



Report of Commissioning & Market Management Service

Report to Director Children & Families

Date: 15/10/2019

Subject: Decision to Waive Contract Procedure Rules No 9.1 and 9.2 – Competition for High Value Procurements – Letterbox Club



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: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary

1. Main issues

- This report seeks the approval of the Director of Children and Families to waive Contract Procedure Rules No 9.1 and 9.2 – Competition for High Value Procurements and award a contract to BookTrust for the provision of the Letterbox Club from 6th November 2019 to 30th June 2020 plus two possible extensions of 12 months. The report also seeks to approve the award of a contract to EC Group, BookTrust’s delivery partner, for the same period, up to a maximum of £4k per annum.

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

- As the local authority is committed to making Leeds the best city for children and young people to grow up in, we must do everything possible to reduce the attainment gap that has been evidenced between looked after children and their peers.
- The Letterbox Club is a service that provides looked after children their own colourful parcel of books, maths games, stationery and other high quality materials once every month for six months.
- For some looked after children, this is the first time they have had books of their own and is a potential springboard to encouraging them to develop a love of

reading, story and creativity, all traits which will ultimately have a positive impact on their life outcomes.

- In our continual pursuit to be a child friendly city, this supports the Best Council Plan objective of *“Improving educational attainment and closing achievement gaps for children and young people vulnerable to poor learning outcomes”*.

3. Resource Implications

- The maximum contract value will be £135k (£45k per annum).
- This is based upon 349 Children Looked After receiving packages costing £121.50 per child.
- There will be an additional cost for delivery of items totalling no more £4,000 per annum to EC Group which has been identified as the delivery partner by BookTrust.
- The financial cost of the Booktrust and EC Group contracts for supply and delivery would total a maximum value of £49k in 2019/20. It is proposed to fund the expenditure from the Pupil Premium Plus Grant £27k, sponsorship £3k and the balance to be funded from the Learning Improvement budgets.
- The options to extend for a maximum of two years 2020/22 would only be exercised following robust evaluation of impact and value for money processes and funding would be from a similar combination of grants, sponsorship and existing budgets as 2019/20.

Recommendations

- a) The Director of Children and Families is recommended to waive Contract Procedure Rules No 9.1 and 9.2 – Competition for High Value Procurements and award a contract to BookTrust for the provision of the Letterbox Club from 6th November to 30th June 2020 plus two possible extensions of 12 months. It is also recommended to approve the award of a contract to EC Group, BookTrust’s delivery partner, for the same period, up to a maximum of £4k per annum.

1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report seeks the approval of the Director of Children and Families to waive Contract Procedure Rules No 9.1 and 9.2 – Competition for High Value Procurements and award a contract to Book Trust for the provision of the Letterbox Club from 6th November 2019 to 30th June 2020 plus two possible extensions of 12 months. The report also seeks to approve the award of a contract to EC Group, BookTrust’s delivery partner, for the same period, up to a maximum of £4k per annum.

2. Background information

- 2.1 BookTrust is the UK’s largest reading charity and has recently signed a partnership agreement with Leeds City Council committing to working together over the next three years.
- 2.2 Similar procurements have been undertaken previously with BookTrust, therefore, the quality of service has been proven.

- 2.3 The 'Letterbox Club' is a national scheme that increases literacy amongst looked after children. The packages of books provided are charged at a lower rate than it would cost for the local authority to purchase the same books, so the scheme provides value for money for Leeds City Council.
- 2.4 Developing a love of reading can play a vital part in not only improving educational outcomes for children and young people but also improving creativity, knowledge and vocabulary.
- 2.5 Key benefits of the Letterbox Club include:
- Children feel 'remembered' and are excited about receiving their parcels
 - Carers/families and their children spend more time together reading and playing games
 - Children read to others and share books
 - Children have increased confidence in reading and number
 - Parcels are delivered despite placement moves and give continuity to the child

3. Main issues

Reason for Contracts Procedure Rules Waiver

- 3.1 The request to waive the CPRs is being made due to the value for money being offered through the partnership with BookTrust who have committed to supplying books, resources and training to the authority.
- 3.2 Payment for the Letterbox Club for 2019/2020 is the only financial commitment being made by the Council to BookTrust and will total less than £45k per annum. They'll be an additional agreement made with EC Group for no more than £4k per annum.
- 3.3 The looked after children's pupil premium funding will pay for the majority of the costs for the Letterbox Club with sponsorship from Child Friendly Leeds Ambassadors, individuals, charities and businesses also making a substantial contribution.
- 3.4 Independent research shows that the 'Letterbox Club' has a positive impact on looked after children's learning. The evidence from the independent research undertaken by BookTrust shows that the bundles have a positive effect on looked after children's self-esteem and progress in learning. The scheme has been a factor in driving up looked after children learning outcomes in Leeds faster than the non-looked after cohort and faster than the national cohort of looked after children.
- 3.5 There is no other provider who offers the Letterbox Club or anything akin to it. Children's services does not have the capacity internally to provide the service ourselves at the same price.
- 3.6 As part of the agreement, BookTrust will:
- 3.6.1 Develop and produce free high-quality universal Bookstart packs for all families with babies aged 0–12 months (Bookstart Baby) and preschool children aged 3–4 years (Bookstart Treasure), including guidance for parents and carers on the benefits of reading books with their children on a daily basis from an early age.
- 3.6.2 Develop and produce free BookTrust additional universal learning and activity resources via the BookTrust website.

- 3.6.3 Develop free BookTrust resources for children with English as an additional language with translated guidance for families.
- 3.6.4 Develop and produce free BookTrust targeted programmes and resources to support families dealing with social and economic disadvantage, including:
- 3.6.5 Booktouch for blind or partially sighted children at ages 0–2 and 3–5;
- 3.6.6 Bookshine for deaf or hearing impaired children at ages 0–2 and 3–5;
- 3.6.7 Bookstart Star for children with disabilities affecting fine motor skills at ages 3–5; and Bookstart Corner for children aged 12–30 months (via children’s centres).
- 3.6.8 Deliver the Bookstart packs free of charge to the Partner’s storage location.
- 3.6.9 Provide support and resources for strategic and operational partners across the Partner’s local authority area, to ensure that Bookstart is delivered effectively as an authority-wide early years programme, which will include support and advocacy from the BookTrust early years programme team and BookTrust Regional Managers.
- 3.6.10 Provide support to increase library membership and regular active library use by families with children aged 5 and under.
- 3.6.11 Provide support and advocacy around books, reading for pleasure, authors and best practice via regional meetings for Bookstart.
- 3.6.12 Commit to supporting the Partner in mitigating against any risks to delivery or to all eligible children and families receiving packs.
- 3.6.13 Make available to the Partner online resources to facilitate data gathering and evaluation for Programme stocktake and audit purposes.
- 3.6.14 Agree to at no time provide confidential information relating to the Partner or this agreement to any other person.

4. Corporate considerations

4.1 Consultation and engagement

- 4.1.1 Children and Families Directorate has formerly had an arrangement with BookTrust and this resource has been identified alongside a number of other strategies to improve educational attainment during Leeds’ ‘Year of Reading’.

4.2 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration

- 4.2.1 An Equality Impact Assessment Screening document has been undertaken and there is no impact in respect of equality and diversity as the new contract will continue on the basis of the existing provision.

4.3 Council policies and the Best Council Plan

- 4.3.1 The outcomes this service will be commissioned against are those within the Leeds Children and Young People’s Plan 2018 – 2023. This contract will contribute to a number of educational outcomes and priorities within the plan.

Climate Emergency

4.3.2 This arrangement has an insignificant impact on factors relating to climate change and the environment.

4.4 Resources, procurement and value for money

4.4.1 The maximum total contract value will be £135k (£45k maximum per annum).

4.4.2 This is based upon 349 Children Looked After receiving packages costing £121.50 per child.

4.4.3 There will be an additional cost for delivery of items totalling no more £4,000 per annum to EC Group which has been identified as the delivery partner by BookTrust.

4.4.4 The financial cost of the Booktrust and EC Group contracts for supply and delivery would total a maximum value of £49k in 2019/20. It is proposed to fund the expenditure from the Pupil Premium Plus Grant £27k, sponsorship £3k and the balance to be funded from the Learning Improvement budgets.

4.4.5 The options to extend for a maximum of two years 2020/22 would only be exercised following robust evaluation of impact and value for money processes and funding would be from a similar combination of grants, sponsorship and existing budgets as 2019/20.

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

4.5.1 This report seeks approval to waive Contracts' Procedure Rule and 9.1 & 9.2 to enter into contracts with BookTrust for the 'Letterbox Club' service

4.5.2 The decision requested is a significant operational decision and therefore not subject to call in. This report does not contain any exempt or confidential information under the Access to Information Rules.

4.6 Giving the work to this provider without competition could leave the Council open to a potential claim from other providers, to whom this contract could be of interest, that it has not been wholly transparent. In terms of transparency it should be noted that Contracts Procedure Rules suggests that contracts of this value should be subject to a degree of advertising. It is up to the Council to decide what degree of advertising is appropriate. In giving the work to this provider without competition there is a potential risk of challenge from other providers who have not been given the chance to tender for this opportunity.

4.7 Children's Services will be signing up to the terms and conditions offered by BookTrust, these will be reviewed by the procurement unit before an arrangement is signed with BookTrust.

4.8 Risk management

4.8.1 In the event that the actions required in order to reinitiate 'Letterbox Club', the potential contributions towards the Leeds' 'Year of Reading' program will not be realised. This could therefore have an impact on the council's priorities as outlined in the Child and Young People's Plan 2018-2023.

5. Conclusions

5.1 The maximum total contract value will be £135k (£45k maximum per annum).

- 5.2 The looked after children's pupil premium funding will pay for the majority of the costs for the Letterbox Club with sponsorship from Child Friendly Leeds Ambassadors, individuals, charities and businesses also making a substantial contribution.
- 5.3 Developing a love of reading can play a vital part in not only improving educational outcomes for children and young people but also improving creativity, knowledge and vocabulary.
- 5.4 BookTrust has committed to the delivery of over books, resources and training in Leeds.

6. Recommendations

- 6.1 The Director of Children and Families is recommended to waive Contract Procedure Rules No 9.1 and 9.2 – Competition for High Value Procurements and award a contract to BookTrust for the provision of the Letterbox Club from 6th November to 30th June 2020 plus two possible extensions of 12 months. It is also recommended to approve the award of a contract to EC Group, BookTrust's delivery partner, for the same period, up to a maximum of £4k per annum.

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.

What is your reason for waiving CPRs?

There is a genuine, unforeseeable emergency meaning there is no time to go through a procurement process e.g. to deal with the consequences of extreme weather.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
To purchase supplies or services on particularly advantageous terms due to liquidation/administration.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Requirement to put a contract in place with a current provider whilst a review of the services is completed.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Ran out of time to undertake a new procurement exercise	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<p data-bbox="148 913 687 952">Other (please provide summary here)</p> <p data-bbox="148 987 1098 1279">The request to waive the CPRs is being made due to the value for money being offered through the partnership with BookTrust who have committed to supplying books, resources and training to the authority. Independent research shows that the 'Letterbox Club' has a positive impact on looked after children's learning. There is no other provider who offers the Letterbox Club or anything akin to it. Children's services does not have the capacity internally to provide the service ourselves at the same price.</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No