

 Brent	Decision of Lead Member for Children’s Safeguarding, Early Help and Social Care 23 June 2021
	Report from the Strategic Director of Children and Young People
AUTHORITY TO WAIVE CONTRACT STANDING ORDERS TO PERMIT PROCUREMENT OF A TARGETED MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING SERVICE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN IDENTIFIED VULNERABLE GROUPS THROUGH A DIRECT AWARD	

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Non-Key
No. of Appendices:	1 – Equalities Impact Assessment
Background Papers:	None
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1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This report concerns the procurement of a contract for a Targeted Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Service for Children and Young People in Identified Vulnerable Groups. This report requests individual Cabinet Member approval to waive Contract Standing Orders to enable a direct award of a contract for Targeted Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Service for Children and Young People in Identified Vulnerable Groups in accordance with paragraph 13 of Part 3 of the Constitution. The case for direct award, as opposed to a full tender process, is set out below.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

That the Lead Member for Children's Safeguarding, Early Help and Social Care, having consulted with the Leader:

- 2.1 Approves an exemption pursuant to Contract Standing Order 84(a) of the requirement to tender a contract for a Targeted Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Service for Children and Young People in identified Vulnerable Groups to enable a direct award of a contract to be made to the Anna Freud Centre for a period of 12 months from 1 October 2021 to 30 September 2022, in accordance with paragraph 13 of Part 3 of the Constitution.

3.0 Detail and brief summary of decision

- 3.1 Under the Children Act 2004, Section 10, local authorities are required to co-operate with others in promoting the wellbeing of children in the authority's area. Under Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 the local authority is required to have regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children whenever it carries out any act or makes any decision.
- 3.2 The council currently has a contract for the provision of a Targeted Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Service for Vulnerable Children and Young People delivered by the Anna Freud Centre for a period of 24 months from 1 October 2019 to 30 September 2021.
- 3.3 The current contract with the Anna Freud Centre was established as a pilot of targeted preventative services, aimed at the effective early targeting of help to vulnerable children and young people who require mental health and emotional wellbeing support to prevent escalation to specialist CAMHS services. The aim of the service, which is known as the Wellbeing and Emotional Support Team (WEST), is to increase the number of children and young people accessing appropriate early support. The service is targeted at priority groups including Looked After Children, children with disabilities aged 0-25, children and young people with social, emotional and mental health needs, children and young people at risk of exclusion from school or alternative provisions and children and young people who are at risk of multiple vulnerabilities including child sexual exploitation, gang affiliation and domestic violence. The service also provides support, clinical advice and training for professionals working directly with children, young people and their families and two thematic training sessions a year for Brent schools.
- 3.4 Between October 2019 and 20 April 2021, 178 referrals to the service were accepted of which 85 are current open cases. A further 4 are on the waiting list and 15 are in the assessment phase. Between October 2020 and January 2021 the following support activity was delivered: 5 group sessions for 12 foster carers; attendance at internal team meetings in schools and CYP and a training session entitled 'Supporting schools to manage the impact of unexpected change on the mental health and wellbeing of pupils', delivered virtually to 34 Primary and Secondary SENCOs. Feedback has been positive

and 87% of SENCOs attending the school session said they would recommend the course.

- 3.5 The pilot has proved to be very successful and achieved expected aims in increasing the number of vulnerable children accessing early support and preventing the escalation of cases to specialist services. The range of need is extensive, with 13% of cases relating to parental difficulties or conflict within the family, 13% cases relating to risk of abuse to self or others, 10% cases relating to violence to adults and peers and 9% of cases relating to complex behaviour. The full impacts on children's mental health and emotional wellbeing as a result of the pandemic are still unknown at this stage, but health professionals are anticipating an increase in demand. Since September 2020, the service has reported an increase in presenting needs such as anxiety, isolation, adjusting to school life, parental mental health impacting on children and strained family relationships.

Reasons for the recommendation:

- 3.6 Officers are recommending a direct award for a 12 month contract to the Anna Freud Centre for the for the following reasons:
- A direct award would test an expanded service model which has been developed to meet emerging need in the context of COVID-19. This would build on the success of the pilot model which has been supporting young people who might otherwise have been escalated to specialist CAMHS. Additional capacity for more clinical psychologist input would support more vulnerable children and young people presenting with higher levels of need than the current service is able to provide and would enable the service to reach an increased number of children and young people.
 - A review of mental health and wellbeing services undertaken by the LA and health partners has identified a number of service gaps, including the need for more preventative services. The direct award of this contract would allow time for further work to be undertaken to explore joint commissioning arrangements to support mental health and emotional wellbeing services targeted at prevention and early intervention longer term. This would also allow time for services to develop a greater understanding of the impact of the last 12 months on children and young people and for this to inform future service design.
 - The provider, the Anna Freud Centre, has worked hard to establish the new service and the associated support systems and networks to build a holistic service, to include wider school community. Access to the WEST service is direct and responsive. Feedback from practitioners, schools, children and young people and parents is highly positive. Families have reported positively on the impact of interventions. It would not be good practice to disrupt the support provided to children and young people during wellbeing and education recovery.

3.7 The Direct Award would realise the following benefits:

- The service would meet increasing demand, including emerging needs as a direct or indirect result of the pandemic.
- Through the service, the LA would meet statutory duties to support children and young people through good quality provision.
- Continuity of services for children and young people in targeted vulnerable groups would be provided.
- Further testing of the service would inform future delivery models and pathways for mental health and emotional wellbeing developed in partnership with health partners.

3.8 Officers are recommending a direct award of the contract, as it is not cost effective to carry out a tender exercise for a one year contract. A tender exercise will be planned for delivery from October 2022, with a specification that is jointly developed with health partners as part of a continuum of mental health and wellbeing services.

3.9 The individual Lead Member is asked to give approval to waive the Contract Standing Order requirement to tender this contract as set out in the Recommendations and in accordance with the Constitution. In accordance with paragraph 13 of Part 3 of the Constitution, the Lead Member is required to consult the Leader in connection with the Recommendations.

4.0 Financial Implications

4.1 The contract with the Anna Freud Centre is valued at £499,856 for 12 months from 1 October 2021 to 30 September 2022. The proposed contract sum will be funded via the DSG £0.2m, Pupil Premium grant for Looked After Children £65k and £218K from the General Fund.

4.2 It is anticipated that the surge in demand mentioned in the report will be contained within the contract sum, but there remains a risk that the financial implications of any further increases in demand will need to be reviewed.

5.0 Legal Implications

5.1 In accordance with paragraph 13 of Part 3 of Brent's Constitution, the Leader has delegated certain functions to Cabinet members to be exercised within their portfolio area in consultation with the Leader. This delegation includes agreement of waivers of Contract Standing Orders for Medium and High Value Contracts.

5.2 The services Officers are proposing to procure are valued at £499,856 (see paragraph 3.6) over its lifetime and the proposed contract is thus classified as a Medium Value Contract under Contract Standing Orders. Contract Standing Orders provide that a Medium Value Contract should be procured by way of a tender process but for the reasons detailed in the body of the report, Officers

do not consider it is possible to procure the contract by way of a tender process.

5.3 The value of the services Officers are proposing to procure are below the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (“PCR 2015”) threshold of £663,540 for Schedule 3 services. Therefore the proposed services are only subject to the partial application of the PCR 2015, and which requires compliance with the overriding principles of equality of treatment, fairness and transparency in the award of contracts.

5.4 In reaching any decision to waive Contract Standing Orders, the Lead Member in consultation with the Leader should have regard to the reasons Officers have set out in Section 3 of the report.

6.0 Equality Implications

6.1 The proposals in this report have been subject to screening and officers believe that there are no equality implications (see Appendix 1: Equalities Impact Assessment).

7.0 Consultation with Ward Members and Stakeholders

7.1 A range of internal and external stakeholders, including young people through Brent Young People Thrive, has helped inform the development of the service.

8.0 Human Resources/Property Implications (if appropriate)

8.1 This Service is currently provided by an external contractor and there are no implications for Council staff arising from extending the contract.

8.2. The Service will be co-located within the Children and Young People Department.

Report sign off:

Gail Tolley
Strategic Director
Children and Young People