

Cabinet Member Children and Young People's Services

Report Title: Approval of Early Years Training Providers Framework Agreement

Report by Executive Director Adults and Children and Director of Operations, Children.

**Key Decision:
CYP06(09/10)
Yes**

Part I

**Electoral
Division(s):
N/A**

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to seek approval to undertake a procurement process in order to continue to deliver the training and support programme offered by the Early Childhood Service (ECS) on behalf of the County Council to all private, voluntary and independent (PVI) early years and childcare providers in West Sussex.

As a local Authority there is a statutory duty to:

- Provide information, advice and training to childcare providers.
- To 'narrow the gap' between the most and least disadvantaged groups of children and to improve outcomes for all children, Early Years Outcome Duty.
- To manage the implementation of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

The current contracts with training providers commenced in April 2004, the last extension was in February 2009 for a period of 24 months until 31st March 2011. They cannot be extended further and a new framework agreement is needed to sustain the Service's capacity to deliver this programme.

The training and support programme needs to be flexible and able to respond to:

- the needs of the customers in West Sussex,
- reflect the objectives in the West Sussex Children and Young Peoples Plan and the Play Strategy, currently in draft,
- the ECS Workforce Development Plans and
- the local and national strategies for the early years and childcare workforce.

The quality of the delivery will be monitored through regular contract management using the terms and conditions established through the procurement framework, the principles and values established by the West Sussex Children's Trust and Local Safeguarding Children Board and quality standards for delivery within the sector as appropriate.

Recommendation(s)

That the Cabinet Member approves:

1) The commencement of the process in accordance with corporate procurement strategy, by the most appropriate procurement route, for the provision of training for a contract period of 4 years minimum with the option to extend for periods of up to 3 years to a maximum of 7 years subject to performance.

2) In accordance with the Scheme of Delegation, authority is delegated to the

Executive Director Adults and Children to award the contract to the bidder submitting the most economically advantageous tender.

3) The contract to be awarded from September 2010 to allow time to work with the successful training providers to develop a programme of training and development that can be published in advance and run from April 2011.

4) In accordance with the Corporate Procurement Strategy the contract should be made available to other local authorities within the geographical boundaries of East and West Sussex, Brighton and Hove, Surrey, Hampshire and Portsmouth.

1. Background Information

1.1 Every Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) early years and childcare setting and childminder in West Sussex has been able to access a combination of funding and support provided by West Sussex County Council (WSCC). The qualifications and continuing professional development programme has been commissioned and fully funded by WSCC for the last 10 years using the DCSF Sure Start Early Years and Childcare Grant.

1.2 There are currently 42 active training providers on the framework. The current contracts which have already been extended cannot be extended again and a new framework agreement is needed to sustain the capacity to deliver the training and support programme run by WSCC.

1.3 The programme aims, to improve quality in settings, outcomes for children and narrowing the gap between the more and less able.

The WSCC training and support programme includes Statutory Training, Business, Leadership and Management, Early Years Foundation Stage and sector qualifications. It is designed to:

- continuously improve the quality of practice in settings by developing the skills of the workforce to be able to provide a high quality, experience for young children;
- support the recruitment and/or training of a graduate to lead the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) for every PVI full daycare provider in West Sussex;
- increase qualification levels across the workforce to ensure the sector workforce is competent and confident;
- increase the level of practitioner's basic skills promoting GCSE English and Mathematics to support long-term career development towards a graduate profession;
- promote training to meet statutory welfare requirements of the EYFS.
- support settings to meet the regulatory requirements of:
 - all leaders and deputies to have at least a full and relevant level 3 qualification and be working towards a higher level;
 - at least 50% of the rest of the staff to be level 2 qualified in all settings;
 - ensuring that staff qualifications are full and relevant as specified by the CWDC qualification list for those practitioners working in the EYFS.

- 1.4 The Government's National aims are:
- Every full day care setting to employ a graduate with Early Years Professional Status (EYPS) to lead work with children and parents by 2015 and two graduates in areas of deprivation.
 - Every children's centre offering early learning and care to employ a full time qualified teacher within 18 months of opening and a Graduate with Early Years Professional Status (EYPS) by 2010.
 - Full day care settings to be working towards all staff holding a level 3 qualification by 2015.
- 1.5 WSCC supports approximately 6000 practitioners working in PVI early years and childcare settings including:
- 1100 registered childminders.
 - 580 early years and childcare providers.
 - 200 reception classes in maintained primary schools implementing the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- 1.6 The new procurement Framework will incorporate the changing needs and priorities of the sector including:
- increased status of the Children's Trust by providing opportunities for a more integrated training programme across the whole children's workforce;
 - the new qualifications and credit framework and the introduction of a new qualification for the sector from September 2010;
 - the potential of complementary service to include course promotion.
- 1.7 Subject to consultation and consideration with colleagues in procurement and legal services the procurement will be undertaken by adopting the most appropriate procurement process to source a range of service providers who can deliver a comprehensive training programme for WSCC.

The contract value for the provision of the training and support programme exceeds the EU procurement directive threshold for services and as a Part B service.

A fully compliant EU open procurement process will be undertaken to establish a framework of training providers that is fair, open and transparent.

Any TUPE (Transfer of Undertaking and Protection of Employment) issues will be considered as part of the procurement process.

In addition to being able to provide training services the procurement strategy should allow for other local authorities to participate in the contract within the geographical boundaries of East and West Sussex, Brighton and Hove, Surrey, Hampshire and Portsmouth.

An indicative timetable subject to the procurement process adopted

March 2010	Cabinet Member approval to undertake a procurement process.
April 2010	Consider all procurement options, agree the procurement process and prepare specification of requirements.

23 April 2010	Advert for tender to appear
25 June 2010	Tender closing date
July – August 2010	Assessment of bids
September 2010	Award contract
October – December 2010	Development of programme
January – March 2011	Promotion of programme
April 2011	Contract and delivery start date

2. Consultation

- 2.1 The ECS has consulted and assessed the views of customers and has undertaken research and consultation with our neighbouring local authorities, training providers and representatives from the sector. Further details are in the customer focus appraisal. See appendix A.

3. Customer Focus Appraisal

- 3.1 A Customer Focus Appraisal has been undertaken and is attached as an Appendix to this report. Reference number 1011-AC-LM

The findings from this will be incorporated and integrated into the design of the service through the specification of requirements.

4. Resource Implications and Value for Money

- 4.1 Funding is identified from the Sure Start Early Years and Childcare Grant (SSEYCCG) from the Department for Schools and families (DCSF). The annual indicative Workforce and Quality expenditure is in the region of £500,000. The actual amount is subject to the budget allocated each year and is tailored to fit within the allocation from the grant.
- 4.2 The ECS SSEYCCG allocation from the DCSF is allocated to local authorities in a three year cycle.
- 4.3 There are no cost savings identified as this proposal is to enable the Early Childhood Service to continue to provide the training and support programme beyond the expiry of the current contract.
- 4.4 The following were alternatives considered:
- A - Using in house staff to deliver the training and support programme.
 - B - Reducing the training programme offered by not funding some areas of training to reduce the costs.
 - C – Run a procurement process to establish a framework where a variety of training providers can be used to deliver the training and support programme.

Option A – The ECS has had limited success with recruiting qualified teachers and there is no capacity within the existing team.

Option B - The ECS will be reducing one aspect of the training programme Settings will have to cover the cost of paediatric first aid. Other local authorities have also taken this decision.

Option C is the best option in terms of continuity of provision of the service to customers and fulfilling the statutory requirements of the local authority. The framework will be flexible in terms of annual amounts to match agreed budget.

- 4.5 The contract should be awarded to the service providers (bidder) that submit the most economically advantageous tender (MEAT) that balances technical and quality requirements against commercial elements to ensure the delivery of an affordable service that is best value for money.
- 4.6 The cost of procurement is in the order of £6000 (approximately 35 days) and is budgeted within the service budget from the SSEYCC grant.

5. **Risk Management Implications**

- 5.1 The main risk associated with the proposal is that no framework will make delivery of the training and support programme impossible and result in WSCC not meeting their statutory duties.

There are limited risks with the proposal as the establishment of a framework agreement will not guarantee training providers work. Funding will be subject to continuation of funding from central government and will be adjusted annually to fit within priorities and the budget available.

- 5.2 The successful service providers will be:
- awarded work based on meeting the requirements of the procurement process;
 - monitored to ensure the quality and delivery of the training commissioned;
 - required to have appropriate levels of insurance in accordance with Standing Orders on Procurement and Contracts;
 - required to comply with the County Council's health and safety requirements.
- 5.3 A risk and issues log will be kept as part of the procurement administrative process.

6. **Crime and Disorder Act Implications**

- 6.1 There are no implications:

7. **Human Rights Act Implications**

- 7.1 There are no implications:

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Papers

Appendix A Customer Focus Appraisal - reference number 1011-AC-LM