

Record of Officer Decision

Decision title:	Habilitation Service for Visually Impaired Children contract extension
Date of decision:	7 September 2020
Decision maker:	Director for Children and Families
Authority for delegated decision:	<p>As per the Children and families scheme of delegation (line 53) the Director for children and families; Assistant Director Education Development and Skills; and the Head of Learning and Achievement may carry out this duty to ensure that they keep arrangements for Special Educational Needs provision under review as defined under the Education Act 1996 Part IV, Chapter 1 (sections 312-332B) and Schedules 26 and 27. Secondary - The Education (Special Educational Needs) (England) (Consolidation) Regulations 2001 (SI 2001/3455).</p> <p>In accordance with the contract procedure rules, Managers who report to heads of service may authorise payments up to £100,000.</p>
Ward:	Countywide
Consultation:	Consultation was undertaken with the subject lead (Lead Specialist Teacher of Visual Impairment) and with the provider. Service delivery to date has met expectations and the provider is willing to extend the arrangements for the two year period at the same annual value.
Decision made:	The contract to provide Mobility and Independent Living Skills support to children and young people with a visual impairment delivered by Guide Dogs for the Blind Association is extended for a period of 2 years, from 1 st November 2020 to 31 st October 2022, in line with contract terms. The annual value of this contract is £6,000, therefore the total contract value across the 5 year period is £30,000.
Reasons for decision:	<p>Section 19 of the Children and Families Act (2014) states that for children and young people with SEN, Local Authorities must pay particular attention to supporting children's development and helping them to achieve the best possible outcomes. The provision of Mobility and Independent Living Skills enables the council to meet this duty for children with a visual impairment. In addition, provision of this service supports delivery of local authority duties under Schedule 2 para. 6 of the Children Act 1989, which requires local authorities to provide services designed:</p> <p>(a) to minimise the effect on disabled children within their area of their disabilities;</p> <p>(b) to give such children the opportunity to lead lives which are as normal as possible;</p> <p>Visually impaired children and young people with an Education Health and Care Plan are entitled to a Mobility and Independent Living Skills service. The overall purpose of the Habilitation Service is to provide Mobility and/or Independent Living Skills assessments and support for visually impaired pupils referred by the Visual</p>

	<p>Impairment Service in Herefordshire; to work with pre-school, primary and secondary aged children from birth to 25yrs as required.</p> <p>At present there are 11 children with Visual impairment as a primary need (SEN banding data 2019).</p> <p>A contract to provide Mobility and Independent Living Skills support to children and young people with a visual impairment was awarded to Guide Dogs for the Blind Association. It was for a period of 3 years from 1 November 2017 to 31 October 2020 at a cost of £18,000.00 (£6,000.00 per year) with the option to extend for a further 2 years.</p> <p>The service has met the requirements of the contract and the service Lead (Lead Specialist Teacher of Visual Impairment) and provider have confirmed that they wish to extend the arrangement for the permitted 2 year period.</p>
Highlight any associated risks/finance/legal/equality considerations:	The lack of a quality habilitation service for children with an Education Health and Care Plan may result in them not receiving Mobility and Independent Living Skills support which is vital for their future independence. If it is written in to their Plan that specific habilitation support is required, the absence of this may result in the Local Authority being unable to provide for a pupil in a maintained school, so an out-of-county specialist placement may be requested by parents.
Details of any alternative options considered and rejected:	Specialist Habilitation could be purchased on a spot-purchase basis for individual pupils as required, however there would be no guaranteed continuity of provision, different staff may be provided each time, making it difficult for pupil, parents and school to build a working relationship; and will be a more expensive approach to meeting need.
Details of any declarations of interest made:	N/A

Signed:

Chris Baird
Director for children and families

Date: 7 September 2020