

Report of Head of Service Workforce Development and Change

Report to Director of Children & Families Services

Date: 01/09/2020

Subject: Step up to Social Work – Permission to Procure

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

- Leeds has been part of the DfE funded Step Up to Social Work programme for training Social Workers for over 12 years. For the procurement of the last cohort Leeds became the lead partner for West and North Yorkshire Step up Partnership including Wakefield, Bradford, Kirklees and North Yorkshire. Salford University were procured to deliver the programme.
- We now need to procure a Higher Education Institution (HEI) for Cohort 7 of Step Up to Social Work for the West and North Yorkshire Partnership. It is anticipated a new contract will be required from January 2021, where Leeds will be the lead partner on behalf of Wakefield, Bradford, Kirklees and North Yorkshire. This report requests permission to undertake a competitive tender exercise to procure this contract.
- The maximum total value of the contract will be £408,345, for a period of 27 months from 1st Jan 2021 – 31st March 2023. The DfE provide £11,667 per student directly managed by the lead partner (Leeds). Leeds City Council are currently in negotiations with other authorities within the partnership regarding the number of student places however the anticipated total number will not be greater than 35..

2. Best Council Plan Implications (see the [latest version of the Best Council Plan](#))

- This contract will support the best council plan priorities of keeping people safe from harm and reducing the number of children looked after.
- This contract will support Children and Families Services commitment to:
 - Help children and parents to live in safe, supportive and loving families
 - Ensure that the most vulnerable are protected
 - Support families to give children the best start in life
 - Increase the number of children and young people participating and engaging in learning
 - Improve social, emotional, and mental health and wellbeing

3. Resource Implications

- The maximum contract value for the contract is £408,345 for a maximum of 35 student places. This funding comes directly from the DfE through grant funding, claimed and managed by the lead partner (Leeds) on behalf of the five local authorities. The DfE have not yet sent confirmation to fund the total student places across the partnership at £11,667 per student, however, a new contract must be awarded by early 2021. Therefore due to the short timescales permission to procure has been sought before we have confirmation. If funding is not received the procurement will not take place and so the local authority will not incur any financial risk other than officer time. .
- The price element of the evaluation will be scored based on the overall contract value. The bidder with the lowest total cost will score the highest in the price evaluation. This approach will help to drive down the cost.
- Bidders will be asked to submit a service cost analysis form (SCAF) which will inform the breakdown of the bidder's price.
- As part of the grant funding from the DfE some funds will be allocated to employ a part time Quality Assurance manager who will meet with the contractor quarterly to ensure best value for money is being achieved.
- The submission deadline for the bid to the DfE is 9th October 2020 and as part of the bid we are required to submit evidence of our procurement activity for an HEI provider. We should be notified of the outcome of our bid by 11th November 2020.
- If the bid is unsuccessful then the procurement will not take place

Recommendations

The Director of Children and Families Services is recommended to provide permission to procure a new Step up to Social Work service via competitive tender. The duration of the contract will be 27 months; commencing from 1st Jan 2021 – 31st March 2023 and will offer a maximum of 35 funded student places. The maximum contract value will be £408,345 over 27 months.

1. Purpose of this report

1.1 This report is seeking approval from the Director of Children and Families Services to conduct a competitive procurement exercise to procure a new contract to deliver the Step Up to Social work programme. Separate approval will be sought via a Key Decision to seek approval to receive the grant funding from the DfE.

2. Background information

2.1 The Step Up to Social Work programme provides an accelerated entry route into social work for high-achieving graduates and career changers. It targets high calibre individuals who already have experience of working with children and young people and who want to train as Social Workers. Step Up to Social Work is delivered through the development of a bespoke work-based 14-month postgraduate diploma programme, led by groups of local authorities working in regional partnerships (RPs) and contracting with Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Students successfully completing the course will qualify with a postgraduate diploma in social work. This will enable students to apply for registration as a qualified social worker with Social Work England

2.2 Leeds has been part of the DfE funded Step Up to Social Work programme for training Social Workers for a number of years. Evaluation of previous cohorts shows an average 84% conversion rate to Social Worker posts on completion of the programme and very positive views about the quality of the training.

2.3 Step Up to Social Work complements our reform programme and our commitment to raising the quality of social work practice, with a particular focus on the practice of child and family social workers undertaking statutory social work. We expect the delivery of cohort 7 of Step up to Social Work to embed the Knowledge and Skills Statement for approved child and family practitioners in the design and content of the training programmes, and associated Regional Partnership arrangements.

2.4 Leeds has been part of the DfE funded Step Up to Social Work programme for training Social Workers for over 12 years. Sheffield was historically the lead authority for our region, leading the procurement of the university provider and the grant funding for the programme. For the procurement of the last cohort (2020) Leeds became the lead partner for West and North Yorkshire Step up Partnership including Wakefield, Bradford, Kirklees and North Yorkshire. Salford University were successful in the procurement to deliver the programme until 31st March 2021.

2.5 The submission deadline for the bid to the DfE is 9th October 2020 and we should be notified of the outcome by 11th November 2020.

3. Main issues

3.1 This report is seeking approval from the Director of Children and Families Services to conduct a competitive procurement exercise to procure a new contract to deliver the Step Up to Social work programme. Separate approval will be sought via a Key Decision to seek authorisation to receive the grant funding from the DfE. .

3.2 The maximum total value of the contract will be £408,345, for a period of 27 months from 1st Jan 2021 – 31st March 2023. The DfE provide £11,667 per student directly managed by the lead partner (Leeds). The West and North Yorkshire Partnership which presently includes Leeds, Kirklees, Wakefield, Bradford and North Yorkshire are currently in negotiations regarding the number of student places however the anticipated total number will not be greater than 35.

3.3 Submission deadline for the bid to the DfE is 9th October 2020 and as part of the bid we are required to submit evidence of our procurement activity for an HEI provider. We should be notified of the outcome of our bid by 11th November 2020. If the bid is unsuccessful the procurement will not take place.

3.4 The contract will be for 27 months; commencing 1st January 2021 and terminating on 31st March 2023 with no options to extend.

3.5 The tender evaluation will comprise of 7 written tender questions and will be assessed by our Principal Social Worker and Workforce Development representatives from across our regional partnership to evaluate quality, 40 % of points will be allocated based on price as per standard requirement within CPRs.

3.6 TUPE will not apply to this contract.

4. Corporate considerations

4.1 Consultation and engagement

4.1.1 A partnership has been set up with Workforce Development colleagues from all partner authorities of which Leeds will be procuring on the behalf of.

4.1.2 Within Leeds, a project team has been established to support the procurement consisting of representations from Workforce Development, Commissioning and Procurement.

4.2 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration

4.2.1 An equality impact screening form has been completed and is attached as appendix 1.

4.3 Council policies and the Best Council Plan

4.3.1 This contract will support the best council plan priorities of keeping people safe from harm and reducing the number of children looked after.

4.3.2 This contract will support Children and Families Services commitment to:

- Help children and parents to live in safe, supportive and loving families
- Ensure that the most vulnerable are protected
- Support families to give children the best start in life
- Increase the number of children and young people participating and engaging in learning
- Improve social, emotional, and mental health and wellbeing

Climate Emergency

- 4.3.3 The service specification requires the service to meet all Legislation, Guidance and Good Industry Practice in environmental management and the objectives of the Authority's sustainability policies. Thereby supporting the Council in achieving its ambition to be carbon neutral by 2030.
- 4.3.4 The provider will be required to 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 provision.

4.4 Resources, procurement and value for money

- 4.4.1 The maximum contract value for the contract is £408,345 for a maximum of 35 student places. This funding comes directly from the DfE through monthly grant funding, claimed and managed by the lead partner (Leeds) on behalf of the presently five local authorities. The DfE have not yet sent confirmation to fund up to 35 student places across the partnership at £11,667 per student, however, if the bid is successful a new contract must be awarded by January 2021. If funding is not received the procurement will not take place and so the local authority will not incur any financial risk other than officer time.
- 4.4.2 The price element of the evaluation will be scored based on the overall contract value. The bidder with the lowest total cost will score the highest in the price evaluation. This approach will help to drive down the cost.
- 4.4.3 Bidders will be asked to submit a service cost analysis form (SCAF) which will inform the breakdown of the bidder's price.
- 4.4.4 The total income of the DfE grant is expected to be circa £1m this includes a bursary, supervision and support for each trainee, funds for the procurement of the HEI and additional monies for the administration of the partnership and HEI. As part of the funding from the DfE some funds will be allocated to employ a part time officer to perform the role of lead partner who will meet with the contractor quarterly to ensure best value for money is being achieved.

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

- 4.5.1 The annual value of the contract is up to a maximum of £408,345 over 27 months. this is therefore a Significant Operational decision and is not subject to call-in
- 4.5.2 In line with CPR 9 this is a High Value Procurement
- 4.5.3 Should the DfE bid for the grant funding be successful a separate Key Decision will be sought for receipt of income.

4.6 Risk management

- 4.6.1 A risk register is in place and managed by the project team.

5. Conclusions

5.1 Following a detailed appraisal of the options available to fulfil this contract need; the Step Up to Social Work project team currently made up of partners from Leeds Wakefield, Bradford, Kirklees and North Yorkshire concludes that the best value option is to undertake a competitive tender to commission an external organisation to provide the Step Up to Social Work Project.

6. Recommendations

The Director of Children and Families Services is recommended to provide permission to procure a new Step up to Social Work service via competitive tender. The duration of the contract will be 27 months; commencing from 1st Jan 2021 – 31st March 2023 and will offer a maximum of 35 funded student places. The maximum contract value will be £408,345 over 27 months.

7. Background documents¹

7.1 N/A

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.