

## Record of officer decision

<b>Decision title:</b>	To exercise the option to renew the contract for the Herefordshire intensive placement support service (HIPSS) from 1 April 2021 up to 31 March 2023
<b>Date of decision:</b>	8 October 2020
<b>Decision maker:</b>	Director for Childrens and Families
<b>Authority for delegated decision:</b>	<p>On 28 September 2017, an executive decision was undertaken by Herefordshire Cabinet (report titled; Herefordshire intensive placement support service (HIPSS) and therapeutic intervention support service (TISS))  <a href="https://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/documents/s50051195/Herefordshire%20Intensive%20Placement%20Support%20Service%20and%20Therapeutic%20Intervention%20Support%20Service%20-%20cove.pdf">https://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/documents/s50051195/Herefordshire%20Intensive%20Placement%20Support%20Service%20and%20Therapeutic%20Intervention%20Support%20Service%20-%20cove.pdf</a> ) authorising;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a procurement exercise for the provision of the Herefordshire intensive placement support service (HIPSS) and Therapeutic Intervention Support Service (TISS).</li> <li>• delegated authority to the Interim Director for Children’s Wellbeing (or the substantive Director for Children’s Wellbeing once appointed) to award a contract to a maximum value of £2.5m for up to five years, effective from 1 April 2018.</li> </ul> <p>In January 2018, following a competitive tender exercise, approval was given to award Action for Children a contract to deliver HIPSS, for 3 years with an option to renew for up to a further 2 years  <a href="http://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/mgIssueHistoryHome.aspx?Ild=50025367&amp;Opt=0">http://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/mgIssueHistoryHome.aspx?Ild=50025367&amp;Opt=0</a>).</p>
<b>Ward:</b>	Countywide
<b>Consultation:</b>	An evaluation of HIPSS was undertaken in August 2020. The review included information sought from children and their carers who have received support from HIPSS since 2018, and all social workers who have accessed the service.
<b>Decision made:</b>	To exercise the option to renew the contract with Action for Children to deliver Herefordshire intensive placement support service (HIPSS) for up to 2 years from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2023 at a maximum cost of £815k. This would result in a total contract value of £2.01m from April 2018 up to March 2023.
<b>Reasons for decision:</b>	<p>The HIPSS approach supports the council’s;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• role as a corporate parent,</li> <li>• Children and Young people’s Plan (2019 -24) pledges and</li> <li>• sufficiency strategy aims by providing placement stability and reducing the need for residential placements.</li> </ul> <p>Following an evaluation of HIPSS undertaken in August 2020, the recommendation is to exercise the option to renew the contract for a further two years, with minor operational amendments. This is based on the HIPSS approach continuing to achieve its strategic aims;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Aim 1: to support the reduced reliance on agency fostering and residential placements and support the Council’s approach in enabling looked after children to benefit from growing up in a stable family environment care.</b></li> </ul> <p>Herefordshire’s looked after child population has continued to grow. At the same time, there have been ongoing challenges encountered by the in-house fostering service in recruiting and retaining specialist carers. Together, this has meant that the council has a continued reliance on the independent sector to accommodate children. However, the HIPSS approach has helped to alleviate some of these pressures by supporting children to safely step-down from residential care or by helping to stabilise their existing fostering place and preventing them from entering residential care.</p> <p>From April 2018 to the end of June 2020, the service supported 35 children deemed at risk of entering, or potentially able to step down from, residential care. A further 105</p>

	<p>looked after children have received lower amounts of direct or indirect support via consultations (65) or short term intervention (40) that has helped to improve carer capabilities, with the aim of preventing placement breakdown that puts the child at risk of entering residential care.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Aim 2: to help children and young people develop greater emotional well-being and control over their behaviours so that they can engage in meaningful relationships, participate positively in the community, take advantage of opportunities in education and learning and live successful independent lives.</b></li> </ul> <p>The majority of children who have received intensive support from the service are able to demonstrate improvements in their ability to manage their own behaviour and engage in positive relationships.</p> <p>During the review period (April 2018 up to end June 20), 83% (29 out of 35) of children and young people achieved positive outcomes, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4 stepped down to general foster care</li> <li>• 2 stepped down to supported living</li> <li>• 3 reunified home</li> <li>• 20 stabilised fostering placement</li> </ul> <p>Where the following objectives were part of a child's referral:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 93% have improved emotional and mental health, and better able to manage their behaviour</li> <li>• 86% have improved social skills</li> <li>• 100% have improved communication skills</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Aim 3: to reduce the budgets for agency placements</b></li> </ul> <p>While overall spend on agency placements has increased as a result of growing demand and limited fostering capacity, the HIPSS approach has mitigated against some additional spend.</p> <p>As a result of avoiding residential bed nights, it is estimated that HIPSS has achieved a credible cost avoidance of at least £3.9m after contract costs over the review period regarding those children stepping down from or at imminent risk of entering residential care.</p>
<p><b>Highlight any associated risks/finance/legal/equality considerations:</b></p>	<p>As the council's in-house foster service increases its capacity to provide placements for children supported by the HIPSS approach, there is a risk that the contracted service will have less flexible capacity than it has had to offer therapeutic advice and guidance to the wider social care service. Commissioners will work with social care to identify solutions to ensure carers and placements receive relevant support with issues before they escalate.</p> <p>The total contract value for the five years from April 2018 up to March 2023 will be £2.01m. Originally £2.5m was approved. However efficiencies have been realised through the decommissioning of the TISS functions, which has reduced pressure on social care budget.</p>
<p><b>Details of any alternative options considered and rejected:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do nothing. The contract with Action for Children will end as scheduled on 31 March 2021. The implication of doing nothing would be an overnight loss of specialist support for looked after children and their carers with an increased likelihood of additional placement disruptions and entry into residential care with an associated budget pressure.</li> <li>• To provide the therapeutic team as a specialist unit in-house from 1 April 2021. This option is not recommended as the council currently does not have the expertise in house to deliver this very specialist service. It may be difficult for the council to recruit suitably qualified staff to such specialist roles, whereas an external provider is more likely to be able to attract staff by spreading the highly specialist clinical roles across multiple contracts they hold with other regional local authorities.</li> <li>• The council undertakes a competitive procurement exercise to award new contract to deliver the service. This is not recommended as there have been no contract performance issues that would require a change of provider at the current time.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Details of any</b></p>	

<b>declarations of interest made:</b>	
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Signed

Date: 08.10.2020

Chris Baird

Director for Children and Families