

Cabinet – 3 February 2010

Intensive Family Support Services – delegated authority to tender and accept contract

Portfolio: Councillor R Walker, Children's services

Service: Children's Services

Wards: All

Key decision: Yes

Forward plan: Yes

1. Summary of report

- 1.1 Children's Services provides a number of services to support families and to prevent family breakdown. Much of this work is undertaken by Universal services through Children's Centres, childminders, sessional support, schools and health providers. Often this intervention is specifically targeted at children in need or vulnerable families. In situations where family breakdown is likely and particularly where the children are older a more intensive and specialised intervention is necessary. Experience has shown that this service is more successful when delivered in partnership with the local authority but provided by non statutory agencies. This report seeks authority to tender for this intensive service and then award a contract, as required by the Councils Constitution because the value of the contract will be in excess of £500,000.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That authority be delegated to the Executive Director for Children's Services, in consultation with the portfolio holder, to seek and accept tenders for the provision of Intensive Family Support Services and to award the contract (including authorising execution/signature of the contract and ancillary documents) to the most suitable contractors having regard to Best Value for the works/services as set out in the report.
- 2.2 That the contract be awarded for a period of 2 years with an opportunity to extend for a further year subject to evidence of improved outcomes for vulnerable children including prevention of family breakdown.

3. Background information

- 3.1 The Council has previously provided an intensive family support service through a contractual arrangement with a voluntary organisation for seven years. The approach has evaluated well, has been successful in challenging requests for care, reduced family conflict and engaged children and young people in positive

activities. The current contract is due to expire, a review of the current service has been undertaken and this has demonstrated value for money and improved outcomes however some improvements to the current service delivery model are considered necessary particularly as this will provide opportunities to meet a greater range of need and the potential to secure funding from Government funded initiatives

3.2 The service is required to work directly with children and young people, their immediate family and where indicated extended family and friends. Engagement may cover a number of days or weeks and interventions will be tailored to meet the needs of individual families, an exit strategy will involve networking with local services to provide ongoing support and monitoring as necessary.

3.3 Children's Services are working closely with Walsall NHS, who is increasingly supporting jointly commissioning services and aligning budgets where such opportunities become evident.

4. Resource considerations

4.1 Financial:

The annual costs of the proposed service are £312,000 this will be met from mainstream Childrens Services budget although negotiations are underway to secure funds from the Think Family pilot, this will be subject to a guarantee that grant conditions can be met without detriment to the core service requirement

4.2 Legal:

The council will act as lead commissioner. Officers will assess and implement the 'best value' and legally compliant route.

4.3 Staffing:

The staff will be employed by the provider; Council Officers will be responsible for contract management

5. Citizen impact

The service will be designed to demonstrate improved outcomes for children and will offer support to ensure wherever possible that children and young people will remain with their birth family or family and friends network.

6. Community safety

The service will be expected to demonstrate skills and knowledge of work with children and young people displaying anti social behaviour. The service will be expected to network with specialists in this field and to work in partnership with others where this is felt to be in the interest of those concerned

7. Environmental impact

There is no direct environmental impact.

8. Performance and risk management issues

8.1 Risk:

The risk is ensuring there is sufficient funding available for the life of the contract. An additional risk is that if the contract is terminated due to lack of funds an increase in the number of looked after children could occur. Ongoing dialogue with Integrated Young People Services as they develop targeted services is part of the process and is critical to long term sustainability.

8.2 Performance management:

A robust performance management framework will be included in the service specification and regular reports on key performance indicators will required.

9. Equality implications

The contracted services will need to demonstrate a detailed understanding of the diversity agenda, demonstrate how to put this into practice and how to respond to the needs of different vulnerable groups including disabled children and parents.

10. Consultation

Social workers and their Managers have been fully consulted.

Background papers

none

Author

Kay Child
Interim Assistant Director
01922 652756
childk@walsall.gov.uk



Pauline Pilkington
Executive Director
Date: 15 January 2010



Councillor Rachel Walker
Portfolio holder
Date: 21 January 2010