

Authority to procure an inclusion support service from 1st April 2022

Date: 28th June 2021

Report of: Commissioning Manager, Children & Families

Report to: Director, Children & Families Directorate

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

What is this report about?

Including how it contributes to the city's and council's ambitions

- The report seeks approval to go out to competitive tender for the delivery of an Inclusion Support Service from 1st April 2022 for two years at a value of £257,000 per annum. There will be the option to extend for two further twelve month periods to 31st March 2026.
- The inclusion support service will work to increase the number of children and young people (CY&P) with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) accessing mainstream fun activities.
- The service will help deliver the local ambition of becoming an inclusive Child Friendly City – to make Leeds the best city in the UK for children and young people to grow up in.

Recommendations

- a) Approve the decision to go out to competitive tender for the delivery of an inclusion support service and award a contract following the competitive exercise
- b) Approve the annual expenditure of £257,000 per annum for a two year period with the option to extend for two further twelve month periods with a potential four year value of £1,028,000.

Why is the proposal being put forward?

1. An inclusion support service is at the heart of a robust short breaks offer and a vital component in meeting the duty to provide short breaks as per the Children Act 1989. The service offers advice, support and challenge to settings to ensure activities are fully inclusive and able to offer equality of access to all children. This is a highly sustainable model, building capacity in universal settings to include disabled children, reducing the likelihood of crisis and family breakdown and thereby reducing the need for more expensive targeted and specialist provision or Social Work intervention.

2. The numbers of CY&P in Leeds (and nationally) with additional needs are increasing. As well as an increase in numbers of CY&P with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP), there is projected to be a sustained increase in pupils who are SEND without EHCP by 2024. In January 2020, 15,868 pupils were classified as SEN Support (Reception to Key Stage 5). Based on the data at January, projections show that the total number of pupils with SEND is likely to increase by between 1,719 and 2,366 (around 3%) by 2024. Without inclusive activities across the city, more pressure will be put on targeted and specialist activities and short breaks.
3. The successful provider will offer signposting to families, deliver training to lead professionals across the city and proactively target providers who are struggling with delivering an inclusive service. The expectation will be to increase the number of CY&P with SEND accessing mainstream activities year on year.

What impact will this proposal have?

Wards affected: All

Have ward members been consulted? Yes No

4. A successful service will advise, support and challenge universal settings to ensure they are fully inclusive. It will deliver an inclusion 'quality mark' and monitor the increase in CY&P with SEND accessing activities. The service will provide information for parents/carers/CY&P and settings on short breaks and signpost to inclusive settings in Leeds.
5. The service will support the Local Authority to ensure services delivered either directly or commissioned externally are inclusive. For example, it will work with LCC Leisure Centres to ensure all CY&P are able to undertake swimming lessons whatever their additional need/s. They will work with LCC Officers to ensure inclusion is considered when undertaking a grants delivery programme.
6. The service will provide help for Lead Professionals in Leeds including training events, forums and one to one support. It will also provide a suitably trained Inclusion Support Worker to work with a C&YP in a setting for an appropriate time period to ensure successful inclusive practice for future C&YP.
7. The successful provider will deliver a sustainable service model which will exponentially increase the numbers of CY&P with SEND accessing mainstream activities. This will enable CY&P to access fun activities in their own communities, alongside their siblings, friends and neighbours.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

8. Play and leisure activities were the 2nd highest priority identified by 229 parents/carers completing a survey about their priorities for change to SEND provision in Leeds, was around accessible places to go, things to do, and spaces to play for 0-25 year olds with SEND. A good quality inclusion support service is a key part of increasing inclusion across the city.
9. In March 2021 The Voice, Influence & Change Team worked in partnership with EPIC Leeds (our parent/carer forum) to host a virtual Leeds Local Offer Information and Consultation Month on the Leeds Local Offer website. During this month we wanted to raise awareness about the Short Break offer and also consult with families and CY&P with regards to a review

we were undertaking for our Inclusion Support Service. All comments received during this consultation will feed into the development of the inclusion support service specification.

10. CY&P with SEND will be on the tender panel scoring a question and EPIC will work within the project group developing the service specification and tender questions.

What are the resource implications?

11. The total cost of the inclusion support service is £257,000 per annum, with a total potential contract value of £1,028,000 including the two extensions to 31st March 2026. The price of any extension will be fixed in line with the successful bidders contract award.

12. The contract value was reduced by 10% from April 2021 (from £285,500 per annum) to support the budget challenges experienced by LCC and more particularly by the Children & Families Directorate.

What are the legal implications?

13. This is a contract that has been in place for a number of years and the current provider is fully aware of the preferred option of going out to competitive tender for the service.

14. The contract will be procured in line with Public Contract Regulation 2015 and the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.

15. This is a key decision and open to call-in given the overall contract value of £1,028,000.

What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

16. There are few significant risks of proceeding with this decision. It was noted during the market sounding exercise that a tender would only be submitted by some providers if the TUPE liability was not too burdensome. The TUPE information will be collected and made available on request once a confidentiality agreement has been completed and returned signed

17. Some personal data will be processed as part of this contract delivery and a privacy impact assessment will highlight how any risks will be mitigated.

18. If the decision is not approved and we cease the commissioning of an inclusion support service, there is a significant risk that targeted and specialist provision will receive an increased demand from families and these services are currently running at capacity.

Does this proposal support the council's three Key Pillars?

Inclusive Growth Health and Wellbeing Climate Emergency

19. The 'inclusion' remit is to break down barriers to inclusion and support disabled children and their families to live happy and fulfilling lives as equal members of their communities. Short breaks are viewed as a preventative early help strategy and untimely can prevent family breakdown.

Options, timescales and measuring success

What other options were considered?

18. An options appraisal considered the option of directly award a contract without competition to the existing provider Scope in Leeds. This contract has not been competitively tendered since the award in May 2013. A market sounding exercise found there was sufficient interest in tendering for this contract in order that a competitive exercise was necessary and would ensure compliance with Public Contracts Regulation 2015 and deliver value for money.

19. A second option considered was to deliver the service in-house. The cost assessment against this option does not appear to be value for money compared to the current value for the externally commissioned service.

20. Ceasing delivery of inclusion support is not felt to be a viable option in terms of contributing to the Council's ambitions of becoming an inclusive child friendly city. It is extremely difficult to calculate how much the cost of delivering an increased amount of specialist services eg direct payments would be should families not have access to inclusive activities.

How will success be measured?

21. The primary indicator of success will be a year on year increase in CY&P with SEND accessing universal activities.

What is the timetable for implementation?

22. The current contract ends on 31st March 2022 and the new contract will be in place for the 1st April 2022 to ensure a continuum of provision.

Appendices

23. None

Background papers

24. None