

## Record of officer decision

<b>Decision title:</b>	<b>Extension of Digital Multi-Media Advocacy Pilot</b>
<b>Date of decision:</b>	<b>6 August 2019</b>
<b>Decision maker:</b>	<b>Director for Children and Families</b>
<b>Authority for delegated decision:</b>	In accordance with Line 49 of the Children and Families Directorate Scheme of delegation and the financial procedure rules, the Director for children and families is authorised to take this decision.
<b>Ward:</b>	Countywide
<b>Consultation:</b>	Consultation has been undertaken with key stakeholders including current service users, and consultees are supportive of the extension to the pilot. Feedback from a number of users has been positive in terms of the potential to achieve more person-centered planning and collaboration with the toolkit, although it is recognised that this is dependent on positive engagement from all key organisations supporting individual families.
<b>Decision made:</b>	<p>To extend the contract with the current provider (University of East London) to enable the pilot to continue for an additional 12 months at a cost of £15,415 from 9<sup>th</sup> September 2019 to 8<sup>th</sup> September 2020. (The total cost for total period including the one-year extension will be £42,366.) This will be funded through the SEN reform grant.</p> <p>Further develop the bespoke combined toolkit that seamlessly integrates the existing Rix Wiki and Multi-me platforms for CYP with SEND and their circles of support.</p> <p>Review progress in Q1 of 2020 to inform future decision making with regard to the software. The success of the project will be judged on the proportion of families who report that Wiki-Me has improved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ sharing information selectively</li> <li>▪ person-centered planning</li> <li>▪ the communication and achievement of the child's/family's needs and preferences</li> <li>▪ the production and sharing of plans and programmes.</li> </ul>
<b>Reasons for decision:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The SEND reforms in the 2014 Children and Families Act place the child, young person and family at the heart of planning and decision-making. Education and health care plans (EHC plans) need to be co-produced through person-centered practice and individuals must have full choice and control. Multi-Media Advocacy (MMA) enables an individual to produce their own portfolio, communicate their interests and preferences and to engage with planning processes, which is also a recommendation of NICE guidance on cerebral palsy and transitions.</li> <li>2. MMA can support collaborative, person-centered planning and facilitates effective integration of inputs and implementation of programmes. All information stays with the young person and family and can be shared selectively as appropriate. Being able to</li> </ol>

	<p>store and share information securely reduces the need for families to have to re-tell their story and to update numerous care plans, reducing effort for family and professionals.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Early support is key to achieving coordinated, family-focused service delivery for children with disabilities and is referenced by the SEND code of practice. The proposed extension of the multi-media advocacy platform supports service delivery in line with the early support principles.</li> <li>4. In May 2017, Herefordshire Council commissioned a pilot for Rix Wiki/Multi-Me to deliver an online multi-media advocacy platform for children and young people with disabilities for a period of 24 months at a cost of £26,951. This arrangement comes to an end in September 2019.</li> <li>5. Development, recruitment and engagement of families with the Wiki-me platform has been slower than anticipated and progression has been dictated by the availability and priorities of both the families and professional users. A particular barrier to engagement by professionals has been concern around GDPR compliance, which has taken some time to resolve. This has meant that the pilot has not progressed at the intended pace.</li> <li>6. It was considered important in the original trial to, where possible, work directly with families to give them ownership of their information and to exploit the Wiki-me as a self-advocacy tool. There has been interest and enthusiasm resulting from demonstrations of the Wiki-me, but reaching out to families depends on information about the Wiki-me reaching them from all the agencies they are involved with. As professionals have become more aware of the Wiki-me, this is now growing and it is anticipated that there will be further growth and interest with an extension to the pilot granted.</li> <li>7. Use of the Wiki-me by the 79 (out of a potential 250) users registered is not yet fully utilised however users are very positive about the potential to achieve more person-centered planning and collaboration and would therefore take-up the opportunity to explore it in more detail in the form of an extended pilot. With more professional engagement, it will not be left to families to populate their Wiki-me.</li> <li>8. Feedback obtained from early users suggests that people have been contending with an ever-changing system and numerous ICT issues, which has hindered users exploiting its full potential. The finished product has however been shaped based on local users' feedback, which has been positive.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Highlight any associated risks/finance/legal/equality considerations:</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Public Sector Equality Duty (specific duty) requires specific consideration to how the local authority can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that 'due regard is paid in its decision-making processes in the design of policies and in the delivery of services.</li> <li>2. The proposal is intended to support the advancement of opportunity of children and young people with disabilities to</li> </ol>

	<p>equality of opportunity. Measures must be taken to ensure those who do not use or have access to the internet and computers/mobile devices will not be discriminated against.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. The temporary nature of the trial has impacted on willingness by users to engage and to embed its use.</li> <li>4. Leaders in key service areas have been and are continuing to emerge and a focus on this extension will be on further supporting and developing their skills to ensure long-term sustainability.</li> <li>5. Availability of IT hardware and Wi-Fi in more remote parts of Herefordshire can be a barrier although those few families who do not have any hardware are signposted towards possible funding sources. Broadband is improving across Herefordshire however and those who have access problems are being signposted towards alternatives such as libraries and public Wi-Fi spots.</li> <li>6. Although the pilot phase has taken longer than expected, the tool is more fully developed, key issues relating to professional involvement are being actively addressed, and a 12-month extension will enable the department to fully embed and assess the impact of an operational system supported by key professionals. The review, which will take place in Q1 of 2020, will include identification of what has and has not worked, what improvements can be made, whether there are any obstacles to overcome, and whether any savings could be realised should reinvestment occur. This will be undertaken in consultation with key individuals, to inform future decision-making.</li> <li>7. The proposed extension is compliant with the council's contract procedure rules.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Details of any alternative options considered and rejected:</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. End the trial and do nothing more. If the pilot were ended, service users would have to revert to using paper-based records and current means of inter-agency information sharing. Neither of these empower families to share information selectively, support person-centered planning, enables use of multi-media to describe the child and family and their needs and preferences, or produce and share plans and programmes easily.</li> <li>2. Put the pilot out to tender. After having researched the field alongside other local authorities in awarding the original contract, there were no digital alternatives developed that provided the required functions, which were secure and designed for use by people with learning disabilities and which had been used by councils, special schools and colleges. The current offering is a combined platform providing a unique range of functions including information storage and selective sharing, circle of support, social networking, goal setting, and multi-media self-advocacy. As this is an extension of a trial, it would be counter-productive to move to another provider at this point.</li> </ol>

	<p>3. End the pilot and award the contract directly to the incumbent pilot provider.</p> <p>This option would lose control and oversight over the project and is likely to be far more costly than a short extension to something that is already established.</p>
<b>Details of any declarations of interest made:</b>	<p>The SEND Partnership Development Officer supports a service user in using the system. Monitoring and evaluation of the extension period will be undertaken by the Directorate's Commissioning and Contracting team in order to ensure robust and objective assessment of pilot outcomes.</p>

Signed

Date 6 August 2019