
Report of the Strategic Director to the meeting of Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be held on Wednesday 10 February 2016

Subject: Tendering of contract over £2m for Bradford Connexions service

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Summary statement:

In line with the requirements of Council Standing Order 4.4.1 to report all proposed procurement exercises with a total estimated contract value of over £2million prior to commencement of the procurement tendering process, we wish to advise of the planned procurement of the Connexions contract and thereby give Members the opportunity to engage in the process prior to inviting tenders from the marketplace.

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Overview & Scrutiny Area:
Children's Services

1. **SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This service is commissioned to fulfil statutory duty as outlined in 2.1 to 2.4.
- 1.2 The current contract is jointly commissioned with a number of Bradford schools and colleges and as such is funded through a combination of Council money and contributions from education providers. To date, 18 providers have committed to joining the new joint commissioning exercise.
- 1.3 The current contract was let for three years with the option to extend for two one year periods. The option to extend was taken up for this year but the intent is to go to market and not to take up the final year's extension; the contract will expire at the end of August 2016. The budget consultation proposes a significant saving against the value of this contract.

2. **BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 Under the Education and Skills Act 2008 [ESA] Local Authorities have existing statutory responsibilities to support young people into education, employment with training. These include securing sufficient suitable education and training provision for all young people aged 16 to 19 and for those aged 20 to 24 with an Education, Health and Care Plan. In addition, support needs to be in place that will encourage, enable and assist young people to participate in education or training.
- 2.2 The ESA placed additional new statutory duties on Local Authorities with regard to raising participation age [RPA] for 16 and 17 year olds:
- to promote the effective participation in education and training of young people covered by the duty to participate.
 - to have in place arrangements to identify those who are not participating.
 - to provide strategic leadership in their areas to support participation in education, training and employment
- 2.3 Local Authorities must also collect information to identify young people who are not participating, or who are at risk of not doing so, to target resources on those who need them most. This means arrangements need to be in place to confirm young people's current activity at regular intervals. This may be through exchange of information with education and training providers and other services as well as direct contact with young people.
- 2.4 Local Authorities are expected to continue to work with schools to identify those who are in need of targeted support or who are at risk of not participating post 16. They will need to agree how these young people can be referred for intensive support, drawn from the range of education and training support services locally.

The purpose of this contract is to meet these duties and expectations.

- 2.5 The initial contract will be for three years, between September 2016 and August 2019. There will be an option to agree one 12 month extension. The extension will be subject to the availability of funding and contract performance.

- 2.6 The Council's contribution funds NEET identification, reduction and prevention activity and a limited universal IAG offer through the Connexions centres. The schools' contribution pays for Careers Advisor time in the school.
- 2.7 Currently the Council also delivers NEET specialist provision (Tier 1 NEET) inhouse through the Neighbourhoods Team. It is proposed that the NEET provision is considered as part of the re-tender of the Connexions contract to provide a more consistent and streamlined service

3. **REPORT ISSUES**

- 3.1 The requirement of the service provided to the Council is divided into two elements as follows:

3.1.1 Tracking

In seeking to achieve the shared outcomes identified at 3.2 – participation rates, NEET and 'unknown' – CBMDC will monitor the contributing statutory data collection activities. This will include:

- the timely completion of the *Year 11 Intended Destination Survey* and the number and proportion of young people with no recorded destination
- the timely completion of the *September Offer* for Year 11 and Year 12 young people and the number and proportion of young people with no recorded offer
- the timely completion of the *Activity Survey for Year 11 Leavers* and the number and proportion of young people who are not in Full-Time learning or whose 'activity is unknown'
- the timely processing of information about 'early leavers' enabling young people, who might otherwise become NEET or 'unknown', to receive rapid and intensive support to re-engage with education or training.

3.1.2 Targeted Service

CBMDC expects service delivery to contribute to a sustained increase in the number and proportion of vulnerable young people who participate in education or training beyond statutory education.

Specifically targets will be agreed for the participation of young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan, Looked After Children, young people leaving Care, young people who are known to the Youth Offending Service; parents to be and young parents, and young carers.

3.2 **Outcomes**

The Council expects service delivery to contribute to:

- a sustained increase in the proportion of young people who participate in education or training beyond the end of Year 11;
- a parallel reduction in the number and proportion of young people who are NEET or who become NEET if they leave provision early; and

- a parallel reduction in the number and proportion of young people whose destination is 'unknown'. This is a prerequisite step to successful re-engagement.

4. OPTIONS

- 4.1 This service must also be aligned with the Bradford Pathways programme to ensure that we give young people the best possible chance of progressing through the 16-19 phase into employment and Higher Education, and is also being considered within the on-going post-16 review in Bradford.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- 5.1 **Improving Educational Attainment:** Getting on the right programme of study will greatly enhance young people's chances of successful outcomes. This contract will support decision making processes.
- 5.2 **Support for the District's economy, jobs, skills and city centre regeneration:** The service will help young people better understand their pathway to the labour market and therefore contribute to them being better prepared for employment.
- 5.3 **Supporting the most vulnerable adults, children and families and Reducing health inequalities**
Monitoring the participation and progression of our most vulnerable groups will inform targeted interventions to achieve the best educational outcomes and signpost health and care support services for young people facing serious and often multiple barriers to learning and independent living.

6. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL

- 6.1 The financial resources will be allocated after the budget consultation has concluded. The proposal is that a significant reduction is made to the current contract value and that the Tier 1 NEET service becomes part of the tendered service.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES

- 7.1 A project Board has been set up to oversee the commissioning process for this contract comprising appropriate staff from across the Council and Chaired by the Assistant Director Children's Services.
- 7.2 There is a project plan in place and this is being implemented by a project team again with specialist, expert support from across Council departments.

8. LEGAL APPRAISAL

- 8.1 There is a requirement to advertise and re-tender the contracts under the Council's Standing Orders and Procurement Strategy and to ensure compliance with EU legislation due to value of the individual contracts.
- 8.2 Contract Standing Orders (4.4) state that:
"Before inviting tenders or quotations, the Appropriate Officer must:

4.4.1 for contracts with a total estimated contract value in excess of £2m, report details to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee using the agreed pre-contract reporting process determined by the Assistant Director of Commissioning & Procurement”

8.3 ‘EU Procurement Rules’ implemented by the UK set out the law on public procurement. The EU Financial Thresholds at which the EU Procurement rules are applicable are:

“As of 1st January 2016 these are: Works (maintenance and construction) €5,225,000 (£4,104,394) and Services and Goods €209,000 (£164,176)”.

9. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

9.1 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

There are no issues arising from the Council’s Equality & Diversity Strategy to consider as part of this report.

9.2 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

The primary purposes of the Council specification are pre-16 work to ensure participation of vulnerable groups in education and training post-16, to re-engage 16-18 NEET young people in positive destinations and to track young people to ensure they are engaged in employment, education and training.

The IAG provided will cover a range of support that shall equip young people to manage their personal and career development and confront barriers to learning and the labour market.

As such this will contribute to the longer-term economic engagement of these young people, their career and personal development, and mitigate the risk of them becoming disengaged from the labour market, society and their communities.

The successful contractor will be expected to act as the strategic lead for IAG in the District, identifying opportunities for using other funding and existing networks to enhance the Council’s investment in the contract and provide a greater service to the young people.

The contractor will also be expected to feed into the Producer City governance structures, specifically through the Workforce Development Advisory Committee and the People and Innovation Board as required as well as contributing resources to the Bradford Pathways programme and to engage with the review of post-16 provision in the District.

9.3 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS

The commissioning of this service would not impact Council’s own and the wider District’s carbon footprint and emissions from other greenhouse gasses.

9.4 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

There are no Community Safety implications arising out of the implementation of the recommendations in this report.

9.5 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

There are no Human Rights Act implications arising out of the implementation of the recommendations in this report.

9.6 TRADE UNION

Trade Unions will be involved, as appropriate, with consultation over the Tier 1 NEET service over whether there are any TUPE implications for Council staff.

9.7 WARD IMPLICATIONS

There are no Ward implications arising out of the implementation of the recommendations in this report.

**9.8 AREA COMMITTEE ACTION PLAN IMPLICATIONS
(for reports to Area Committees only)**

N/a

10. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

None.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the report is noted and the option to undertake the tendering exercise for the Connexions contract be noted.

12. APPENDICES

None.

13 Background documents

None.