



**Report of Sufficiency and Participation Manager, Childrens**

**Report to Chief Officer Employment and Skills**

**Date: 10 July 2019**

**Subject: Award of contract to deliver on-line prospectus and application system to replace UCAS progress**

Are specific electoral wards affected? If yes, name(s) of ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Has consultation been carried out?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Will the decision be open 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: 10.4.3 Appendix number: 1	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

**Summary**

**1. Main issues**

- UCAS Progress is currently contracted to provide the on-line prospectus and application system in Leeds for post 16 applications and recently announced it will cease to do so from summer 2019. A replacement system is required to be procured and implemented in autumn 2019.
- Following a competitive procurement exercise using the Employment and Skills Dynamic Purchasing System under category 4 Supply and Maintenance of MIS Systems and category 5 Professional Support Services, authorisation is sought to contract U-Explore Ltd to provide the online prospectus and application system in Leeds.

**2. Best Council Plan Implications** (click [here](#) for the latest version of the Best Council Plan)

- The activities proposed in this report will contribute to our ambitions to enable all of our residents to benefit from a strong economy in a compassionate city. The work will contribute to the delivery of the Best Council Plan priorities to delivery inclusive growth in a child friendly city and the outcomes for all residents to do well at all levels of learning, having the skills they need for life, and for everyone in Leeds to earn enough to support themselves and their families. Leeds City Council is

committed to ensuring all young people and their families are better informed about jobs, careers and opportunities available to them.

- The provision of an on-line prospectus and application system will support the delivery of the Council's ambitions within the Children & Young People's plan to help young people into adulthood, to develop life skills and be ready for work. It will also contribute to the achievement of the city's Talent and Skills Plan objective to strengthen the role of schools in developing students to contribute to the economy to their full potential, including getting them ready for the world of work, raising educational attainment, improving careers advice and business engagement.

### **3. Resource Implications**

- The expenditure proposed to set up, develop, and implement the on-line prospectus and application system can be met in full from the Employment and Skills Service strategic budget.
- The 5 year hosting and maintenance costs proposed and any additional costs for out-of-hours service desk support can be met in full by the Children and Families Directorate resource budget.

### **Recommendations**

The Chief Officer Employment and Skills is asked to:

- award a 5 year contract to U-Explore Ltd to develop, set up and deliver the on-line prospectus and application system in Leeds from 2019 to 2024.
- to authorise expenditure of £85,505, consisting of £60,100 from Employment and Skills for development and implementation costs, and £25,405 from Children's and Families services for hosting and maintenance for 5 years as well as any additional costs for the out-of-hours service desk support.

The Head of Service Learning Systems, Children and Families will be responsible for the implementation of the contracted provision supported by the Head of Projects and Programmes, Employment and Skills providing contract management support. Implementation will commence on 15 July 2019 and conclude on 12 July 2024.

## **1. Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 The report seeks to authorise expenditure and award a contract to U-Explore Ltd to develop and deliver an on-line prospectus and application system for Leeds.

## **2. Background information**

- 2.1 For the past 8 years, UCAS Progress has been contracted by Leeds City Council, Children and Families Directorate, to deliver an on-line prospectus and application systems to enable young people (aged 14-19 years and up to 25 years for those with Special Education Needs or Disabilities) to discover more about further and higher education opportunities and apply via a common application form for post-16 courses. UCAS Progress decided it no longer wished to provide this service in England, therefore, a replacement was required to be commissioned and implemented for autumn 2019.

- 2.2 A procurement exercise was undertaken via the Employment and Skills Dynamic Purchasing System with a mini competition DN415988 to identify an organisation capable of developing and delivering a replacement system to enable young people to search and apply for post-16 courses and learning opportunities.

- 2.3 Tenders were sought from 16 providers from category 4 (Supply and Maintenance of MIS Systems) and category 5 (Professional Support Services) against a call off contract for an on-line application service

## **3. Main issues**

- 3.1 The tender documentation was issued through the Council's tender portal "YORtender" on 14 June 2019 with a tender return date of 3 July 2019. One tender was received and assessed on a 30% price and 70% quality basis by the evaluation panel consisting of representatives from the Employment Skills service, Children and Families services and DIS.
- 3.2 The evaluation panel determined that U-Explore Ltd met the evaluation criteria and this report recommends that the contract to deliver the on-line application system be awarded to U-Explore Ltd. Confidential Appendix 1 of this report sets out the detailed evaluation scores of the contractor for reference.

## **4. Corporate considerations**

### **4.1 Consultation and engagement**

- 4.1.1 Since the announcement made by UCAS Progress, officers from the Children and Families Directorate have undertaken extensive consultation with schools and colleges individually and via the Council-led Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance network. The Children and Families Directorate established a steering group consisting of Schools/Academies, FE Colleges, Sixth Form Colleges, UTC Leeds, universities and Council officers, to gather essential requirements for an on-line prospectus and application system; this informed the tender specification and the implementation timeline.

4.1.2 The Executive Member for Learning, Skills and Employment has been consulted on the allocation of funds and the proposed contract award.

## **4.2 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration**

4.2.1 The delivery of an on-line prospectus and application system for young people in Leeds has the potential to positively impact equality and diversity by improving access to post-16 courses and opportunities for progression for all young people in Leeds. It will link to the on-line IAG service procured by the Council which is provided to all schools to enable young people to access on-line resources including labour market information to assist them to make informed choices about the most appropriate learning pathways and employment.

4.2.2 The on-line prospectus and application system will enable schools and the Council to continue to track the intended post-16 destinations of young people, directing advice and support to meet the September Guarantee, and supporting all young people to meet their duty to remain in education or training until their 18th birthday.

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

4.3.1 The activities proposed in this report will contribute to our ambitions to enable all of our residents to benefit from a strong economy in a compassionate city. This provision will contribute to the delivery of the Best Council Plan priorities to deliver inclusive growth in a child friendly city and the outcomes for all residents to do well at all levels of learning, having the skills they need for life, and for everyone in Leeds to earn enough to support themselves and their families. Leeds City Council is committed to ensuring all young people and their families are better informed about jobs, careers and opportunities available to them.

4.3.2 The online prospectus and application system supports the Council's ambitions within the Children & Young People's plan by helping young people into adulthood, to develop life skills and be ready for work.

4.3.3 Climate Emergency. This is the re-procurement of an existing on-line service and as such there are no adverse impacts associated with this decision.

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

4.4.1 The expenditure proposed to develop and implement the on-line prospectus and application system can be met in full from the Employment and Skills Service strategic budget.

4.4.2 The 5 year hosting and maintenance costs proposed and any additional costs for out of hours service desk support can be met in full by the Children and Families Directorate resource budget

## **4.5 Legal implications, access to information, and call-in**

4.5.1 Following a competitive process a provider was selected from the Council's Employment and Skills DPS and will be awarded a 5 year contract to the value detailed in the confidential appendix 1 commencing on 15 July 2019 and running through to 12 July 2024 in accordance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.

4.5.2 The Council Procurement Manager advises this decision to award a contract is a significant operational decision and is not subject to call in.

## **4.6 Risk management**

4.6.1 The Employment and Skills Service has a robust contract management and quality assurance procedures in place. Contract management will be undertaken by the Head of Projects and Programmes reporting to the client, the Head of Service Learning Systems, Children and Families Directorate.

4.6.2 The preferred provider U-Explore Ltd is registered at Companies House and the audited accounts have been provided. The company will also be required to report on expenditure and outcomes to an agreed timetable to draw down funding across the contract period

4.6.3 The Data Protection Impact Assessment was carried out on 9 May 2019 and identified that GDPR data protection considerations can be managed within contract. U-Explore Ltd is registered with the Information Commissioners Office and will be the data controller and processor and has the technical facilities and measures in place to ensure compliance with General Data Protection Regulation and to ensure protection of the rights of data subjects.

4.6.4 Risks around 2 Factor Authentication (2FA) and availability of logs of user transactions have been identified by the solutions architect, however, it is anticipated that these can be mitigated. Further clarification will be sought during the forthcoming demo session with U Explore Ltd and subsequently contract monitoring discussions.

## **5 Conclusion**

5.1 The commission and implementation of this on-line prospectus and application system will ensure young people across the city continue to have access to information to enable them to make informed choices about their post-16 options. It will easily put young people in contact with the providers who are able to offer them learning opportunities to support them in meeting their Participation Duty. It will also provide the local authority and schools in the city with the facility to monitor and track the destinations of young people, meeting both statutory information duties and Ofsted requirements.

5.2 Schools will continue to be able to support their young people to make applications to all post-16 learning opportunities, as well as receive applications for their own 6th Forms, helping them to meet their Information Advice and Guidance duties for all young people for whom they are responsible. Colleges across the city will be given the opportunity to continue to receive applications via a standardised system, and able to inform young people of offers they wish to make them.

## **6 Recommendations**

6.1 The Chief Officer is asked to

- award a 5 year contract to U-Explore Ltd to develop, set up and deliver the on-line prospectus and application system in Leeds from 2019 to 2024.
- authorise expenditure of £85,505, consisting of £60,100 from Employment and Skills for development and implementation costs, and £25,405 from Children's and Families services for hosting and maintenance for 5 years as well as any additional costs for the out-of-hours service desk support.

6.2 The Head of Service Learning Systems, Children and Families will responsible for the implementation of the contracted provision supported by the Head of Projects and Programmes, Employment and Skills providing contract management support. Implementation will commence on 15 July 2019 and conclude on 12 July 2024.

## **7 Background documents<sup>1</sup>**

7.1 There are no background documents.

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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.