

Request to create traded Childrens Commissioning posts

Date: 10/11/2022

Report of: Chief Officer of Strategy and Resources

Report to: Director of Children and Families

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

- This report requests the creation of three new positions in the Children and Families Commissioning and Market Management team. The posts will be funded through traded income from the following areas of work:
 - One Adoption West Yorkshire (OAWY) and the National Adoption Strategic Project Team
 - Leeds SAFE Taskforce
- These commissioning needs cannot be resourced within the existing Commissioning Team staff resource. These new commissioning staff will increase the capacity of the Learning & Early Help Team in the Children and Families Commissioning Service.
- Commissioning is a key service providing technical support to the Children & Families Directorate. These posts will support the Council to achieve its ambition to be a Child Friendly City.

Recommendations

- a) The Director of Children and Families is recommended to approve the creation of position IDs for two new PO4 Commissioning Managers and one new PO2 Commissioning Officer to sit within the Childrens Commissioning Team to undertake commissioning for One Adoption West Yorkshire and the National Adoption Strategic Project Team and increase capacity across the Learning & Early Help area of the Commissioning Team to support the functions of the Commissioning Lead role for the Leeds SAFE Taskforce.

Why is the proposal being put forward?

1. Adoption

The Commissioning Team has been supporting OAWY for a number of years. OAWY became the country's first Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) when regionalisation reforms were launched in 2017 - bringing together all of the adoption services from Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds and Wakefield. The pooled RAA budget is managed by Leeds on behalf of all Local Authority members of OAWY and as such, Leeds is responsible for leading the majority of commissioning activity. Funding for commissioning resource has been recharged to the Commissioning service budget annually on submission of timesheets. The level of commissioning activity has gradually increased over this period.

Since 2019, the Department for Education (DfE) has made available grant funding to improve the adoption system for vulnerable children and young people nationally. The DfE and RAA leaders have agreed collectively to pool the resources, with OAWY acting as a central repository for the grant funds on behalf of all RAAs. As host of OAWY, Leeds is the lead Local Authority for managing the grant budget and for commissioning. The grant has increased year on year and has now been agreed for a three year period (2022/23 – 2024/25). The level of grant is now substantial (£19.5m over 3 years) and the level of commissioning activity required is set to increase in line with this.

It has been agreed with the Head of Service OAWY and the National Adoption Strategic Lead that a dedicated staffing capacity is required to support this significant and growing commissioning activity. It is proposed that two posts should be created: 1.0 fte Commissioning Manager (PO4), and 1.0 fte Commissioning Officer (PO2) fully funded by OAWY and National Adoption Strategic budgets. Continued input will also be required from the existing Commissioning Programme Manager, and this will be recharged to OAWY based on an agreed percentage of fte.

2. Safe Taskforce

The DfE has made available grant funding to establish SAFE Taskforces in 10 local authority areas across the country, as part of the cross-government Beating Crime Plan published in July 2021, which announced investment in specialist support in schools in serious violence hotspots to support young people at risk of involvement in violence to re-engage with education.

Leeds City Council has agreed to act as a central repository for the grant funds on behalf of schools and will receive total grant funding of £3.7 million over three years (2022/23 – 2024/25) to commission interventions. This includes funding for a Commissioning Lead. This function is being currently provided by the existing Commissioning Programme Manager (Learning & Early Help) in the Commissioning Team and funding will be re-charged to the Commissioning Team equivalent to 0.8fte PO6.

In order to sustain this level of resource, it is proposed that additional Commissioning Manager resource be identified. The Commissioning Programme Manager (Learning & Early Help) will continue as the named Commissioning Lead for Leeds SAFE Taskforce, accountable for the programme of work and fulfilling the strategic commissioning functions. 1 FTE of PO4 Commissioning Manager fixed term capacity is required to support this work on a traded basis until the end of the SAFE Taskforce programme on 31/03/2025.

3. Summary of New Positions

To meet the combined requirements of this new traded activity from these two programmes of work it is recommended that three new staffing positions are created as follows.

Adoption

- 1.0 FTE PO4 Commissioning Manager
- 1.0 FTE PO2 Commissioning Officer

Safe Taskforce

- 1 FTE PO4 Commissioning Manager fixed term to 31/03/2025

What impact will this proposal have?

Wards affected:

Have ward members been consulted? Yes No

- 7 The proposal will enable the service to adequately resource essential areas of commissioning activity and will support the traded activity and income.
- 8 This additional commissioning staffing resource will ensure that three programmes of work aimed at improving outcomes for children and families will have the necessary commissioning support.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

- 9 The Head of Service Commissioning and Health Partnerships and the Chief Officer Resources and Strategy have confirmed they agree with these proposals.
- 10 Budget holders who fund this traded activity have been consulted.
- 11 These proposals have been cleared with finance and unions.
- 12 Consultation has enabled the proposal to ensure that the proposed staffing arrangements can meet the requirements of this traded activity.
- 13 The development of this traded activity will further develop the capacity and resilience of the Childrens Commissioning service.

What are the resource implications?

- 14 The Chief Officer of Resources and Strategy has agreed that the three posts, with a total value of approximately £156,008 per annum, are required to fulfil these commissioning needs and secure traded income. These will be funded by OAWY (£100,420) and SAFE Taskforce (£55,588).
- 15 Funding for this work is confirmed for a minimum of 2 years. The adoption posts will be recruited on a permanent basis with the expectation of continued grant funding in line with recruitment for the national adoption project team. The additional capacity to support the team to undertake the SAFE Taskforce commissioning functions will be recruited as fixed term to 31/03/2025. This work is undertaken in a wider context of growing demand for specialist commissioning support where recruiting staff with the right skills is essential to meeting the

demands of this traded work. Budget risk associated for this will be managed within Resources and Strategy overall budget planning going forward.

What are the legal implications?

16 There are no specific legal implications of this decision given that proper HR processes for the creation of position IDs and recruitment will be followed.

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

17 The Chief Officer of Strategy and Resources has agreed these posts are required to enable the Commissioning team to deliver essential commissioning activity on behalf of the directorate. There is a risk associated with recruiting to permanent posts when the funding is time-limited but it is acknowledged that funding has been confirmed for at least two years. The demands on the Commissioning Team have increased, cannot be managed within existing resource and that time-limited government grants are likely to continue.

18 If the recommendation is not agreed, then there is a risk that OAWY, the National Adoption Strategic project team and the Safe Taskforce programme will not be able to deliver the outcomes of their DfE grant agreements.

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

Inclusive Growth Health and Wellbeing Climate Emergency

19 The Commissioning Team's support for OAWY 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 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. The also support the 2020-25 Best Council Plan priority to make Leeds a Child Friendly City where families are supported to give children the best start in life.

20 The Leeds SAFE Taskforce programme will support the council's health & wellbeing pillar and the commitments city & council ambitions of:

- Improving educational attainment and closing achievement gaps for children and young people vulnerable to poor learning outcomes
- Improving social, emotional and mental health and wellbeing
- Helping young people into adulthood, to develop life skills and be ready for work

Options, timescales and measuring success

What other options were considered?

21 Various options were considered including creation of a part-time PO6 post but these were considered less suitable in relation to the commissioning activity required and the level of resource needed.

How will success be measured?

22 Success will be measured via the outcomes of the OAWY, National Adoption Strategic project team and the SAFE Taskforce.

What is the timetable for implementation?

23 The current arrangements are unsustainable and are putting significant challenges on the Commissioning Team's capacity to fulfil its commissioning functions for the Children and Families directorate. The commissioning needs of OAWY, National Adoption Strategic project team and SAFE taskforce are significant and the position IDs are required as soon as possible in order to secure the required staffing resource.

Appendices

24 None

Background papers

25 EDCI screening document