

CHILDREN'S CENTRE SERVICES (CP1439-17): OUTCOME OF TENDER AND AWARD OF CONTRACT

Report of the Chief Officer Children's Services.

Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Cabinet (and confirmation under the provisions of the Council's Constitution) before taking effect.

Recommendations:

That approval be given to the contract award recommendations set out in Report ACH/17/58.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Children's Centre Services are the key delivery mechanism for the local authority to meet their statutory duties referenced in the Children Act 1989, the Childcare Act 2006, and Working Together 2015. To improve the well-being of young children and reduce inequalities Children's Centre Services are key delivery partners within Devon's Children's Services Delivery Plan and Targeted Families Support programme (national Troubled Families Programme), they are critical to the delivery of Early Help to children and families from pre-birth through to eight years of age.
- 1.2 The Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy, emphasises the need for children to have the best start in life. This is further supported by the work of the Wider Devon Sustainability and Transformation Plan where Best Start in Life is a priority coupled with a focus on preventing adverse childhood experiences.
- 1.3 Achieving the Best Start in Life for children spans the delivery of a wide range of services. It is vital that the system of services, including Public Health Nursing and Children's Centres work effectively with a common purpose to ensure outcomes are improved.
- 1.4 As part of the design process through an options appraisal, joint working between services will be explored to define the co-dependencies and to increase integrated working.
- 1.5 In Devon the current Children's Centre Service offers a balance of universal and targeted services for families with children aged four and under. Through the life of the new contract the service will move to providing targeted Early Help support for families increasing the age group to children aged eight and under.
- 1.6 Following extensive consultation in 2014 the following principles were agreed;
 - Focus services on the most vulnerable
 - Reduce building costs

- Focus funding on front line delivery
 - Encourage others to deliver some universal services from Children's Centre buildings
 - Reduce numbers of contracts from 43 to 8 aligning to city/council boundaries in order to reduce management cost
- 1.7 The new commissioning model was adopted and the Children's Centres in Northern Devon and the South West areas were completed by April 1st 2015 with 6 contracts let aligned to district council boundaries. The recent procurement process undertaken in Northern Devon and South and West Devon culminated in one provider being successful in all contract areas which has realised further efficiencies in management costs.
- 1.8 To continue with the efficiencies realised through rationalising the contracts and to allow for the increase in service provision (to families with children aged 8 and under) it was agreed to rationalise the service into one contract covering the authority boundaries of DCC. This has also been the natural results from previous procurements which have resulted in a single provider being successful across the service areas.
- 1.9 The total estimated value of the Children's Centre Services contract is approximately £29.5 million over 5 years (the contract will be for a 3 year term with an option to extend for up to a further 2 years).

2. Children's Centre Services: context and contract design

- 2.1 The Children's Centre Services contract will;
- Embed the service into Early Help system
 - Deliver universal offer for families wanting to return to work or access training opportunities to enable them to do so
 - Deliver **targeted** intervention and support to children 8 years and under
 - Deliver a whole family approach to improving outcomes for families
 - Support families to prevent the need for statutory intervention
 - Deliver a range of evidenced based parenting interventions
 - Improve joint working to improve school readiness and increase early help particularly for children with communication needs.
 - All of this will be delivered through a progressive contract, acknowledging the risks associated with the transition from universal to a more targeted approach

The service will meet the needs of targeted families with children aged eight years and under within the boundaries of Devon County Council's administrative area and will align to the Children and Families Partnership's four areas of Exeter, Mid and East Devon, South Devon and Northern Devon. All parents and families who are expectant parents or have a child aged eight or under, will have access to a Children's Centre across the locality area.

- 2.2 Robust performance measures will be in place to ensure the effective delivery of the service including the transition to targeted services and increase in eligible families. This will be backed up with structured contract monitoring

arrangements and management information which will be used to further develop and target the service.

3. Financial Considerations

3.1 The financial impact of the contract is set out in the Part 2 report.

4. Sustainability Considerations

4.1 The single contract structure was adopted because it provides the optimum combination of service delivery and efficiency which will allow the Commissioners and the Provider to widen the service to include families with children aged up to eight years and under and mitigate reductions in the budget available. This structure has also been proven effective by the results of previous re-commissioning processes.

5. Equality Considerations

5.1 A detailed impact assessment was undertaken at the pre-procurement stage of this project and the outcomes reflected in the construction of the tender and contract documentation and in the evaluation of the tenders and as such meets our equality duties. **EIA attached**

6. Risk Management

6.1 Risks identified as part of the process are that the service will not progress from a universal to a targeted service including increasing the eligible age range for families as intended and that there may be gaps between this service and other commissioned services. These have been mitigated by designing into the service specification robust performance monitoring and management processes and ensuring that it is explicit in the specification that the provider must work closely and collaboratively with all partner agencies and providers.

7. Summary/Conclusions/Reasons for Recommendations

7.1 The new Children's Centre Services contract will realise efficiencies through the single contract / provider model both through reduced costs to the provider which would be passed on to the authority in the form of increased budget allocated to direct service delivery and in management and monitoring of the contract for DCC officers. These efficiencies will allow DCC to ensure the sustainability of the service despite budgetary pressures and allow for the increase of service delivery to fulfil an identified gap in provision that was not previously covered. It is also intended that earlier more targeted interventions will prevent the need for statutory intervention avoiding the related impacts of this.

Electoral Divisions: All

Cabinet Member for Children's Services: Councillor James McInnes

Head of Children's Commissioning: Fiona Fleming

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972: LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

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BACKGROUND PAPER DATE FILE REFERENCE