

# Delegated Decision Report

*Decision below £250k*



<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Holiday Activities and Food HAF Booking System</b>
<b>Decision maker: Senior Officer</b>	Neil Consterdine, Director of Communities
<b>Decision date:</b>	6 <sup>th</sup> February 2025
<b>Report author:</b>	<b>Carrie-Ann Varey</b>
<b>Ward (s):</b>	<b>All Wards</b>

## Reason for decision

The HAF programme is funded via grant from the Department for Education. Eligibility of the programme is means tested. The current system for ensuring that eligible children access the programme is no longer fit for use.

We would like to purchase a subscription for the HAF SEND and Wraparound Booking and Data Solution available from Eequ Limited. This is a booking system designed specifically for this purpose. The system is used by 19 Local Authorities. Whilst there are other systems available, none would be compatible with the current programme in Oldham. Based on cost comparison and labour time implications we believe the Eequ software would provide greater value for money than the current system.

The current process used does not require a subscription and so this process would be new rather than a replacement. As the Eequ system is unique it is not possible to obtain like for like quotations. This report is necessary to proceed as we are seeking to obtain authority to call off under the Crown Commercial Service G-Cloud 14 Framework Agreement, which is a legally compliant route to market.

Both the current system and the HAF SEND and Wraparound Booking and Data Solution available from Eequ must work in partnership with external organisations throughout Oldham. Some of these organisations have been early adopters of the Eequ system and have given good feedback.

The HAF Team have tried the Eequ system through a neighbouring LA and feel that the programme is ideal to support us to get the best value from the HAF grant.

## Recommendation(s)

To authorise a call-off contract to be awarded and entered into with EEQU Limited under Lot 2 (Cloud Software) of the Crown Commercial Service G-Cloud 14 Framework Agreement (RM1557.14) for the supply of a HAF SEND and Wraparound Booking and Data Solution on an annual basis for up to 24 months with a 1-year extension if required.

## **Background**

The Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme is entering into its fourth year in Oldham. The Department for Education notified all higher tier Local Authorities that the programme would be funded during the 2025-26 financial year on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2025. The first delivery period of the financial year will run from 7<sup>th</sup> April-18<sup>th</sup> April. Roll out of the proposed Eequ System will take between 8-11 weeks and so the timescales allowed by the funder are very tight.

The G-Cloud 14 Framework Agreement made available by the Crown Commercial Service offers a procurement compliant route to market for cloud-based computing services, including hosting, software, cloud support, and many off-the-shelf, pay-as-you-go cloud solutions. The HAF SEND and Wraparound Booking and Data Solution available from Eequ Limited can be accessed under Lot 2 of G-Cloud 14.

### **Alternative option(s) to be considered** *(please give the reason(s) for recommendation(s))*

An option for an alternative to the Eequ system would be a continuation of the current system. This has proven to be ineffective. The current process is to receive data from Revenues and Benefits around eligible children, we then trim and prepare the data along with a letter template. This is then sent to a printer (Civia) who generate between 14K-16K individual letters, which are posted to the individual addresses. Many letters are returned due to incorrect or outdated address information. Each letter contains an individual "HAF code". This code must be provided to the HAF activity organiser upon booking, to demonstrate eligibility for the provision. Many activity organisers do not actually take the code from the booker, potentially resulting in the resources being used in breach of our agreement with the DfE. Often families discard the letters and so email the council to obtain their code anyway. This is time consuming.

The Eequ system would trim the data and at point of booking provide an instant response of "yes" or "no" based on eligibility. There would be no letters or HAF codes and only eligible families would be able to book. Activity providers currently send their booking and attendance data to us, which we then sort, aggregate, and send to the DfE. The Eequ system would generate this report removing all steps above. This would ensure time efficiencies and a greater level of accuracy.

There are other systems that can be used for booking HAF places, however they have different features than this one and would not be effective in Oldham, for example, the Evoucher system relies on schools disseminating vouchers to their eligible students, not all schools engage with the programme and the result would be many children missing out.

### **Consultation** *(include any conflict of interest declared by relevant Cabinet Member consulted)*

*No conflicts of interest have been identified.*

## Risks

- 1- *Delay to a decision in this regard will result in the system being rolled out late. Due to late funding decisions by the Department for Education the roll out of this initiative was delayed until affirmative funding decisions were made. As a consequence the led time for this project has been shorter than expected. We politely request timely decision making around this to offset this risk.*

## Implications

Financial	<i>The entirety of the cost for the Eequ system will be funded by the HAF grant. The Eequ system does provide good value for money. The current system of posting letters costs between £11k-£20k per financial year and a great deal of staff time. The proposed system is £15k per financial year. Whilst staff time will be required, we project that this will be significantly less than the current process.</i>
Legal	<p><i>G-Cloud 14 is a procurement compliant Framework Agreement which offers an online catalogue where public sector customers can buy cloud-based computing services such as hosting, software, and cloud support. Includes many off-the-shelf, pay-as-you-go cloud solutions. G-Cloud 14 is available from 29 October 2024 until 28 April 2026. The agreement is designed to allow for direct contract awards with the successful provider identified following market engagement with the available providers followed by the completion of a 6 step buying process.</i></p> <p><i>Therefore, provided the Commercial Procurement Unit is satisfied that the 6 step process has been correctly conducted and that the result of the process is that EEUQ Limited has been identified as the preferred provider, there are no known legal implications in respect of the proposed recommendations – the procurement and contract award will be in line with the Contract Procedure Rules.</i></p> <p><i>If the appointment is approved, a Call-Off contract, in the G-Cloud 14 prescribed form, must be put in place and legal advice should be taken as required.</i></p> <p><i>Sarah Orrell – Commercial &amp; Procurement Solicitor</i></p>
Equality impact including implications for Children	<i>EIA not deemed to be necessary as the booking process will not change in any significant way for residents. Any</i>

and Young People	<i>changes to process caused by the Eequ system will be for partner organisations. The new system will be far more accessible than the current process. Officer support will be offered to the partner organisations through the transition process.</i>
Other	<p><i>Commercial Procurement Unit supports the recommendation, procure Eequ Ltd, Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme, SEND Short Breaks and Family Hubs software via G Cloud 14.</i></p> <p><i>Procurement have initiated a Project: CCS Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme, SEND Short Breaks and Family No 62208 via CCS Digital Marketplace, for the following criteria: All lots, All categories, All subcategories, Search term: Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme as well as SEND Short Breaks and Family Hubs, No filters applied – with Eequ Ltd being listed as the only available supplier.</i></p> <p><i>As per the CCS Buying Guidelines, if there is only 1 supplier matching the search criteria, the Contract can be direct awarded with no further action necessary.</i></p> <p><i>G Cloud 14 framework is compliant with the Councils Contract Procedure Rules.</i></p> <p><i>Senga Henstock, ICT Senior Buyer, 20<sup>th</sup> Jan 2025</i></p>


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

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

1. None

## Appendix

1. None

Report author sign-off	
Role	Head of Youth services
Date of sign-off	28/02/2025

<b>Approval</b>	
Officer approval sign-off	<i>N. Constable</i>
Role	Director of Communities
Date of sign-off	6 <sup>th</sup> February 2025