

Record of officer decision

Decision title:	To exercise the option to extend the contract for the Herefordshire emergency duty team from 1 April 2021 up to 31 March 2023
Date of decision:	17 February 2021
Decision maker:	Director for Childrens and Families
Authority for delegated decision:	<p>On 13 September 2019, an executive decision was undertaken by Herefordshire Council Cabinet (report titled; Children’s social care out of hours emergency duty service) (https://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=6244) authorising;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a contract be awarded to Worcestershire Children First to deliver Herefordshire’s children’s social care out of hours emergency duty service for a maximum period of 42 months from 1 October 2019 at a total cost of not more than £440,000 • Authority be delegated to Director of Children and Families (in consultation with Legal Services) to settle the final form of contract with Worcestershire Children First
Ward:	Countywide
Consultation:	<p>The current provider Worcestershire Childrens First have confirmed their willingness to continue to deliver this service for the 2 year extension period.</p> <p>The Head of Service for MASH and Assessment has confirmed an extension is the most effective decision and best fits with the service delivery of Children and Families Directorate.</p>
Decision made:	To exercise the contractual option to extend the current contract with Worcestershire Childrens First to deliver the council’s children’s social care out of hours emergency duty service for 2 years from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2023 at a maximum cost of £253,952. This would result in a total contract value of £439,952 from October 2019 up to March 2023.
Reasons for decision:	<p>Section 17(1) of the Children Act 1989 states that it shall be the general duty of every local authority to safeguard and promote the welfare of children within their area who are in need. This duty continues during out of office hours and the recommendation will enable the council to continue to ensure that it meets its duties and obligations in relation to safeguarding children outside of normal working hours, including overnight, weekends and public holidays.</p> <p>The Emergency Duty Team (EDT) service exists to provide an emergency social care response for children and young people believed to be at risk of significant harm and for whom delay until the next working day would be detrimental to their welfare and safety. The service ensures that they continue to be safeguarded in the immediate term.</p> <p>Following the previous decision a contract was awarded for an initial 18 month period to 31 March 2021 but with an option to extend for a further 24 months to 31 March 2023.</p> <p>During the first 12 months of the contract up to 30 September 2020, the service responded to over 1244 contacts with an average of 103 contacts per month from various referral sources and supported over 580 families with an average of between 40 to 49 Herefordshire families each month.</p> <p>To inform this decision an options appraisal has been undertaken which considered</p>

	<p>the following options; bringing the service in house, re-procurement and exercising the option to extend the current contract.</p> <p>The options appraisal included conducting a soft market test exercise, which was conducted in October 2020. In line with the council's contract procedure rules, the soft market test was an expression of interest which was published on ProContract portal; the council's on-line Tendering and Contracts System. Suppliers who have registered on the system are able to receive and return tender and quotation documents electronically. Whilst the test was viewed by at least 1 organisation, no expressions of interest for delivery of this service were received.</p> <p>The option to bring the service in house has also been explored and deemed not viable in the medium term due to the current high turnover of staff and challenges that continue with recruiting to permanent vacancies within the directorate. The options appraisal concluded that that the current contract is delivering value for money.</p>
<p>Highlight any associated risks/finance/legal/equality considerations:</p>	<p>If the decision is not approved, there will be a significant risk to the council of it not meeting its statutory duty under the Children Act 1989. There would also be a risk to the children and their families/carers who require this service. Added pressure would also be put upon the council's children social care workforce due to the redirection of operational and management staff and this would have an effect on the day to day operations of the council's social care service.</p> <p>This contract been included in the council's base budget going forward.</p> <p>There have been no Ofsted reports published to date for Worcester Childrens First but this will be monitored by the commissioners going forward.</p> <p>For the period 01/10/19 to 31/03/21 the contract has cost £186,000 which is an annual contract value of £124,000. The above extension costings of £253,952 include a 2.4% increase to the contract value. The annual cost will now be £126,976. This percentage uplift takes into account the pay inflation for the contracted staffing. Finance have confirmed this has been included in the budget forecast going forward.</p>
<p>Details of any alternative options considered and rejected:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do nothing. The current contract with Worcester Childrens First would terminate on 31st March 2021. Doing nothing is not recommended as the council has a statutory duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children within their area who are in need. This duty continues during out of office hours and extending the current contract will ensure compliance with this duty. • The council could delegate the function (under S101(b) of the Local Government Act 1972) to Worcestershire County Council, in order for Worcestershire County Council to commission Worcestershire Children First to deliver the service under a third party arrangement. This is not recommended as it would result in the council having no direct oversight and influence over the provider without first having to go through Worcestershire County Council.
<p>Details of any declarations of interest made:</p>	<p>None</p>

Signed

Date: 17 February 2021

Chris Baird

Director for children and families

