

Delegated Officer Report

Decision Maker: Gerard Jones, Managing Director Children and Young People

Date of Decision: 21 July 2021

Subject: Extension of contracts of Family Decision-making team

Report Author: Leanne Cooper, Head of Assessment Service

Ward (s): N/A

Reason for the decision:

Summary:

The Family Decision-making Team were established in 2018 to help reduce the number of children and young people being taken into care. A significant proportion of those children and young people who find themselves in care do so because of the inability of their parents/carers to safely care for their child unsupported. In many of those cases constructive and active support from extended family can prevent children needing to be brought into care. Family Group Conferencing is an evidence-based approach which helps to bring those families together in a way which facilitates mutually agreed supportive actions.

A Family Group conferencing team of a manager, four Conference Co-ordinators and half time Business support officer were established to undertake this role in Oldham. They are known as the Family Decision-Making Team. The team are employed on fixed term contracts, some of which expire at the end of August 21.

The support offered to children and families at child in need level is being reviewed over the next 12 months in order to develop an offer which more effectively supports de-escalation of need and reduce rates of re-referral into children's social care. Pending this review, the report seeks approval to extend the contracts of all members of the Family Decision Making team on fixed term contracts to 30 June 2022. This will ensure continuity of employment for members of the team while the wider offer is reviewed and implemented.

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

Option A - Do Nothing

Doing nothing would mean that members of the team would leave before the child in need offer has been reviewed.

Option B Extend contracts of the Family Decision Making team to 30 June 2022

Extending contracts of the team would ensure continuity of employment for staff so that the Family Decision Making team can potentially form part of the refreshed Child in Need offer subject to the outcome of the review.

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

N/A

Recommendation(s):

Option B Extend contracts of Family Decision Making team currently on fixed term contracts to 30th June 2022

Implications:

What are the financial implications?

This report is seeking to extend the existing arrangements of the Family Decision Making Team on cost centre 12883 to 30 June 2022.

The posts are all included in the existing establishment and funding for the posts is undertaken by a drawdown of reserve from the Reform Investment Fund. The costs of these posts have been included in the forward plan profiling of the use of this reserve over the next 3 years.

Sufficient balance is available, and no additional cost will be incurred by the council.

At the end of the fixed term arrangements redeployment will be considered as an initial option before any call on possible redundancy costs. It is anticipated that any such costs will also be met from the reform investment fund reserve.

The table below summarises the posts in scope with a total annualised cost of approx. £0.236m including on costs, all to be met from the reform investment fund.

Sadrul Alam, Finance Manager

12883- Reform Investment Fund	FTE	Grade	Current end date
Family Group Conference Coordination Manager	1.00	Grade8	Permanent
Family Group Conference Coordinator	1.00	Grade7	18/9/21
Family Group Conference Coordinator	1.00	Grade7	1/6/22
Family Group Conference Coordinator	1.00	Grade7	15/6/22
Family Group Conference Coordinator	1.00	Grade7	5/8/21
Business Support Officer	0.50	Grade2	15/6/22

What are the **legal** implications?

Fixed term workers are afforded protection under the Fixed-term Employees (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations. At the expiry of a 2 year contract the worker will be entitled to a redundancy payment and at the expiry of 4 cumulative years, acquire the same rights as employees. Therefore, it is recommended that the structure is reviewed with a view to establishing the posts permanently if this arrangement is still required going forwards. The contracts will also need to be updated / extended.

Radhika Aggarwal Principal Employment Solicitor
N/A

What are the **procurement** implications?

What are the **Human Resources** implications?

Extensions to Fixed Term Contracts should be made in line with the Council's Fixed Term Worker guidance and appropriate contractual document should be issued to confirm any extension.

If redundancy is applicable at the end of a FTC, Council's Redundancy and Redeployment policies should be followed.

FTC guidance and the Council's Recruitment policy should be followed if there is a need to further review and establish the posts on a permanent basis.

[Jen Windle – HR Advisory Team Leader]

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

The team provide support to vulnerable children and their families. There is no identified adverse impact on groups with any protected characteristics.

What are the **property** implications

N/A

Risks:

There are no corporate level risks associated with the decision.

Co-operative agenda

The Family Decision Making team work with families through a structured approach which enables them to access support in meeting the needs of their children through their wider network of family and friends, rather than needing the involvement of children's services.

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?

No

List of Background Papers under Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972:

There are no background papers for this report

Report Author Sign-off:	
Date: June 2021	

In consultation with Managing Director Children and Young People, Gerard Jones



Signed :

Date: 21st July 2021

In consultation with Director of Workforce and Organisational Design



Signed :

Date: 21st July 2021