

<b>Bath &amp; North East Somerset Council</b>				
MEETING/ DECISION MAKER:	<b>Cllr Dine Romero, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Communities</b>			
MEETING/ DECISION DATE:	<b>On or after 15th July 2022</b> (for single Member decision)	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE: <b>E 3385</b>		
TITLE:	Bath West Children's Centre Service Procurement			
WARD:	All			
<b>AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM</b>				
<b>List of attachments to this report:</b> None				

## 1 THE ISSUE

The Bath West Children's Centre Service is a key part of the Early Help offer for Bath and North East Somerset. The contract expires at the end of March 2023 but it is recommended to extend for a further year until March 2024 before considering the future longer term tender options to allow sufficient time to ensure the future children's centre service aligns with emerging national key policies and areas of work, such as Family Hubs and SEND Review, to ensure that we go out to tender for the right service. The Annual Contract Value is £384,959.84 (below threshold for procurement) and the process to extend has received an Exemption from Contract Standing Orders, approved by the Contract Panel Review.

## 2 RECOMMENDATION

**The Council Member is asked to;**

- 2.1** Give approval to award the Bath West Children's Centre Service to the existing provider for a further year (until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024).

## 3 THE REPORT

The Bath West Children's Centre Service is a key part of the Early Help offer for Bath and North East Somerset and aligns with the Council's internal Children's Centre services and Connecting Families to provide targeted early help for children and their parent/carers who are at risk of experiencing poor social, developmental and emotional outcomes.

The Annual Contract Value is £384,959 (below threshold for procurement) and the process to extend has received an Exemption from Contract Standing Orders, approved by the Contract Panel Review.

The contract expires at the end of March 2023 but it is recommended to extend for a further year until March 2024 before considering the future longer term tender options to allow sufficient time to ensure the future children's centre service aligns with the following national key policies and areas of work:

1. Family Hub Transformation Fund

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/family-hubs-transformation-fund>

There is an emerging national direction for local authorities to move towards a "family hub" model of support. The Family Hubs local transformation fund application guide states:

"The Government has committed to championing family hubs. Family hubs are a way of joining up locally and bringing existing family help services together to improve access to services, connections- between families, professionals, services, and providers, and putting relationships at the heart of family help. Family hubs bring together services for families with children of all ages (0-19) or up to 25 with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) with a great Start for Life at their core."

B&NES have made an application to the Family Hubs local transformation fund stating a commitment to develop children's centres into family hubs, building on the existing 0-5 service offer to increase to 0-19, extending to 25 for children and young people with SEND. The development of family hubs significantly impacts of the future delivery requirements of our Children's Centre services including the Bath West service.

2. Family Hubs/ Start for Life <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/infants-children-and-families-to-benefit-from-boost-in-support>

The government has announced further investment for 75 eligible local authorities to create new family hubs in their area to give parents advice on how to take care of their child and make sure they are safe and healthy (including parenting and breastfeeding support). B&NES are not included in the latest local authorities who are eligible as yet but this funding and focus on family hubs nationally emphasises the need to consider this and the implications it has on future commissioning of family support services.

3. SEND Review: right support, right place, time

The publication of this green paper marks the start of a 13 week consultation process, closing on 1 July 2022. Later this year, a national SEND delivery plan, setting out government's response to the consultation and how change will be implemented. Children's centre services contribute to our local SEND offer leading on support for those aged 0-5 and this review, again, impacts on the future delivery model.

#### **4. Data Accelerator Programme**

B&NES has recently been awarded funding as part of a data accelerator bid to implement processes to allow us to have a single view of the child. This, together with joint working in the family hubs would help to build a clearer picture of need, what needs to change, and any unidentified gaps which will help inform the future commissioning outcomes of this service.

Timescales to ensure we are able to align these policies and work for the benefit of our families do not allow for them to be incorporated into tendering for a new service to start in April 2023. An exemption to continue with the existing service for one year until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 provides the opportunity to align with strategic aims for family hubs and SEND, undertake full engagement with service users and wider stakeholders to develop service specifications that ensure improve experiences and outcomes for families.

The current contract is held by Action for Children and, since the contract commenced in April 2018, the service has been assessed annually against the Early Help Quality Assurance Framework which involves monitoring standards around assessment, support planning, outcomes and impact. This process includes case file audits, interviewing staff and practitioners as well as families accessing the service. The service has consistently shown that they are delivering targeted support to a very high standard with positive feedback

### **4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS**

#### **4.1 Community Engagement**

The Early Help Quality Assurance Framework includes consulting with young people, volunteers and practitioners delivering early help to ensure that support is accessible, effective and informed by service users. Engagement and consultation with service providers is a key part of the contract management process for all early help targeted support providers and quarterly monitoring includes information on referrals, referral sources, outcomes achieved and case studies. Further consultation with key referrers, wider stakeholders and young people will be undertaken as part of the tender process to ensure that any future service specification addresses any concerns and supports the service to provide the right help at the right time and achieve positive outcomes.

The Bath West Children's Centre service will continue to actively engage with local residents through their recruitment for volunteers, links with local businesses and fundraising activities.

#### **4.2 Equality Issues**

The current and future service is and will be accessible and responsive to the needs of all children and young people and their families who are at risk of experiencing poor outcomes irrespective of gender, sexuality, disability, age, ethnic origin or cultural and religious beliefs. The service will ensure that fair access, diversity and inclusion is embedded within the culture of the service and this is monitored through the Early Help Quality Assurance Framework.

## **5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)**

5.1 Currently no additional resource implications.

## **6 RISK MANAGEMENT**

6.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.

## **7 EQUALITIES**

7.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment will be undertaken as part of the future tender process to commence in 2023.

## **8 CLIMATE CHANGE**

Future tenders will adhere to the new national Procurement Policy (PPN) 05/21 where there is a much greater emphasis on Social Value and the B&NES Procurement and Commissioning Strategy objectives which include considering carbon footprint and sustainability impacts of all products and services and encouraging the use of local suppliers to further reduce carbon footprint.

## **9 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

9.1 The option to undertake a tender exercise for a new contract to commence in April 2024 was considered but discounted to allow time to consider the impact of emerging policies referenced in section 3 above.

## **10 CONSULTATION**

10.1 The recommendation to award the Bath West Children's Centre service to the existing provider for an additional year until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 has been considered and agreed by the Leader of the Council, Chief Executive, Chief Operating Officer, Director of Public Health, Director of Children's Services and Education, shared with Informal Cabinet on 7<sup>th</sup> June and agreed at the Procurement Steering Group on 13<sup>th</sup> June.

<b>Contact person</b>	Marcia Burgham, Senior Public Health Development and Commissioning Manager, <a href="mailto:marcia_burgham@bathnes.gov.uk">marcia_burgham@bathnes.gov.uk</a>
<b>Background papers</b>	
<b>Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format</b>	