

Record of officer decision

Decision title:	Extension of Early Years Workforce Development Speech and Language Support service
Date of decision:	16 June 2020
Decision maker:	Director for Children & Families
Authority for delegated decision:	<p>An executive decision was undertaken by Herefordshire Cabinet on 06/03/2018, authorising the Director for Children and Families (Report titled: Allocation of 2 year Nursery Education Fund spend: http://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=5038) to procure an early years speech and language service for children aged 2 to 5 to be commissioned for a period of up to three years at a total cost of £590,000 with effect from April 1st 2018.</p> <p>The Director for Children and Families is authorised to take all operational decisions necessary to implement the recommendations, including procurement and award of contract, within the approved budget allocations.</p>
Ward:	Countywide.
Consultation:	Consultation has been undertaken with the Early Years Lead Improvement Advisor, the Early Help Manager and the Public Health Specialist who were supportive of the extension. It has also been agreed by the Strategic Finance Manager (Corporate Services), and Commercial Services have agreed that a waiver is not required.
Decision made:	<p>To extend the contract period (by variation) for the service provided by Elklan Limited to deliver an Early Years Workforce Development Speech and Language Support service at an unchanged total cost of £462,272.</p> <p>The service will no longer end on 31st March 2021. The service will continue until 30th September 2021, with the provision to extend for a further three months up to 30th Dec 2021. The potential further extension up to December 2021 will be determined by the recovery timescales for early year's settings and ability to complete necessary training in light of the current Covid 19 crisis.</p>
Reasons for decision:	<p>Due to the current situation around Covid19, Elklan Limited has been unable to fulfil many of its contractual obligations. The crisis has meant that a significant proportion of early years settings have been closed, with many staff furloughed. Due to this, speech and language training for staff has been unable to take place in line with timescales set.</p> <p>It is anticipated that a six- month extension to the lifetime of the contract should be sufficient to enable staff in Early Years settings to complete the training courses already signed up to, when staff are able to return to work, and for Elklan Limited to fulfil its contractual obligations, within the original allocated budget.</p> <p>However due to the ongoing crisis, a further 3 month extension may be necessary, dependent on the recovery of the sector.</p>
Highlight any associated risks/finance/legal/equality	The crisis continues, inhibiting the ability of the provider to deliver within the six month extension period. As mitigation, the contract

considerations:	<p>may be extended for a further three month period, to enable further re-profiling of delivery and funding in order to ensure completion of the contractual obligations.</p> <p>Risks associated with Elklan Limited not delivering the service outlined during its extension will be minimised through robust contract monitoring processes including regular performance reporting and contract monitoring meetings.</p> <p>There are no additional costs associated with the contract extension.</p>
Details of any alternative options considered and rejected:	<p>As highlighted in the associated cabinet report (Report titled: Allocation of 2 year Nursery Education Fund spend: http://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=5038) two alternative options were considered:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The under-spend could be used to fund pressures in the high needs block; however, this was debated at schools forum and it was agreed that the funding should be used for early years. 2. Share the underspend amongst all registered early years providers (over 90 in total across Herefordshire and over 100 childminders). This is not deemed to be good value for money, as there would be little impact due to the small amount of funds each provider would receive if it was shared.
Details of any declarations of interest made:	N/A

Signed

Date: 16 June 2020