

Delegated Officer Report

Decision Maker: Merlin Joseph – Interim Director of Children’s Services

Date of Decision: 28th March 2019

Subject: Delivery of Oldham’s Children’s Rights, Advocacy and Independent Visitor Service

Report Author: Anthony Shaw – Planning and Commissioning Manager

Ward (s): All

Reason for the decision: This report requests approval to extend the current contract for the delivery of Oldham’s Children’s Rights, Advocacy and Independent Visitor service from 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020.

Summary: The current contract for the delivery of Oldham’s Children’s Rights, Advocacy and Independent Visitor service is delivered by Cuffe and Lacey Ltd (formerly Excel Social Work and Therapeutic Services) who commenced delivery on 1st July 2017 following a competitive tender process. The contract is due to expire on March 31st 2019 although there is an option to extend this contract by a further twelve months.

The provision of the service is a statutory requirement and aims to -

- Ensure that children and young people are aware of and able to access appropriate services
- Provide advice and information so that children and young people are empowered to ensure their views and wishes are heard, their rights are respected and reflected in the decision making about their lives in order to assist them in making balanced decisions regarding their welfare and support.
- Provide an independent visitor to advise and befriend those children and young people where it is

considered in their best interests.

A summary of activity for 2018/19 is given below

Open Referrals	2018/2019			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
<i>General Advocacy Cases</i>	10	10	9	12
<i>IV Cases</i>	5	7	4	4
<i>CP Advocacy Cases</i>	55	57	37	42
Totals	70	74	50	58

Recruitment of Independent Visitors (IVs) has been an ongoing issue with this contract which predates the appointment of the current provider. The viability of linking the recruitment process with that for the children's champion scheme is being explored.

The provider is represented on the Corporate Parenting Panel and has made constructive working links with the Children in Care Council. It has been agreed that over the forthcoming summer period a feedback exercise will be undertaken by the organisation.

There is ongoing dialogue with the provider and the Safeguarding Unit about how to maximise the benefit of advocacy to the child protection conference process. This is with a view to freeing up capacity to focus on the advocacy work with children looked after.

What are the alternative option(s) to be considered? Please give the reason(s) for recommendation(s):

Option 1 – agree an extension to the current arrangements.

That approval is given to extend the contract for the delivery of Oldham's Children's Rights, Advocacy and Independent visitor service for one year for a total contract value of £61,000. This is within Procurement rules, and the scope for this extension is within the specification of the original contract.

This option maintains service continuity and enables current areas of improvement and development to be followed through to implementation.

Option 2 – source an alternative provider of the service.

The service will need to be recommissioned for delivery from 1st April 2020 and it is not viable to bring this process forward by any significant degree. The last time the service was tendered the current provider was the only bidder and this was thought due to the funding envelope available. Services such

as this could lend themselves to collaborative commissioning with another local authority and it is a possibility worth exploring.

Consultation: including any conflict of interest declared by relevant Cabinet Member consulted.

No conflicts of interest declared.

Recommendation(s):

That approval is given to extend the contract for the delivery of Oldham's Children's Rights, Advocacy and Independent visitor service for one year for a total contract value of £61,000 (Option 1). This is within Procurement rules, and the scope for this extension is within the specification of the original contract.

Implications:

What are the financial implications?

The request is to extend the contract for the delivery of Oldham's Children's Rights, Advocacy and Independent visitor service for one financial year commencing 1st April 2019. The total cost of the extension is retained at £61k, the same level as in 2018/19; a saving in real terms. Full budget provision exists.

Claire Shield, Senior Accountant

What are the legal implications?

There are provisions in Rule 17.1 (a) of the Council's Contract Procedure Rules to modify an existing contract where the original tendered contract contains clauses allowing for such modifications and the such clauses list the scope and nature of the modifications and that they would not alter the overall nature of the contract. The option to extend the contract within the terms and conditions of the contract would meet the criteria in Rule 17.1 - Elizabeth Cunningham Doyle

What are the procurement implications?

There is a Provision in the current contract to extend for further one year, The Rule 17.1 (a) of the Council's CPR allows that so therefore taking legal advice into consideration and Council CRP Procurement supports this extension. (Mohammad Sharif) Interim Sourcing 21/02/2019.

What are the Human Resources implications?

N/A

Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment attached or not required because (please give reason)

The preferred bidder is an established provider of services across the North West. They are established in actively engaging and promoting their services to young people from across the many diverse

communities within this wider boundary and will work to bring the same opportunities to Oldham. This recommended option provides continued opportunity for them to do so and to strengthen the model of service delivery for Oldham's vulnerable children and young people.

What are the *property* implications

There are no property implications as the service is delivered by an external company.

Risks:

If the preferred option is approved then there are no risks at this stage. If the contract is not extended, the Council has a statutory duty to provide advocacy services and independent visitors for vulnerable children and young people therefore we must ensure delivery of a commissioned service going forward.

Co-operative agenda

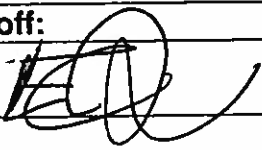
The recommended option aligns with the Council's Co-operative agenda. The preferred provider has been delivering services across the North West and engaging local people for several years and has a proven track record of supporting the most vulnerable young people through their services. The organisation also has established experience of working with its own youth forum and is keen to work with Oldham's Youth Council and to diversify their services into the delivery of advocacy and children's rights.

Has the relevant Legal Officer confirmed that the recommendations within this report are lawful and comply with the Council's Constitution? Yes

Has the relevant Finance Officer confirmed that any expenditure referred to within this report is consistent with the Council's budget? Yes

Are any of the recommendations within this report contrary to the Policy Framework of the Council? Yes

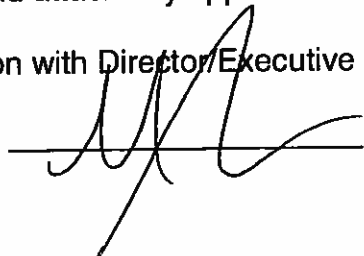
There are no background papers for this report

Report Author Sign-off:	
Ed Francis 	
Date: 29 th March 2019	

Please list and attach any appendices:- None

In consultation with Director/Executive Director

Signed :



Date:

29/3/19