

	Individual Cabinet Member Decision
	Report from the Corporate Director of Service Reform and Strategy
	Lead Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Public Health – Cllr Liz Dixon
Authority to Vary and Extend a Contract for Latchaid Ltd (Anya) Subscription to Breastfeeding and Parenthood Support	
Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Non-key decision
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
List of Appendices:	0
Background Papers:	0
Contact Officer(s): (Name, Title, Contact Details)	Name: Marie Mcloughlin / Maryam Abdur-Rahman Job Title: Public Health Consultant (health protection and young people / Public Health Strategist Email: Marie.Mcloughlin@brent.gov.uk / Maryam.AbdurRahman@brent.gov.uk

1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1. This report requests individual Cabinet Member approval to vary and extend a contract in respect of subscription for Brent residents to receive free premium access to breastfeeding and parenthood support through a mobile application provided by LatchAid Ltd (Anya) in accordance with paragraph 13 of Part 3 of the Constitution.
- 1.2. This variation and extension will be for a period of 31 months (ending March 2029, aligning with the end of the financial year 28/29). The report summarises the reasons for the request to vary and extend. Latch Aid Ltd (Anya) was first approved under a 24-month contract under the Start for Life (now Best Start in Life) spend via a direct award for low value contracts in July 2024.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

That the Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Public Health, having consulted with the Leader:

- 2.1 Approves the extension of the contract for the subscription to Anya, breastfeeding and parenthood support for all Brent residents LatchAid Ltd as set out in paragraph 1.1.
- 2.2 Approves the variation of the contract to allow for an extension to the contract for a period of 31 months from 25th August 2026 to 31st March 2029 (aligning to the end of the financial year 28/29) at the cost of £75,812.46, excl VAT.

3.0 Detail

- 3.1.1 In 2023, The Department for Education (DfE) and Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) launched their Start for Life programme in response to the 'Best Start for life: a vision for 1001 critical days' published as Government policy in March 2021. Brent was one of 75 initial eligible local authorities with the responsibility of delivering improvements with the uptake of breastfeeding in the borough and reduce admissions to Accident and Emergency departments for infant feeding problems. The Council entered into a contract for premium subscription app access for breastfeeding and parenthood support for all Brent residents with LatchAid Ltd (Anya) on 24th August 2024 (the "Contract") for 2 years costing £90,576.42.
- 3.1.2 Officers consider that the contract should be varied and have entered into discussions with LatchAid Ltd (Anya) (the "Contractor") to extend the Contract as follows:
 - Extend contract from 25th August 2026 to 31st March 2029
 - Extension of a value of £75,812.46 + VAT
- 3.1.3 Officers consider that the recommendation to direct award this Contract will contribute to Borough Plan Priorities as follows:
 - The Best Start in Life
 - A Healthier Brent
- 3.1.4 The delivery of the Anya app promotes nurturing and bonding and underpins healthy development of babies and young children. The app provides out of hours support for residents and a resource for health professionals and community champions to strengthen their breastfeeding practice.
- 3.1.5 As a universal and preventive health offer it is central to ensuring that "mother's mental health and wellbeing is prioritised and children's physical health" as per the Healthier Brent priority in the Borough Plan.
- 3.1.6 The Anya mobile application provides specialist support using
 - interactive 3D breastfeeding animations

- a virtual chat bot with ability to escalate to specialist lactation consultant
- content written specifically by lactation consultants
- provision of knowledge in the form of webinars, seminars and live communities. All available for out of hours support and in 5 different languages (Arabic, Gujarati, Urdu, Bengali Sylheti and English).

3.1.7 The Anya app was introduced in Brent as part of the Best Start in Life (BSiL) programme to improve uptake of breastfeeding in the borough and reduce admissions to Accident and Emergency for infant feeding problems. The BSiL is a national programme managed by the Department of Health and Social Care and Department for Education.

3.1.8 Approximately 3500 children are born in Brent every year of which 80% start to breast feeding. By 6 weeks around 60% are mixed feeding. With the support of the Anya app hopefully more families will continue to breast feed for longer.

3.1.9 Officers also consider that the recommendation will contribute to the delivery of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, specifically the commitments to

- Increase the number of children with a healthy weight
- Reduce dental decay in under 5s
- Increase breast feeding rates

3.2 Background

3.2.1 Since the launch of the Best Start in Life programme, a renewed focus on the delivery of holistic infant feeding support has seen an increase in breastfeeding rates across the borough. In March 2024, the percentage of babies who were being breastfed at 6-8 weeks was 19% (due in part to the effect of the pandemic). As of Quarter 4 of 2025/2026, this rate has increased to 73%, which is above pre – pandemic levels. Breastfeeding improves health outcomes for both breastfeeding parents and for babies.

3.2.2 Data so far up to April 2026 is showing very positive results

- 401 parents using the app
- 295 expectant parents using the app
- 50 health care professionals using the app
- 1 employer sign up
- 20% of new users live in IMD1 and 2
- Top usage times were 10pm, 8pm and 9pm, 7am, 6am and 5am – reinforcing the need for out of hours support.
- Use of the app by ethnicity is reflective of the borough, with the largest use being in Indian communities, followed by White British, any other White background and African.
- Infant feeding topics that are commonly asked include
 - Feeding a newborn
 - Combining breastfeeding and expressing
 - Using the first foods toolkit

- 3.2.3 The extension of this contract will allow for the work taken place in the first 2 years of the BSiL programme to take root in the borough. As funding for the BSiL in Brent has been extended, this contract aims to fully utilise the grant funding and communications efforts put towards the promotion of the scheme. An additional 31 months will help to solidify this work as well as the borough benefitting from the app developments including expansions into parenting and school readiness – a key priority for Brent Public Health and Early years.
- 3.2.4 Anya will provide premium access to the app for all residents with a Brent postcode for an additional 31 months, taking the entire contract total to 4 years and 7 months. Officers recommend an extension to the term of this contract.

4.0 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement

- 4.1 Consultation has taken place with stakeholders from the Best Start in Life steering group which includes maternity staff, health visitors, early years and GP representative.

5.0 Financial Considerations

- 5.1 The proposed variation and extension has a value of £75,812.46 excluding VAT for the period 25 August 2026 to 31 March 2029. This will increase the total contract value to £166,388.88 excluding VAT.
- 5.2 The cost will be funded from the Best Start in Life (BSiL) budget, within the Infant Feeding Support strand. Brent's Best Start Family Hubs and Healthy Babies Infant Feeding Support allocation is £259,900 per year for 2026/27, 2027/28 and 2028/29. The Anya extension is included within Brent's Best Start delivery plan as a continuing infant feeding support activity.
- 5.3 The expenditure is expected to be contained within the existing BSiL allocation and there is no additional pressure on the Council's General Fund or Medium Term Financial Strategy. Spend will need to remain an eligible use of the BSiL funding and be managed in line with the funding conditions, including reporting, monitoring and delivery assurance requirements.
- 5.4 The cost will be profiled across the relevant financial years in line with the agreed contract payment schedule and monitored through the BSiL/Public Health budget monitoring process.
- 5.5 The extension supports continued subscription access to Anya for Brent residents, providing digital infant feeding and early parenthood support, including out of hours access. Officers will continue to monitor usage, reach, priority group access, outcomes and performance reporting to ensure the contract continues to provide value for money over the extension period.
- 5.6 All contract values are stated exclusive of VAT. VAT will be treated in line with the Council's normal VAT arrangements. Where VAT is properly charged, supported by a valid VAT invoice, and relates to the Council's non-business public health functions, it is expected to be recoverable under Section 33 of the

VAT Act. Finance will review the position if the VAT treatment or contract/payment structure changes.

6.0 Legal Considerations

- 6.1 The contract was awarded under the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and remains governed by those Regulations under the transitional provisions; the extension and variation are therefore assessed under regulation 72 PCR 2015.
- 6.2 The variation is a permitted modification. The first 24 months of the extension are expressly provided for in clause 2.1 of the contract, which permits extension of the term by up to 24 months, and fall within regulation 72(1)(a) as a modification provided for in the original contract terms. The balance of the extension constitutes a non-substantial modification within regulation 72(8): The variation does not render the contract materially different in character and is not a substantial modification for the purposes of regulation 72(8).
- 6.3 As set out in paragraph 3.10, pursuant to paragraph 13 of Part 3 of the Constitution, the Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Public Health subject to consultation with the Leader, has delegated powers to agree the proposed extension and variation.

7.0 Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

- 7.1 Pursuant to s149 Equality Act 2010 (the “Public Sector Equality Duty”), the Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
 - (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act
 - (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
 - (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it,
- 7.2 The Public Sector Equality Duty covers the following nine protected characteristics: age, disability, marriage and civil partnership, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 7.3 Having due regard involves the need to enquire into whether and how a proposed decision disproportionately affects people with a protected characteristic and the need to consider taking steps to meet the needs of persons who share a protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it. This includes removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by persons who share a protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic.
- 7.4 There is no prescribed manner in which the council must exercise its public sector equality duty but having an adequate evidence base for its decision is necessary.

8.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations

- 8.1 The proposals in this report have been subject to screening and officers believe that there are no adverse impacts on the Councils' environmental objectives and climate emergency strategy

9.0 Human Resources/Property Considerations (if appropriate)

- 9.1 This service is currently provided by an external contractor and there are no implications for Council staff arising from varying and extending the contract. To be included only where the matter involves specific HR or property related issues.

10.0 Communication Considerations

- 10.1 Given that the recommended award of the Contract is to the incumbent provider, it is not considered that the award of the Contract has any direct communication considerations.

Report sign off:

Name

Corporate Director Service Reform and Strategy
Rachel Crossley

Legal considerations provided by:
Ryan Thompson

Finance considerations provided by:
Raj Meetoo