

Report of Commissioning and Market Management team

Report to Head of Service One Adoption West Yorkshire

Date: 15th November 2019

Subject: Award of a contract to deliver a national adopter recruitment campaign

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

- The Regional Adoption Agencies (RAA) are working collectively with partner agencies including the voluntary sector across the country to undertake adoption recruitment activity on a national and regional scale to address the adopter sufficiency issue.
- The RAA Adopter Recruitment Steering Group agreed to procure an experienced creative agency to develop and deliver a digital and stakeholder advocacy campaign aimed at reaching more potential adopters, as well as engaging BAME adopters. Approval to procure off the Crown Commercial Services (CCS) framework for Campaign Solutions was obtained on 26/09/2019 and the opportunity was published to all agencies on the framework on 27/09/2019.
- Three bids were received and following an evaluation process, the successful agency, which scored the most points overall, is Freud Communications Ltd. This will help ensure a contract can be awarded in time for the campaign to be launched in February 2020.
- The steering group now wishes to award a contract to Freud Communications for the period 02/12/2019 to 31/07/2020.

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

- This proposal provides strong support for the refreshed Children and Young Peoples Plan and the Council's ambition to be a Child Friendly City. The outcomes delivered through this grant funding will contribute to a number of the outcomes and priorities within the plan, including the outcome to ensure all young people are safe from harm and the priority to help children live in safe and supportive families.
- This proposal also supports the 2019-20 Best Council Plan priority make Leeds the best city for children and young people to grow up in.
- The RAA Adopter Recruitment Steering Group will consider the environmental impact of their approach to service delivery. They will be asked to demonstrate how they will reduce their carbon footprint, including making best use of technology and sustainable transport in delivering the outcomes required for this grant funding.

3. Resource Implications

- The value of the contract to be procured is £441,024.50.
- The contract will be fully funded by grant funds pooled and managed by One Adoption West Yorkshire (OAWY) on behalf of all RAAs, with Leeds acting as the lead local authority. There is no additional cost to Leeds City Council.

Recommendations

- a) The Head of Service for One Adoption West Yorkshire is recommended to approve the award of a contract to Freud Communication Ltd for delivery of a national adopter recruitment campaign. The contract will be for eight months; commencing on 2nd December 2019, expiring on 31st July 2020. The contract value is £441,024.50.

1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval to procure a contract to deliver a national adopter recruitment campaign. The contract will be between 2nd December 2019 and 31st July 2020 and the value will be up to £450,000.

2. Background information

Regionalisation reforms for adoption services

- 2.1 The Government's regionalisation reforms were introduced in 2017 to reduce the large number of agencies providing adoption services and create 25-30 Regional Adoption Agencies (RAAs) to pool resources and provide:
 - More targeted and efficient recruitment of adopters
 - Speedier matching with a larger more diverse pool of adopters
 - An improved range of adoption support services and regulatory compliance
- 2.2 In the longer term RAAs are expected to provide
 - Better outcomes for children and adopters
 - Reduced practice and performance inconsistencies

- More effective strategic management of the service delivering efficiency savings
- A culture of excellence in adoption practice through strong partnerships with the Voluntary Adoption Agency (VAA)

2.3 One Adoption West Yorkshire became the country's first Regional Adoption Agency when the regionalisation reforms were launched - bringing together all of the adoption services from Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds and Wakefield. Within its second year of operation the agency has already demonstrated that it is leading the way for newer regional agencies by winning two national awards.

Recruitment of adopters

2.4 The recruitment of adopters nationally is declining and the gap between the number of children waiting (increasing) and approved adopters waiting (decreasing) is widening.

2.5 The Government's policy objectives are to:

- Raise awareness about adoption amongst the general public, and specifically among BAME communities, through both a digital campaign and through voluntary sector organisations who can work with black churches, mosques and other faith groups.
- Help agencies with their recruitment campaigns, supporting them to increase the number of relevant enquiries they receive.
- Increase awareness of the specific qualities and attributes that make successful adopters.
- Engage the sector to support the aims and work of the Department for Education

2.6 In July 2019, the DfE made available grant funding to allow for the Regional Adoption Agencies (RAA) Leader's Group to fund national and regional projects across the adoption system, particularly focusing on finding adoptive families for the harder to place children currently waiting.

2.7 The DfE and RAA leaders agreed collectively to pool the resources, working collaboratively to achieve better outcomes for children waiting for adoption. The RAA leaders group are working together to develop a national approach to raising awareness generally and addressing some regional priorities. A small steering group with VAA involvement has been established where decisions can be made on what and how the funds are spent across the country over a period of time. OAWY has agreed to act as a central repository for the grant funds on behalf of all RAAs.

2.8 The RAA Adopter Recruitment Steering Group has agreed to procure an experienced creative agency to develop and deliver a digital and stakeholder advocacy campaign aimed at reaching more potential adopters, as well as engaging BAME adopters. Digital services required include:

- Developing digital (including social media) channel recommendations based on audience data
- Developing compelling, creative content (including key messages) based on campaign objectives and audience data
- SEO utilisation where applicable
- Analytics for all channels used

- 2.9 Alongside the digital campaign, the agency will be required to develop a stakeholder advocacy campaign with relevant voluntary sector organisations in order to engage black churches and mosques to support our target of reaching reach BAME audiences.
- 2.10 The campaign will span from February through to May 2020, with a launch in February and three subsequent bursts of activity (beginning of March, LGBT week, mothering Sunday, fathering Sunday).

3. Main issues

- 3.1 The preferred option of the RAA Adopter Recruitment Steering Group was to procure a contract through the CCS framework for Campaign Solutions. This framework has been developed specifically for this type of provision and the process for calling off this framework can be completed quicker than an open tender. This will help ensure a contract can be awarded in time for the campaign to be launched in February 2020.
- 3.2 The tender was issued to all 26 agencies registered on the Campaign Solutions framework on 27/09/2019, with a deadline for submissions of 21/10/2019. The evaluation stage has been completed and the aim is to award the contract on 22/11/2019, with a start date of 02/12/2019.
- 3.3 The tender evaluation comprised of a concurrent capability stage to shortlist those agencies capable of delivering the campaign within the timescales; written proposals based on a number of scored questions and face to face pitches from short-listed agencies (80% of total points available) and price (20% of total points available).
- 3.4 The evaluation criteria used in the quality evaluation are presented in Appendix 1. The maximum quality score available was 800, with 600 for the method statement and 200 for the pitch. For the method statement there was a minimum score threshold of 360 (60).
- 3.5 The contract price was fixed; with bidders invited to bid their best price against a price cap. The maximum contract value given was £450,000.
- 3.6 The CCS call off process was used but standard LCC corporate tender instructions and scoring criteria were issued.
- 3.7 The evaluation panel comprised of five representatives from the RAA Adopter Recruitment Steering Group, representing both statutory and voluntary sectors and ensuring marketing and adoption expertise.
- 3.8 Three bids were received in total. The method statements were evaluated by the evaluation panel using the consensus approach at an evaluation meeting held on 28/10/2019. Two of the agencies met the minimum quality thresholds and so were invited to pitch.
- 3.9 The pitches were held on 13/11/2019 and the evaluation panel were able to agree consensus scores on the same day.
- 3.10 A summary evaluation panel scores and submitted tender prices is attached as a confidential appendix.

- 3.11 A clear winner was identified, scoring the most points on quality and price and the steering group now wish to award a contract to that agency, Freud Communications Ltd.

4. Corporate considerations

4.1 Consultation and engagement

- 4.1.1 Consultation took place at a regional RAA meeting on 16 July 2019 with the Head of Service for OAWY and representatives from the DfE and RAA leaders to explore options on how to manage the grant to achieve best outcomes for prospective adopters and children awaiting adoption. It was agreed that a regional approach would best meet the aims of the grant funding, with one local authority acting as lead. They agreed that Leeds City Council will act as the Lead Authority for the purpose of this recruitment and manage the grant funding on behalf of RAAs.
- 4.1.2 The proposal to procure a contract through the CCS Campaign Solutions framework has been agreed by all RAA Leaders.
- 4.1.3 The Executive Member for Children and Families and the Chair of the Children's Scrutiny Board were consulted about the decision to receive the grant from the DfE and initial proposals as to how the grant will be spent.

4.2 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration

- 4.2.1 An Equality Impact Assessment Screening document was undertaken to inform the decision to receive the grant funding from the DfE (see appendix 2). This identifies there is a positive impact in respect of equality and diversity in that it will advance equality of opportunity for children that are looked after, particularly those most vulnerable i.e. those with special educational needs and disabilities; those from BAME backgrounds and older children awaiting adoption.

4.3 Council policies and the Best Council Plan

- 4.3.1 This proposal provides strong support for the refreshed Children and Young Peoples Plan and the Council's ambition to be a Child Friendly City. The outcomes delivered through this grant funding will contribute to a number of the outcomes and priorities within the plan, including the outcome to ensure all young people are safe from harm and the priority to help children live in safe and supportive families.
- 4.3.2 This proposal also supports the 2019-20 Best Council Plan priority make Leeds the best city for children and young people to grow up in.

Climate Emergency

- 4.3.3 The RAA board will consider the environmental impact of their approach to service delivery. They will be asked to demonstrate how they will reduce their carbon footprint, including making best use of technology and sustainable transport in delivering the outcomes required for this grant funded provision.

4.4 Resources, procurement and value for money

- 4.4.1 This report relates to a contract award for a national digital recruitment campaign at a total value of £441, 024.50.

- 4.4.2 This funding is additional revenue funding that is ring fenced to deliver the outcomes specified in the DfE grant agreement. This pooled resource will provide best value for money across all RAAs as it provides an opportunity to develop new approaches to the recruitment of adopters at a regional and national level.
- 4.4.3 The grant is managed by OAWY on behalf of all RAAs, with Leeds acting as the lead local authority. The activities are to be determined by the RAA Leaders' Group.
- 4.4.4 Performance will be overseen by the RAA Adoption Recruitment Steering Group. Support for contract management will be provided by the Leeds City Council Commissioning and Market Management team as required.

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

- 4.5.1 The value of the contract is £441,024.50 and so approval to procure is a significant operational decision. This decision is not subject to call in.
- 4.5.2 Appendix 2 to this report has been marked as confidential under Access to Information Procedure Rules 10.4 (3) on the basis that it contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) which, if disclosed to the public, would, or would be likely to prejudice the commercial interests of that person or of the Council.

4.6 Risk management

- 4.6.1 If this contract is not awarded, the RAA steering group will be unable to spend the DfE grant within the anticipated timeframe, which will be to detriment of children and families and also put any subsequent funding at risk.
- 4.6.2 The greatest risk to the success of this contract is the tight timeframe within which to develop and deliver the campaign. These risks will be managed by the steering group and all partners involved working closely together with the media agency and working to clear milestones.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 This report seeks approval to award a contract to Freud Communications for delivery of a national adopter recruitment campaign. This award follows a robust tender exercise, calling off the CCS Campaign Solutions framework.
- 5.2 The robust tender exercise has identified a clear winner and the steering group now wishes to award a contract for this work.
- 5.3 This contract will meet the requirements of the DfE grant and provide a vital boost in the recruitment of adopters nationally, which has been declining. This will contribute to the Leeds Children and Young People's Plan outcome to ensure all young people are safe from harm and the priority to help children live in safe and supportive families.

6. Recommendations

- 6.1 The Head of Service for One Adoption West Yorkshire is recommended to approve the award of a contract to Freud Communication Ltd for delivery of a national adopter recruitment campaign. The contract will be for eight months; commencing

on 2nd December 2019, expiring on 31st July 2020. The contract value is £441,024.50.

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.