

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING/ DECISION MAKER:	Cllr Paul May, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Communities	
MEETING/ DECISION DATE:	On or after 5th September 2023	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
		E 3474
TITLE:	Bath West Children's Centre Service Procurement	
WARD:	All	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report: None		

1 THE ISSUE

Children's Centre Services are provided directly by Bath and North East Somerset Council in Bath East, Keynsham and Chew Valley and Somer Valley (Bright Start Children's Centre Services) and by externally- commissioned Action for Children in Bath West.

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 Service both managed by the Head of Service for Children, Young People and Families Prevention Services. They are commissioned to provide targeted early help for children and their parent/carers who are at risk of experiencing poor social, developmental and emotional outcomes.

The current contract expires on 31st March 2024 and due to the aim to include this service within a wider review of the early help offer in B&NES, we are seeking to maintain the current contract until 31st March 2025.

Annual Contract Value: £384,960

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet 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 31st March 2025).

3 THE REPORT

Action for Children were awarded the contract to deliver Bath West Children's Centre Service from April 2018, following a competitive tender process. The contract term was for 3 years, with the option to extend for a further 2 years, which was implemented.

In July 2022, following a service review, approval was given via Single Member Decision to directly award the Bath West contract to Action for Children from 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024. This was to enable commissioning to be aligned with wider strategic aims. However, clarity on the direction of travel in some cases has taken longer than initially hoped, with the emergence of updated information from central government. This includes:

- At the time of requesting a contract direct award for 23/24, we were waiting on the outcome of a bid from central government for funding from the Family Hub Transformation Fund, to pilot family hubs in B&NES. We were unsuccessful in this bid and therefore now need to consider locally how to progress this.
- At the time of requesting a contract direct award for 23/24, the green paper consultation on SEND was in progress and we were awaiting the national SEND delivery plan. This has subsequently been published and outlines a 3 phase implementation timeline, going to 2025 and beyond

Timescales to ensure we are able to align with these pieces of work do not allow for this to be incorporated into tendering for a service to start in April 2024.

Plans are now in place in Children's Services to carry out an Early Help review over the coming year to consider what is needed from the current provision and what may need to be delivered in a different way. This will enable us to implement recommendations from the independent review of children's social care (McCallister, 2022) and "the best start in life vision for the 1001 critical days" (Gov.UK, 2021). It is important that we ensure early help services are not being commissioned in silo and that we work as one Council to develop services in line with strategic aims and our changing population needs to ensure improved experiences and outcomes for families.

The review aligns with the due refresh of our local early help needs assessment and Early Help Strategy due to be completed by April 2025. We are also aware from contract management data of the impact that Covid-19 and the increased cost of living has had on our communities in terms of population needs and service delivery. Wider externally commissioned early help targeted support services contracts are also due to expire around April 2025 and this provides further opportunity to fully support and inform the review.

The risk associated with not approving a further one year direct award is that the tender timescales for a new service to be commissioned and in place from 1st April 2024 greatly reduces the opportunities to align with the early help review which will inform the future response required from the wider early help system, of which the Bath West Service offer is integral, to be able to respond, adapt and meet children and families' needs.

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. The annual value will be the current contracted value of £384,960 and is fully budgeted. Procurement have been fully engaged throughout the process and are satisfied and aware of procurement implications and requirements.

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 carry out the wider review referenced 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 31st March 2025 has been considered and agreed by the Chief Operating Officer, Director of Public Health and Director of Children’s Services and Education, Leader of the Council, S151 Officer and Monitoring Officer

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Background papers	None
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	