

## Record of officer decision

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| <b>Decision title:</b>                   | Extension of Befriending Service & Family Mentoring contracts                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Date of decision:</b>                 | 03 February 2022                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Decision maker:</b>                   | Corporate Director Children and Young People                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Authority for delegated decision:</b> | <p>Under the corporate scheme of delegation, Commissioning for children's services including schools, early years, colleges, adult learning, social care and vulnerable children may be undertaken by the Director for Children and Families.</p> <p>A decision was taken by the Director for Children and Families to award contracts for one-year for family mentoring and befriending services, with an option to extend for a further year, to support Herefordshire's Early Help offer.</p> <p><a href="https://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=7288">https://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=7288</a></p> <p>Where the scheme of delegation provides the authority and in accordance with financial procedure rules: assistant directors, directors or the chief executive (as defined by the requisite pay grade) may authorise commencement of a procurement activity, or commencement of a contract variation activity for a total aggregate contract value of up to £500,000.</p> |
| <b>Ward:</b>                             | All wards                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Consultation:</b>                     | Consultation has been undertaken with the Early Help Head of Service and the current providers, Homestart Herefordshire and Herefordshire Vennture who are willing to take up the option to extend the contract.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Decision made:</b>                    | To vary the contract period by extension of the Family Mentoring and Befriending Service contracts for a further year from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 at a total cost of £166,000                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Reasons for decision:</b>             | <p>On 23 October 2020 the Director of Childrens Wellbeing awarded two contracts for one year from 1st April 2021 to 31 March 2022:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Befriending: Home Start Herefordshire £66,000.00 per annum and;</li> <li>• Family mentoring: Herefordshire Vennture, £100,000.00 per annum.</li> </ul> <p>Both contracts were limited to an initial one year due to uncertain national funding arrangements. Each contract includes the option to extend for a further year (1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023).</p> <p>The contracts are partly funded by the Government's Supporting Families Programme. It has been confirmed that central funding is to continue for a further 3 years from April 2022, however no funding confirmation or guidance on any changes to the existing Programme</p>                                                                                                                                                                                        |

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|                                                                                     | <p>has been provided at this time.</p> <p>A new Herefordshire Early Help Strategy will be prepared in 2022. This and emerging Supporting Families guidance will play a key part in informing commissioning decisions together with details of the Supporting Families revised Programme. The intention will be to review, redesign and recommission contracted services as required during 2022/23.</p> <p>In order to ensure continuation of the local Early Help offer it is necessary to extend both contracts.</p> <p>Since the new contracts started on 1st April 2021 service provision has continued to be disrupted by the Coronavirus pandemic. Whilst delivery has continued throughout, interventions have lengthened for some families due to increased anxieties relating to school closures, increased mental health issues and employment concerns affecting families. Both providers report the increasing complexity of needs presented by families impacting on the level of support required to achieve sustainable change.</p> <p>However, both services have been engaging with families regularly and are making progress with the families they support. At present the services are supporting a total of 56 families at high level 2 and level 3 of the Herefordshire Levels of need model (Level 3 - Children, young people and families with identified vulnerabilities who are experiencing significant additional complex needs and are likely to require a more targeted, multi-agency coordinated approach with possible longer term intervention).</p> <p>Whilst achieving sustainable change as measured by the national Supporting Families Programme has been particularly challenging in light of the pandemic, providers have closed 41 cases between April and October 2021, with 10 to date evidencing sustainable change (12 are currently being tracked and 5 were previously claimed within the Programme and therefore cannot be claimed a second time).</p> |
| <p><b>Highlight any associated risks/finance/legal/equality considerations:</b></p> | <p>Funding for family mentoring and befriending provision is via a combination of the Councils Early Help Budget (£66,000) and funding received via the Supporting Families Programme (£100,000).</p> <p>A key financial risk relates to the future of the Supporting Families Programme. If the council receives confirmation that the Programme is significantly changed from April 2022 onwards, the council may consider two possible options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not proceed with/ terminate (providing the contractual three month notice period) the Family Mentoring and Befriending contracts and consider how available council funding can be best utilised to support the local Early Help Offer in line with the Supporting Families Programme.</li> <li>• Consider varying the contracts within the parameters of the contract procedure rules to ensure alignment with any new government guidance.</li> </ul> <p>Alignment to any changes made with regard to the national Programme has been discussed with existing providers as a potential</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

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|                                                                    | <p>requirement once guidance has been provided at a national level.</p> <p>Both are willing to work alongside the council to ensure that services meet requirements from April onwards.</p> <p>If the option to extend both contracts for a further 1 year is not exercised, this would represent a significant gap in the Early Help offer in Herefordshire leaving a large number of families without any assistance. This may decrease the potential for meeting positive outcomes for vulnerable families, with the increased possibility of escalation to social care.</p> <p>Finance has confirmed there are sufficient funds in the budget to enable the extension of both contracts in 2022/23, subject to Supporting Families Programme funding as highlighted.</p> |
| <b>Details of any alternative options considered and rejected:</b> | <p>Do nothing. This is not recommended due to the impact on the local Early Help offer if services were to end.</p> <p>Go out to tender. Expected national guidance and an updated local Early Help Strategy during 2022/23 will inform future commissioning intentions, therefore future commissioning of services will need to be determined during 2022. Re-commissioning at this stage for a service longer than a 1 year period would risk misalignment with the department's strategic direction in terms of Early Help, and is therefore not recommended.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Details of any declarations of interest made:</b>               | n/a                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |

Signed  
Corporate Director Children and Young People

Date: 3 February 2022