

## **Award of contract to Coram-i (coram Trading Ltd) for Data Analysis in support of the National Adoption Strategy using Contract Procedure Rule 9.5**

Date: 11 May 2023

Report of: Children and Families Commissioning Team

Report to: National Adoption Strategic Lead

Will the decision be open for call in?  Yes  No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?  Yes  No

### **Brief summary**

This report seeks retrospective approval to directly award a contract to Coram-i (Coram Trading Ltd), for Data Analysis in support of the National Adoption Strategy. The contract will be in place for 12 months with the option to extend for 2 x 12 months. The proposal supports the Best Council Plan priority to make Leeds a Child Friendly City where families are supported to give children the best start in life.

### **Recommendations**

- a) The National Adoption Strategic Lead is recommended to retrospectively approve the award of a contract to Coram-i (Coram Trading Ltd), for Data Analysis in support of the National Adoption Strategy. The Contract will run for a period of 12 months from 01/04/23 to 31/03/24 with the option to extend for 2 x 12 months. The maximum cost of the contract is £42,000 per year bringing the potential total to £126,000 if the extensions are fully utilised.

### **What is this report about?**

- 1 The National Adoption Strategy set by the government sets out a bold vision to deliver excellence in adoption services across England. The aim is to ensure that best practice becomes the norm so that every adopted child and their family can access the services and support that they need wherever they live and maximise children's outcomes in the short and long term.
- 2 The aim is for all children with a plan for adoption to be found permanent loving families as quickly as possible where they will feel safe and secure. Adopters are recruited from all communities so that we have a range of approved parents able and well prepared to meet the

needs of children waiting to be adopted and that children and families get the support that they need when they need it.

- 3 Coram-i are currently contracted by the Department for Education (DfE) to administer the Quarterly Adoption and Special Guardian (ASG) data return. The ASG data return is completed by every local authority (LA), regional adoption agency (RAA), and voluntary adoption agency (VAA) in England. Through this work, Coram-i now have access to nine years' worth of data on children and adults who have been through the adoption system in England. Their team includes data analysts, who analyse this data to inform the ASGLB on the state of the adoption sector in England each quarter.
- 4 Leeds City Council awarded a contract to Coram-i on behalf of RAA Leaders for the period 01/12/21 to 31/03/23 for additional analysis. This contract required Coram-i to combine the ASG data with data collected by the National Adoption Recruitment Campaign (NARC) to provide the NARC with insights into the effectiveness of its various initiatives. They also supported the creation of data collections if needed and conduct deep dive analyses, using data provided by RAAs/LAs, as commissioned by the NARC.
- 5 After some delays in confirming continued contractual arrangements between DfE and Coram-i, RAA Leaders have determined that a further contract is required to perform further analysis on the quarterly collected data and to help the adoption agencies to better understand it. The analysis is needed for the agencies to identify potential issues and root causes for these issues. The analysis helps the agencies to focus on areas of improvement that will deliver best outcomes for the adopted children and families. The data analysis is required to identify both national and regional trends within the adoption sector.
- 6 Coram-i are the only provider that can perform this analysis as they are the only provider with access to the data.

### What impact will this proposal have?

- 7 An Equality and Impact Screening Assessment has been completed and identifies that there is a positive impact in respect of equality and diversity and will advance equality of opportunity.

### How does this proposal impact the three pillars of the Best City Ambition?

Health and Wellbeing       Inclusive Growth       Zero Carbon

- 8 This proposal supports that Children and Young Peoples plan and the Councils ambition to be a Child Friendly City. The outcomes delivered by this contract will contribute to a number of the outcomes and priorities within the plan, as detailed above. In addition to this, the proposal will also work towards reducing inequality within the Adoption process as per the National Adoption Strategy set by the government.

### What consultation and engagement has taken place?

Wards affected:

Have ward members been consulted?       Yes       No

- 9 No individual wards in Leeds will be impacted by these proposals as the provision is based on a national basis.

## **What are the resource implications?**

- 10 Funding for this contract is available from the National Adoption Grant from the DfE and is therefore ring-fenced external funding. Issuing this contract will not create additional financial pressure to Leeds City Council.
- 11 It is considered that this contract constitutes essential spend: To meet a statutory service requirement: This contract will assist in the statutory function of finding families for children waiting adoption. While the Children Act 1989 & 2004 outlines the general framework for the support of children in need and planning for their future if they become looked after, the Adoption and Children Act 2002 (as amended) and associated regulations provides the main framework governing adoption law.
- 12 The annual maximum cost of the contract is £42,000 per annum and will be in place for a period of 12 months with the option to extend for a further 2 x 12 months. The potential total maximum value of this contract is £126,000 if the contract is extended in full. The cost of this contract has been agreed based on the additional staff capacity needed by Coram-i to provide the breadth and depth of analysis flexibly in response to requests from the National Adoption Strategy Team.
- 13 The budget for this contract has been confirmed by the finance team.
- 14 Performance will be overseen by the National Adoption Team based within Leeds City Council. Support for Contract Management will be offered by the Leeds City Council Commissioning and Market Management Team as and when required.

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

- 15 With any direct award there must be consideration to the risk of challenge. However the risk is very minimal given the reasons detailed in paragraphs 3-6.

## **What are the legal implications?**

- 16 This report involves a significant operational decision as the total value of the contract is over £100,000 but less than £500,000. It is not subject to call in.
- 17 The decision is in line with Contract Procedure Rule 9.5 for the reasons detailed in paragraphs 3-6: Where the relevant Director considers there is genuinely no competition such that only a particular organisation or provider can meet the Councils specific requirements (e.g. when commissioning a unique product or service) a waiver of CPRs 9.1 and 9.2 need not be obtained. However before making any decision the Authorised Officer must consult with PACS and the lack of competition must be formally evidenced in writing and approved by the relevant Director as part of the Delegated Decision before the contract is entered into.

## **Options, timescales and measuring success**

### **What other options were considered?**

- 18 No other options have been considered for the reasons outlined in the report.

### **How will success be measured?**

- 19 The performance of the service will be monitored closely through regular liaison between the Contractor and the National Adoption team. The Contractor will work closely with the National Adoption team to ensure that there is enough delegates accessing the programme and there will be feedback from attendees made available to the National Adoption team.

### **What is the timetable and who will be responsible for implementation?**

20 Following approval for this decision, the new contract award will be processed as soon as possible, with a backdated start date of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023.

### **Appendices**

- Equality and Impact Screening Assessment

### **Background papers**

- None