

Report of Head of Public Health (Children and Families) and Advanced Public Health Specialist

Report to Director of Public Health

Date: 2nd December 2020

Subject: Request to vary the contracts awarded to Health for All for the Breastfeeding Peer Support Service for additional funding of £12,635 for 6 months and to Women's Health Matters for the (YUMS) Can't Wait Strategy - Breastfeeding Service for additional funding of £6,770 for 6 months under Contracts Procedure Rules 21.7 and to seek authority to procure a new 'Breastfeeding Peer Support' service.

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

1. Summary of main issues

1. Leeds City Council currently commissions two services offering breastfeeding peer support. The Breastfeeding Peer Support service offers city wide support for breastfeeding women where trained peer supporters offer groups, one to one and telephone support. The YUMS (young mums, tots and tums) service offers support for young mothers (24 years and under) offering a bi-weekly support and information group to help to improve their social connections,

confidence and skills with regard to health and wellbeing for themselves and their families.

2. Breastfeeding peer support is currently delivered through separate contracts with two local providers; Women's Health Matters and Health for All (see Table 1). Following a review including consultation with stakeholders and taking into account other local service developments it is proposed that the priorities of the two service specifications be brought together to enable the commissioning of a single service that will be more accessible and coordinated. It should be noted this merger of the services is in relation to the new procurement exercise and it is not the variations that are being merged.
3. This report is seeking the authority to vary the existing contracts with Health for All for the Breastfeeding Peer Support Service for additional funding of £12,635 for 6 months (from 1st April 2021 to 30th September 2021) and with Women's Health Matters for the (YUMS) Can't Wait Strategy - Breastfeeding Service for additional funding of £6,770 for 6 months (from 1st April 2021 to 30th September 2021) under Contracts Procedure Rules 21.7. The Public Contract Regulations 2015 do not apply under these circumstances because the two contracts were formalised under the Council's internal procedure rules (waiver of CPRs) therefore, the council's contracts procedure rules prevail. There will be no material change to the service specification.
4. The report is also seeking the authority to enter in to a competitive tender process to procure a new 'Breast Feeding Peer Support' service from 1st October 2021 for a 2.5 year contract period (with an option to extend up to a further 36 months) at a maximum budget of £38,810 pa (£213,455 for the overall contract period).
5. After undertaking a comprehensive review, confirmation of the fixed price budget of £38.810 pa has been received from Public Health. Following the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic the Council is facing a financial shortfall in the current and 2021/22 financial years. Both contracts have been subject to at least 10% budget cuts over their duration and due to these previous cuts the budget envelope is already at a minimum to enable the contract to be delivered in the specified way. The price has also been considered and is one of the reasons the 2 contracts have been merged to ensure that we can get better value for money and to allow the organisation to deliver in the most cost effective way while maintaining standards and outcomes.
6. It would not be realistic for an organisation to suggest they could provide the service at a lesser cost. The provider will need to work collaboratively, be innovative and creative to work within the budget envelope to ensure a quality service is provided for the families of Leeds. Given the personal and responsive nature of the service, quality is key and quality breastfeeding peer support has been shown to increase breastfeeding rates. Although the service will be proactive there needs to be an element of responsive action to ensure best outcomes for our most vulnerable mothers, babies and families. The practitioners employed to provide this service need to have high quality specialist knowledge and skill, and as such will be a valuable necessity.

7. Our current procurement time line has slipped due to pending decisions regards the budget and the 6 month contract variations will ensure that we have adequate time to go out to procure a new combined Breastfeeding Peer Support service. It is intended the competitive tender process will now begin in January 2021 and the new Breastfeeding Support service will commence on the 1st October 2021.

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

This service will contribute to the following priorities:

- Child Friendly City - Supporting families to give children the best start in life
- Health and Wellbeing - Reducing health inequalities and improving the health of the poorest the fastest.

3. **Resource Implications**

- The total value of this decision is £232,860 – this includes the two 6 month variations for each separate contract under CPRs 21.7 (Contract Variations) and the procurement for a 2.5 years with the option to extend for a period of up to 36 months.
- Officer time will be necessary in order to undertake the procurement and future contract monitoring. This will be met through existing capacity from within the Public Health team and the Adults and Health Commissioning team.
- It is acknowledged that in light of the Council's current financial situation efficiencies may be required in the future on this contract and these would be the subject of a contract variation or reflected in the final contracting documentation. Any change to the budget will in turn impact the service specification and be discussed with the provider.

Recommendations

The Director of Public Health is recommended to:

- (i) Approve the contract variation under Contracts Procedure Rules 21.7 to Health for All for the Breastfeeding Peer Support Service for additional funding of £12,635 for 6 months and to Women's Health Matters for the (YUMS) Can't Wait Strategy - Breastfeeding Service for additional funding of £6,770 for 6 months. This is at a cost of £19,405 for the period of 6 months to commence from 1st April 2021.
- (ii) Grant the authority to enter in to a competitive tender process to procure a new 'Breast Feeding Peer Support' service for a period of 2.5 years (with an

option to extend for a period of up to 36 months in any combination) with a maximum budget of £38,810 pa (£213,455 for the overall contract period).

(iii) Note that a further report to approve the contract award will be submitted for approval at the end of the procurement process.

1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek the authority to procure a single service to provide breastfeeding peer support for pregnant women, new mothers and their families in Leeds. The report also seeks to vary the two current contracts with Health for All for the breastfeeding peer support service and the Women's Health Matters for the (YUMS) Can't Wait Strategy – breastfeeding service to ensure continuity of provision through the existing services until the new service is in place.
- 1.2 The new service will contribute to babies in Leeds having the best start in life. Improving support for breastfeeding families and increasing breastfeeding prevalence are well established strategic priorities and commitments for Leeds, and are underpinned by the city wide implementation of the Health and Wellbeing Plan 2016-21. Research commissioned by UNICEF UK demonstrates that investing in effective services to increase and sustain breastfeeding would make a significant contribution to reducing health inequalities. Included in the services the report describes is the provision of breastfeeding peer support.

2. Background information

Existing Services

- 2.1 The Adults and Health Directorate currently commission two separate contracts to provide breastfeeding and well-being peer support. Health for All provide specialist trained breastfeeding coordinators that provide training and supervision for mothers to enable them to support breastfeeding peers (one to one, in group settings and over the phone) in their communities. Women's Health Matters provide a worker that offers a bi-weekly peer support group for a small cohort of young (24 years and under) vulnerable women (living in designated post code areas in South Leeds) with health and well-being as well as wider issues that impact upon their ability to make healthy choices in pregnancy, for themselves and for their babies/families.
- 2.2 The existing services who provide breastfeeding peer support in Leeds are shown below in Table 1:

Provider	Contract name	Existing Contract Ref	Current Contract Value – per annum
Health for All	Breastfeeding peer Support Service	DN230416	£25,270
Women's Health Matters	(YUMS) Breastfeeding Strategy service	DN230415	£13,540

- 2.3 The final extension periods for both current services are due to end on 31st March 2021.
- 2.4 The current contract arrangements were put in place on 1st April 2017 for 2 years (with an option to extend for a further 2 years) under a waiver of the council's contracts procedure rules. The decision to increase the potential duration is based on the size of the contract and the longer contract period will provide some form of stability due to the low budget. As well as the nature of the contract needing time to embed, become sustainable and reach its full potential.
- 2.5 Throughout the contracts Public Health has worked closely with the providers to ensure the services reflect the latest evidence base with regard to breastfeeding support and the health and well-being agenda, to ensure best use of group provision and to ensure the services are available and accessible.

Service Review – Consultation key findings

- 2.6 A service review has been undertaken involving consultation with key stakeholders including professionals, the general public, fathers, pregnant women and new mothers. There has also been a review of the strategic context, best practice, evidence, data trends and case studies.
- 2.7 Also taken into consideration is the recent recommissioning of the 0-19 Service which included increasing the number of breastfeeding groups' city wide. Groups are a key setting where breastfeeding peer supporters offer highly valued additional capacity, this enables local breastfeeding families to access support outside of usual mandated contacts.
- 2.8 The development of the city wide Empowering Parents Empowering Communities (EPEC) service now also provides capacity for parenting peer support for vulnerable and socially isolated families, including those in South Leeds where the YUMS group currently runs.
- 2.9 The findings from the 'Whose Shoes' engagement event with families, pregnant women, professionals and peer supporters showed that the key issues were:
- Access to and information about evidenced based apps and websites
 - Consistency of practitioner offering realistic, inclusive information
 - More training for professionals
 - More resource and more staff needed (or available and accessible)

- Continue and expand volunteer peer support provision and groups
- Address public opinions around breastfeeding / infant feeding

2.10 The survey looking at fathers views on breastfeeding (completed by parents and general public) was considered within the context of providing support to the breastfeeding mother, as this information is somewhat lacking within the current literature and public health settings. The findings from the survey highlighted that the majority of fathers feel that they should offer support for their breastfeeding partners, however they are not sure how. They also felt that their partners may be embarrassed to breastfeed in public so going to groups where others are breastfeeding would be beneficial. Some of the fathers surveyed said they would feel uncomfortable attending breastfeeding groups with their partners, however others said they would like to be invited. Ultimately the fathers surveyed felt that breastfeeding groups are beneficial and more support in any way would be beneficial.

2.11 The breastfeeding peer support survey was shared with professionals and pregnant women, new mothers and their families. The findings from this resulted in the following key findings:

- Breastfeeding support (availability of groups/professional knowledge and support) varies across the city
- Pregnant women, new mothers and their families value the support they are able to access and would like more e.g. groups, one to one support and telephone calls
- More funding is needed for breastfeeding peer support to ensure it is available more widely
- More individualised support is needed for certain groups including
 - mothers of multiple babies,
 - teenage mothers
 - mothers with babies on Neonatal units
 - working parents – weekend / evening groups
- More community support for mothers breastfeeding in public
- Breastfeeding support offer needs to be more widely promoted

2.12 The cumulative evidence from the review found that stakeholders value the current peer support services. However improvements could be made by having more of the current offer, with added capacity to train more volunteers, having more accessible groups and addressing public perceptions and beliefs around breastfeeding.

3 Main issues

3.1 The New Service Model

Moving forward based on the findings of this review work and consultation, it is the Council's intention to procure a single service model for a breastfeeding peer support service for women and children in Leeds (see Appendix 1). The key elements of this model will be:

- An externally evaluated programme of breastfeeding peer support training facilitated by appropriately trained staff
 - A focus on engaging young mothers from areas with known low breastfeeding rates
 - Development of a network of skilled breastfeeding peer supporters who are able to support mothers in a group setting, on the telephone and / or face to face
 - Formal supervision sessions available for trained peer supporters
 - Liaison with multidisciplinary agencies around peer support and the wider breastfeeding agenda
 - Strong, effective, sustainable partnerships developed and maintained, ensuring signposting to wider support and services are integral to the programme
 - Available and accessible breastfeeding peer support for women and families in Leeds
 - Targeted peer support for young pregnant women/mothers to support them to make informed choices about feeding their baby
- 3.2 The new service will work collaboratively with Public Health and key partners including Leeds Community Health 0-19 Public Health Integrated Nursing service, Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust (LTHT) Maternity and Neonatal services and Children's Services (children's centres) to ensure breastfeeding peer support provision is an embedded part of the offer for pregnant women, new mothers and their families.
- 3.3 There are no internal service providers that are capable of delivering the service specification therefore we will welcome bids from the current providers, other interested providers and consortia.
- 3.4 In accordance with CPR 15.2 tenders will be evaluated on the basis of 100% quality to ensure high quality breastfeeding and peer support is developed and offered by the service, whilst also making full use of the available budget. The quality of the programme and support will impact on the provision available for pregnant women and families, quality breastfeeding peer support has been shown to increase breastfeeding rates. This will help to ensure that the most appropriate tender is awarded the contract.
- 3.5 Financially, increasing rates of breastfeeding not only result in savings to family budgets, but also to the public purse due to reduced service costs associated with dealing with health problems which occur more frequently when babies are not breast fed
- 3.6 Our current procurement time line has slipped due to pending decisions regards the budget and the need to confirm budget availability. The 6 month contract variations will ensure that we have adequate time to go out to procure a new combined Breastfeeding Peer Support service. COVID-19 has had a huge impact on pregnant women, new mothers and their family's experiences of care and support. During the pandemic there has been a reduced statutory offer and a lack of face to face services which means this cohort are more

vulnerable and may need additional support in the coming months and years. This new combined service with universal as well as targeted breastfeeding support will be valuable and much needed.

- 3.7 The new service will be closely managed to ensure robust contract performance monitoring takes place and value for money is being achieved for the Council.

Consequences if the proposed action is not approved

- 3.8 Should the approvals not be granted; the two current contracts will cease on 31st March 2021 and this would result in the loss of the breastfeeding peer support service, YUMS service and the support they provide for women and children in Leeds.
- 3.9 The breastfeeding peer support service is currently an embedded part of the Healthy Child Programme 0-19 Public Health Integrated Nursing Service. Without the volunteer breastfeeding peer supporters 9 of the 18 current breastfeeding support groups provided in Leeds will not run, and hundreds of women will not be able to access timely breastfeeding support in their communities. This is particularly important in the current situation when statutory resource has been diverted.

4 Corporate considerations

4.1 Consultation and engagement

- 4.1.1 A service review as described previously was undertaken including consultation regarding current services and developments with a wide range of public and professional stakeholders. This was done using on-line and face to face surveys, market stall events and an event using the 'Whose Shoes' game.
- 4.1.2 As part of ongoing consultation and contract management, the existing providers have been consulted regarding the development of a new model of service delivery and are supportive of the developments.

The Executive Member for Health, Wellbeing and Adults has been briefed and to date has been supportive of the proposed way forward.

4.2 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration

- 4.2.1 An Equality, Diversity, Cohesion and Integration Screening Tool has been completed (see Appendix A). The screening showed that a full Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment was not required as equality and diversity issues have already been considered as part of the re-commissioning process. The outcome of the screening will be taken into account when updating the specification for the new service.

4.2.2 During the consultation, engagement with communities was undertaken to listen to their needs and to explore community-specific barriers to breastfeeding including service reach and accessibility. It is with this evidence and the understanding that suboptimal breastfeeding rates among different populations are influenced largely by social and systemic barriers that exist outside the parents' sphere of power that particular importance has been placed on work with young, white mothers. This approach along with targeted work in areas of consistent low breastfeeding rates will ensure the service in partnership with other services, works to ameliorate breastfeeding disparities.

4.3 Council policies and the Best Council Plan

4.3.1 The current services already support the delivery of key public health priorities and the future service provision will also help to deliver:

- Vision for Leeds 2011 - 2030
- Leeds Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2016 - 2021
- Best Council Plan 2020 - 2025
- Leeds Children and Young People's Plan 2018 – 2023
- The NHS Five Year Forward View and NHS Planning Guidance
- Leeds Best Start Plan 2015 - 2020
- Leeds Child Healthy Weight Plan 2018 - 2021
- Leeds Inclusive Growth Strategy 2018 - 2023

4.4 Climate Emergency

4.4.1 The service specification requires the service to meet all legislation, guidance and good industry practice in environmental management and the objectives of the Council's sustainability policies. Officers from Public Health will work with the service through the established contract management process to ensure the service is proactively seeking to minimise its carbon footprint and thereby support the Council in achieving its ambition to be carbon neutral by 2030.

4.4.2 Breastfeeding has a part to play in tackling climate change. By investing in breastfeeding peer support services with the aim to increase breastfeeding rates the Council is actively promoting a renewable food (breastmilk) that is environmentally safe and green because it is produced and delivered to the consumer without pollution, packaging or waste.

4.5 Resources, Procurement and value for money

4.5.1 The costs for the breastfeeding peer support service contract will be met by Public Health revenue funding. Both contracts have been subject to at least 10% budget cuts over their duration and due to these previous cuts the budget envelope is already at a minimum to enable the contract to be delivered in the specified way.

- 4.5.2 Extensive consultation and an evaluation of the current services has been undertaken. The price has also been considered and is one of the reasons the contracts have been merged to ensure that we can get better value for money. The proposed provision of a new single breastfeeding peer support service is considered value for money in that it will be more accessible and co-ordinated and will contribute to babies in Leeds having the best start in life.
- 4.5.3 In light of the council's current financial situation, it is acknowledged that efficiencies may be required in the future on this contract and these would be the subject of a contract variation or reflected in the final contracting documentation. Any change to the budget will in turn impact the service specification.
- 4.5.4 The new service will continue to be closely contract managed to ensure robust performance monitoring takes place and value for money is being achieved for the Council.

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

- 4.6.1 This is a Significant Operational Decision and therefore the decision is not subject to call-in. There are no grounds for keeping the contents of this report confidential under the Access to Information Rules.
- 4.6.2 The total contract value over the six years including the possible extensions will not exceed the EU procurement threshold for Health and Social Care which stands at £663,540. There is still a requirement to openly advertise this opportunity and therefore competition will be sought through the open procedure tender process.
- 4.6.3 Advice has been sought from Procurement and Commercial Services throughout the duration of the review and procurement process and will continue to be sought through to contract award.
- 4.6.4 Subsequent decisions arising from this report, for example the decision to award the contract, will therefore be significant operational decisions which will not be subject to call in.

4.7 Risk management

- 4.7.1 The work is being led by Adults and Health Commissioning with the Public Health Specialist Lead and PACS, reporting up to the Head of Public Health (Children and Families). A small project team has been set up to oversee the re-commissioning process and ensure that the process adheres to the procurement regulations, as well as the council's Contract Procedure Rules.
- 4.7.2 A risk register has been established as part of the re-procurement process and this will continue to be managed and updated.
- 4.7.3 If this decision to procure a new Breastfeeding Peer Support service is not approved, the current services will fall out of contract on 31st March 2021 causing significant risk to the Council and its providers. There is an evidenced

need for these services and should they not continue to be delivered beyond the expiry of the current contract, this would result in significantly reduced numbers of families who are supported to continue to breastfeed.

- 4.7.4 Officer experience and knowledge indicates that there is sufficient viable competition to deliver the service as outlined in 3.1 above and therefore a competitive tendering process for the procurement will be used.
- 4.7.5 A three month mobilisation period has been built into the procurement timetable to ensure that the service can be fully mobilised before the contract start date.
- 4.7.6 The risk of challenge to vary the existing contracts by 6 months are deemed low due to the tendering opportunity for a Breast Feeding Peer Support service to be advertised at the start of 2021.

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 Ensuring a best start for all babies and long term health and well-being for families in Leeds is a key priority for the Council and its partners. The new Breastfeeding Peer Support service must be procured through a competitive tender process to ensure the new service can commence from the 1st April 2021. It is proposed that the contract will be for 2.5 years (with the option to extend for up to 36 months) starting from 1st October 2021.
- 5.2 The new Breastfeeding Peer Support service aligns with key city wide priorities and objectives and ensures the needs of pregnant women, babies and their families are prioritised. To maximise budgetary outcomes it is recommended that the tender evaluation be based on 100% quality for the 'Breast Feeding Peer Support. The new service will give a strong platform to further develop efficient and effective outcomes through a holistic city wide provision.

6 Recommendations

The Director of Public Health is recommended to:

- (i) Approve the contract variation under Contracts Procedure Rules 21.7 to Health for All for the Breastfeeding Peer Support Service for additional funding of £12,635 for 6 months and to Women's Health Matters for the (YUMS) Can't Wait Strategy - Breastfeeding Service for additional funding of £6,770 for 6 months. This is at a cost of £19,405 for the period of 6 months to commence from 1st April 2021.
- (ii) Grant the authority to enter in to a competitive tender process to procure a new 'Breast Feeding Peer Support' service for a period of 2.5 years (with an option to extend for a period of up to 36 months in any combination) with a maximum budget of £38,810 pa (£213,455 for the overall contract period).

(iii) Note that a further report to approve the contract award will be submitted for approval at the end of the procurement process.

7 Background documents¹

7.1 None

8 Appendices

8.1 Equality, Diversity, Cohesion and Integration Screening tool

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.