

6 Recommendations

6.1.1 The Director of Children and Families is recommended to vary the existing Framework Agreement (DN219283) following a refresh opportunity for Independent Fostering and Supported Lodgings to review their prices.

7 Background documents¹

7.1.1. 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.