

<b>Decision maker:</b>	<b>Officer: Assistant director safeguarding and family support</b>
<b>Decision date:</b>	<b>28 April 2017</b>
<b>Title of report:</b>	<b>Implementation of Mind of My Own (MOMO) to enable the voice of the child to be heard</b>
<b>Report by:</b>	<b>Head of looked after children</b>

## **Classification**

Open

## **Key decision**

This is not an executive decision.

## **Wards affected**

Countywide

## **Purpose**

To approve the purchase of Mind of My Own (MOMO) apps to enable children and young people in care and those with disabilities to share their views, wishes and feelings with their corporate parents and the council.

## **Recommendation(s)**

**THAT:**

- (a) the council subscribes to MOMO for three years at a cost of £12,600;**
- (b) the council subscribes to MOMO Express for three years at a cost of £10,500;**
- (c) the council purchases training for 50 users at a cost of £1,000;**
- (d) an exemption to paragraph 4.6.13.2 of the contract procedure rules shall be granted to allow the contract to be awarded to Mind of My Own (MOMO) for the reasons set out in the report below.**

## Alternative options

- 1 Continue as we are meaning that advocates, social workers and independent reviewing officers will continue to seek young people's views in relation to meetings or specific issues as and when time and resources allow. They will continue to use face to face meetings, telephone calls and paper based consultation forms to achieve this. However, children and young people consistently tell us that they dislike completing consultation forms and so many choose not to. They are often asked to answer very similar questions in slightly different formats to contribute to looked after children (LAC) reviews, personal education plan (PEP) review meetings and foster carer reviews. The use of paper based consultation forms makes analysis of the information very difficult, if not impossible.
- 2 Review and develop new paper consultation tools. Although it should be possible to improve the forms being currently used, this does not address the difficulties of young people disliking the forms, duplication and difficulties in analysing the information.
- 3 Development of our own digital involvement tool. To make a product like this, that is engaging for young people and fits into existing social work processes, would require significant upfront resource investment in scoping, design and development and a likely 12 to 18 month lead time and ongoing annual maintenance costs. To make the product accessible to young people as an app which works on multiple platforms, would incur further costs. Implementing and monitoring the product would require further internal investment. Annual investment in product maintenance would be required to fix any problems, manage changes and maintain performance.
- 4 Use an online survey tool such as SurveyMonkey. This would provide an effective means of surveying groups of people, however it does not offer any direct benefit to young people. It is not accessible in the same way as an app and does not allow young people to send their views to a specific worker, it is at best a service-led means of gaining feedback. There are no UK based survey tools that hold ISO27001 certification and they are not suitable for storing young people's personal and sensitive data.
- 5 Join Viewpoint, which is a piece of assessment and consultation software, that provides children's services with libraries of questionnaires and interviews to use with children and young people. It is not designed for children to use to communicate with their workers. Young people can choose when to access these tools, but they do not own their account and cannot choose who to send their views to. App versions are available, but only to services that have paid to use the software. Children and young people do not get access to these apps on their own devices nor their own account. Viewpoint does not proactively facilitate connections between local councils and does not hold ISO27001 accreditation.

## Reasons for recommendations

- 6 MOMOs apps are a modernised way of gaining young people's views and enabling them to speak up about the things that are important or of concern to them. They are a safe, easy and digitally appropriate way for them to communicate with their care team, that are accredited to the ISO27001 information security standard. Both apps have been designed and extensively tested with young people using social care services, to make it easy for users to create clear, structured and detailed MOMO documents of their views, wishes and feelings. MOMO One is a free app that anyone can download and use to send their views, wishes and feelings, through their own

personal account on any mobile device or computer, anytime they choose. Service MOMO is the localised service subscription package that unlocks special features for MOMO One users in that area or service, including a local menu of who they can send their views to. Service MOMO also provides services with access to audit trails of young people's views and aggregated data on what they are saying collectively through MOMO One. MOMO Express is an app for workers and young people with a learning disability to use together. It connects to Service MOMO and generates reports in the same way as MOMO One. All apps and Service MOMO are updated every 6 to 12 weeks to introduce new features and refine or enhance existing ones.

- 7 MOMO would increase engagement with all children and young people in contact with social care services, including those with a learning disability. It would enable the service to evidence children's views comprehensively within the care planning process and improve the quality of review, safeguarding and other meeting types by increasing social workers' focus on young people's lived experience.
- 8 MOMO would increase the flow of information from children and young people to their social worker, thereby improving the quality of decision making. This should lead to an increase in placement stability and life chances for Herefordshire's children and young people.
- 9 Herefordshire's last Ofsted report in 2014 recommended "that learning from complaints and representations from children and young people, parents and carers and service users is systematically collated and analysed and is used to improve service delivery and development" and further commented in relation to the Herefordshire Safeguarding Children Board (HSCB) that "members recognise the need to engage with children, young people, families and the community to secure their views to influence the development of its work and safeguarding practice. However, little progress has been made in obtaining the views of children and their families who have contact with safeguarding services". Although work has been undertaken to address these issues since 2014, the task of systematically collating and analysing complaints, comments and compliments is time consuming. MOMO would address these issues in an efficient way, saving time spent currently attempting to analyse information manually.
- 10 An alternative provider was approached and presented to the voice of the child steering group at the same time as MOMO. They did not have a developed product but indicated that they would be able to build a similar product to the specification required. They were asked to provide costings and a timescale to build an equivalent product, but have not responded to either requests since the initial presentation on 12 January 2017.
- 11 Research has indicated that there is no other equivalent product on the market that would meet the specific needs of looked after children, therefore an exemption to paragraph 4.6.13.2 of the contract procedure rules shall be granted to allow the contract to be awarded to Mind of My Own (MOMO) for the reasons set out within this report.

## **Key considerations**

- 12 MOMO is an app-led suite of products and services that modernises the processes and systems used to gather the views of children and young people using social care services. It helps young people create a structured statement of their views in relation to events and situations they encounter. At the same time it helps workers capture and evidence their views, ensuring they are being heard and considered while also

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Further information on the subject of this report is available from  
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meeting quality standards around the voice of the child.

- 13 Events and situations that MOMO can be used in, either by young people on their own or co-using with a worker or carer, include statutory visits, making a disclosure, LAC reviews, PEP meetings, foster carer reviews, assessments, child protection conferences, pathway planning, requesting a change to care, raising a problem, making a complaint, education, health and care (EHC) plan assessments and short break consultations.
- 14 MOMO One is free to use online and on android and Apple devices. Young people can hold their own accounts, but if they are unable or don't want to, a worker can use their worker account to gather the child's views instead.
- 15 MOMO Express is a learning disability friendly version of MOMO One and is available to workers in subscribing areas. They can use it with younger children and those with a learning disability to capture their views.
- 16 Service MOMO is the subscription package that connects the local council and independent children's services to the app and to their young people. It helps them implement MOMO as part of social care practice and makes it easier for young people to send their views, wishes and feelings to their worker. It includes resources, training and a statistics package that enables them to monitor uptake and analyse aggregated data on the views and experiences of their young people.

## **Community impact**

- 17 Implementation of MOMO supports achievement of two of the priorities from Herefordshire Council's corporate plan - enable residents to live safe, healthy and independent lives and keep children and young people safe and give them a great start in life.
- 18 The Children and Young People's Plan sets out in its vision a promise to "listen to the voices of children and young people about their needs and how we can meet them". MOMO is a tool that will enable this to be more effectively achieved for all children and young people who receive a service from children's social care.

## **Equality duty**

- 19 The Equality Act 2010 states that "A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to -
  - eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct ... prohibited by or under this Act;
  - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
  - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it."
- 20 MOMO is designed as a tool to communicate specifically with children and young people in a way that they are comfortable and familiar with i.e. as an app rather than relying upon consultation forms that children and young people routinely report they dislike.

- 21 MOMO Express is designed to communicate with younger children and those with special educational needs and disabilities ensuring that they're enabled to communicate their needs effectively and receive an equal service to their peers.

## **Financial implications**

- 22 MOMO and MOMO Express can be purchased for one, two or three years. There are financial incentives to purchasing the product over a longer period making this the more cost effective option. The need to enable children and young people to express their wishes and feelings will always be there and the provider has developed a product to meet this need and is committed to continuing to develop and improve it.
- 23 The cost of a three year subscription for MOMO and MOMO Express is £12,600 and £10,500 respectively with an additional one off cost £1,000 to train workers to understand and use the product effectively. Therefore the total cost would be £24,100 over a three year period.
- 24 The cost of subscription and training will be met jointly with a contribution of £11,000 from the Special Educational Needs Reform grant and the remainder being met using underspend resulting from a temporary staffing vacancy in the Social Work Academy.

## **Legal implications**

- 25 This decision is made by the council's director for children's wellbeing under the provisions made within the chief executive's scheme of delegation to officers contained within part 3 of the the council's constitution.
- 26 Use of MOMO technology to gain the views of looked after children would help the council to meet its obligations, as set out in its pledge to looked after children.
- 27 Both the Children Act 1989 and the Children Act 2004 set out general statutory duties for local councils to safeguard and promote the welfare of looked after children and where practicable to ascertain the wishes and feelings of these children before making decisions relating to their education or care.
- 28 The Children and Families Act 2014 sets out similar statutory duties to ascertain the wishes and feelings of children with special educational needs and who have or who may require an education, health and care plan.
- 29 The use of MOMO would provide a means for the council to carry out these statutory duties.

## **Risk management**

- 25 Consulting with young people and ensuring they have accessible ways to report problems, express their views and be involved in decision making, is a legal requirement and an evaluation of the effectiveness of mechanisms for consultation with children and young people will be a priority within any Ofsted inspection. Ensuring that children and young people can effectively communicate their wishes and feelings enables services to respond to children's needs and ultimately to keep them safer. MOMO and MOMO Express would be useful tools in achieving effective communication and engagement with children and young people.
- 26 There is a risk that sensitive data will be online. However, this risk is mitigated as

both apps have been accredited to the ISO27001 information security standard. They have been widely tested and are in use by a number of other councils. The central hub for managing MOMO and MOMO Express ensures that there is a system solution to ensuring that all data received will be included on the child's record.

- 27 There is a risk that following implementation and evaluation of the impact, Herefordshire would not realise the benefits from MOMO and MOMO Express that are anticipated. This risk is minimal given the experience of other councils, which have already subscribed to the service and would be minimised by purchasing training to support the implementation of MOMO and MOMO Express to ensure that the staff group understand and can promote the benefits of these tools to children and young people.

## **Consultees**

28. The voice of the child steering group received a presentation from MOMO and another provider. The group was impressed with the product that MOMO had developed and the benefits it could offer the service. The group includes representatives from the Children in Care Council. The alternative provider was offering to develop a product to meet needs, but since that time has not been able to provide either costings or a timescale for developing a similar product. The group supports the proposal to subscribe to the MOMO and MOMO Express service.

## **Appendices**

None.

## **Background papers**

None identified.