

	Officer Key Decision 7 December 2021
	Report to Strategic Director, Children and Young People
Authority to vary and extend the contract for the provision of a Targeted Service to promote Education, Employment & Training for Young People (Connexions)	

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Key
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
No. of Appendices:	None
Background Papers:	None
Contact Officer(s): (Name, Title, Contact Details)	<p>Shirley Parks Head of Forward Planning, Performance and Partnerships Shirley.parks@brent.gov.uk</p> <p>Sharon Buckby Head of Inclusion Services sharon.buckby@brent.gov.uk</p> <p>Brian Grady Operational Director, Safeguarding, Partnerships and Strategy brian.grady@brent.gov.uk</p>

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1. This report requests approval to vary and extend the current Contract with Prospects Services for the provision of a targeted service that promotes education, employment and training for young people at risk of becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) as required by Contract Standing Order 112.

2. Recommendation(s)

That the Strategic Director, Children and Young People, in line with delegated powers (as detailed in 5.3 and 5.4):

- 2.1 Approves a variation to the extension provisions of the current Contract with Prospects Services for the provision of a targeted service that promotes education, employment and training for young people at risk of becoming NEET, to permit extension by one period of 24 months rather than two successive periods of 12 months for the reasons detailed in paragraph 3.3.
- 2.2 Subject to approval of Recommendation 2.1, approves the extension of the Contract with Prospect Services for 24 months from the 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2024 by exercising the option to extend under the Contract terms.
- 2.3 Approves a variation to the Contract value by 5% and consequent amendment to the specification as set out in paragraph 3.10.

3. Background

- 3.1. The Education and Skills Act 2008 places a duty on Local Authorities to secure sufficient suitable education and training provision for young people aged 16 to 19 years old and for those aged up to 25 years old with an Education, Health and Care Plan. Under the Education Act 2011 the Local Authority retains a duty to encourage, enable or assist young people's participation in education or training and is required to assist the most vulnerable young people and those at risk of disengaging with education or work. Local Authorities are also required to lead the September Guarantee process, through which young people are guaranteed a place in education, employment and training after school years 11 or 12.
- 3.2. The Local Authority also has a duty to track all young people's participation and regularly report on current activity to identify young people who are not participating in education, employment or training.
- 3.3. The Council currently has a Contract for the provision of a Targeted Service that Promotes Education, Employment and Training for young people at risk of becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) with Prospects Services (part of Shaw Trust). The contract period is 1 April 2019 – 31 March 2022, with an option to extend for a further 2 years on a 1 year plus 1 year basis. The proposal is to exercise the option to extend for a further 24 month period from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2024. The 2 year extension will ensure the LA fulfils its statutory duty over this period, while providing continuity of service during a time of significant uncertainty and increased anxiety arising from the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 3.4. The service delivers the authority's statutory responsibilities including face to face Careers Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) for 16-19 year olds and

up to 25 for those with SEN in the NEET group. Young people access the service through a number of access points in the Borough. This ensures young people who are not in education, employment and training (NEET) aged 16-19 years old and aged up to 25 with an Education, Health and Care Plan receive relevant information, advice and guidance to support successful transition into post-16 education, employment and/or training. This includes those young people who are new to the borough, as well as young people attending Alternative Provision settings, who have been excluded from mainstream school and are vulnerable to becoming NEET. In addition, the service delivers a targeted service to promote Education, Employment and Training (EET) to all vulnerable groups.

3.5. The service operates an Information Advice and Guidance hub 5 days a week from a range of access points. Services delivered include:

- Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) covering a range of support that equips young people to manage their personal and career development and to confront barriers to learning and the labour market.
- Active tracking, matching and support for young people into education, employment and training using CCIS.
- Work with identified vulnerable groups to support transition into post-16 education and training, including IAG, coaching and mentoring and innovative activities
- Work to re-engage 16-18 NEET young people in positive destinations, including creative initiatives and activities that enhance their employment prospects.
- Delivery across a number of access points in areas of the Borough that present with the greatest need of additional support, early intervention and outreach work.
- Work with local employers to increase relevant employment opportunities that will be sustainable for young people who are NEET, including apprenticeships and jobs with accredited training and opportunities for work experience.
- Targeted support for vulnerable groups and young people with additional needs, to develop their social, emotional and personal skills and to support them into employment, education and training. Programmes focus on resilience building and skills development enabling young people to be better prepared for education, employment or training.

3.6 The service has delivered a range of projects between January and September 2021:

- Branching Out SEND Virtual Event: Virtual SEND Transition Event targeted at young people and parents 13-25 in the borough.
- Moving On (Preventative NEET Project (working with Gujarati Speaking Community 'at risk of NEET'): Focused delivery of work with a group of year 11 students in Alperton and Ark Elvin schools who were from a

Gujarati background and at risk of NEET. 93% of the participants received a college offer in September 2021.

- Positive Pathways: Focused delivery for SEND young people 19 – 25 to move into EET and other positive personal development opportunities. Of 25 students who were supported 72% moved into EET.
- RONI Project: A project to identify young people at risk of NEET early and provide ongoing support over the summer months.

3.7 The expected outcomes of the service are:

- a sustained increase in the proportion of vulnerable young people (including young people with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (“SEND”), Looked After Children (“LAC”), and Care Leavers, young carers, young parents and young people with mental health needs/ substance misuse) 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.
- a contribution to a reduction in the number of first time entrants to the Youth Justice System, aged 10-17 years old and the number of young people becoming gang affected.
- a reduction in school exclusions, especially for vulnerable groups such as LAC and those with SEND.

3.8 In 2020/21 Brent’s NEET performance measures were good. The combined NEET and Unknown figure for 2020/21 (during the reporting period Dec 2020 to Feb 2021) placed Brent in quintile 1 (top 20%) of 142 local authorities across England. Brent is also in the top quintile for NEET figures. Key performance indicators are as follows:

- Achievement of Brent NEET target of 1.6% – Prospects performance against target is 1.6%
- Against a Brent Unknown Outcome target of 1.4%, Prospects performance is 1.5% (performance was impacted by communication difficulties due to Covid-19 restrictions)
- The combined NEET and Unknown 3 month average is 3.2%, placing Brent 18th in the UK across all Local Authorities.
- The number of young people aged 16-19 who moved into employment or training was 170 against a target of 140 for the period April 2020 – March 2021
- By the end of September 2020, 98.1% of young people in Year 11 had a September Guarantee/Offer and 96.9% of young people in Year 12 had a September Guarantee/Offer.

3.9 An area of strength of Prospects Services is their ability to draw in additional funding and provide added value in Brent. Prospects has been successful in securing additional funding from the GLA of £2.5m proportioned across 5 boroughs (Bexley, Brent, Hackney, Harrow and Havering), over a 2 year period

from 2021 to 2023. The programme called ESF Spark Change will go live on 15 December and the funding will provide additional activities for 15-18 year olds accessing NEET/Targeted IAG services, additional activities for 19-24 year olds (the Council contract covers this age group for young people with SEN needs), self-employment support, Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT), mental health and wellbeing coaches and a 12-week supported internship programme.

3.10 The original estimated value of the Contract is £3,411,951 over 5 years (a 3 year contract with the option to extend by up to 2 years in increments of 1 year periods) funded from the Council's General Fund. The contract value in Year 1 (2019/20) was £700,000, in Year 2 (2020/21) it was £683,490 and in Year 3 2021/22 the cost is £683,159. Officers are seeking a 2 year extension at a total value of £1,290,311 (£645,332 in Year 4 and £644,979 in Year 5). This lower annual value reflects an annual saving of 5% on the current contract value. This brings the total value of the contract over the 5 years to £3,336,951. Applying a 5% reduction to the provider costs for the remainder of the contract term, equates to a reduction of 1 FTE qualified practitioner within the service. Officers have assessed the impact and risks associated with this reduction in service and have determined that statutory requirements will continue to be delivered within the remaining resource. This reduction may however have an impact on performance.

3.11 The 24 month extension would:

- Provide sufficient time for partners to take forward full scoping, options appraisal and consultation to design future delivery models.
- Provide continuity of services and strong performance in relation to NEET
- Ensure the LA continues to fulfil its statutory duties.

4. Financial Implications

4.1 Extending the Contract for an additional 2 years will cost £1,290,311 and see a reduction in the contract value compared to 2021/22. The contract will be contained within existing resources.

4.2 The 2021/22 budget available is £682,000 and with a reduced contract value for 2022/23 of £645,332, it will deliver savings of £36,668 which will go towards the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) procurement savings target. The contract value for 2023/24 is expected to be £644,979 which is also a small reduction compared to 2022/23.

5. Legal Implications

5.1 The Contract allows for a two year extension period in yearly increments. Officers are proposing to vary the Contract to allow for one extension of two years. Regulation 72 of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 ("PCR 2015") provides that variations to existing contracts are permitted without commencing a new procurement in certain circumstances. Regulation 72(e) provides that

contracts may be varied where the modification, irrespective of its value are not substantial within the meaning of the PCR 2015.

- 5.2 It is proposed in paragraphs 3.3 and 3.10 of this report that the variation will be in relation to the Contract being extended for two years and a reduction in the Contract price to allow for a 5% contract value reduction in accordance with Brent Council's procurement strategy to realise budget savings through procurement activity. In the circumstances, the proposed variations would not be classed as substantial within the meaning of the PCR 2015.
- 5.3 For the purposes of the Council's Constitution under the table at paragraph 9.5, 3(b) of Part 3 Responsibilities for Functions any variation or extension should not breach procurement legislation, substantially alter the terms and conditions of the Contract and provided there is sufficient budgetary provision. Therefore, a Strategic Director has delegated authority to approve the variation and extension of this Contract.
- 5.4 The Strategic Director is authorised pursuant to Paragraph 9.5 of Part 3 of the Constitution to extend and vary contracts subject to the conditions set out in paragraph 3.8 and 3.9 above. As set out in paragraph 5.3 above, and subject to the relevant cabinet member not requesting the decision to vary be referred to them, none of these conditions preclude the Strategic Director agreeing the recommended extension and variation.

6. Equality Implications

- 6.1. It is considered that there have been no changes in equality implications of the proposals set out in this report since the beginning of the contract and that there is no disproportionate effect on any particular protected characteristic group.

7. Consultation with Ward Members and Stakeholders

- 7.1. The Lead Member for Children's Safeguarding, Early Help and Social Care has been consulted on the approach set out in this report.

8. Human Resources Implications

- 8.1. The service is provided by one external provider and therefore there are no implications for Council staff arising from extending and varying the contract.

Report sign off:

Brian Grady
Operational Director, Safeguarding, Partnerships and
Strategy, Children and Young People

