

Record of operational decision

Decision title:	Provision of locum Educational Psychologist capacity to support completion of statutory Education, Health and Care needs assessments (EHCNAs) and reduce the number of cases awaiting Educational Psychology advice.
Date of decision:	09/10/2026
Decision maker:	Service Director - Education Skills and Learning, Children and Young People
Authority for delegated decision:	Under the Council's Scheme of Delegation and Contract Procedure Rule 4.6.10(d), Service Directors have delegated authority for procurement activity with a total aggregate contract value of up to £500,000, in accordance with the Financial Procedure Rules. The total contract value of up to £195,000 is within this delegated authority.
Ward:	Countywide
Consultation:	Consultation has taken place with the Head of Service – Additional Needs, the Principal Educational Psychologist and relevant SEN/Educational Psychology leads. Advice and input have also been sought from Commercial Services/Procurement, Legal Services, Information Governance, YPO/Consultancy+ and the proposed delivery providers as part of confirming the procurement route, contractual arrangements, service requirements, mobilisation and data-protection controls.
Decision made:	To approve the award of a call-off arrangement through YPO Framework 1141 – Managing Consultancy and Professional Services to Reed Specialist Recruitment Limited, trading as Consultancy+, as the appointed Managed Service Provider (MSP). The arrangement will allow call off from two providers; Reed and Panoramic Associates (Precision Resource Group), with an initial allocation of 50 statutory EHCNA assessments to each provider. The Council may extend the requirement, subject to satisfactory performance, quality assurance, continued need, budget availability and the relevant approvals. The total approved contract value is £167,500 for the period 12 October 2026 to 31 March 2027, with an option to extend for up to three months from 1 April 2027 at an additional value of up to £27,000. Separate contractual/order documentation, costs and purchase orders will be maintained for each providers through the Managed Service Provider.
Reasons for decision:	YPO Framework 1141 provides an established and compliant route for the purchase of consultancy and professional services. The framework has one appointed Managed Service Provider, Reed Specialist Recruitment Limited trading as Consultancy+, and the Council may make a direct call-off award to that provider. Consultancy+ will remain the Council's contractual interface and will manage the relevant supply-chain arrangements. The requirement falls within the scope of the framework because it is for temporary specialist Educational Psychology capacity to deliver statutory psychological advice for EHCNAs. Reed and Panoramic were identified following soft market testing of provider availability, capacity and indicative costs and were considered best placed to meet the service specification and required delivery timescales within the available financial envelope. The additional capacity is required because the Council's existing Educational Psychology Service does not have sufficient capacity to meet the current level of

	statutory demand within required timescales. The arrangement will support reduction of the backlog and avoid further delays for children, young people and families, while protecting core Council Educational Psychology capacity for early intervention and specialist work. Delivery will be monitored through agreed milestones, supplier quality assurance, Council review of completed advice, monthly performance information and contract-management arrangements. Any extension or additional allocation will be dependent on satisfactory delivery, quality, continuing need and available budget.
Highlight any associated risks/finance/legal/equality considerations:	Finance The approved value is £167,500 for the initial contract period, with an option to extend for up to three months at an additional value of up to £27,000. Expenditure will be controlled through separate purchase orders and supplier/order documentation for the two providers. Payment will be linked to completed and accepted assessments in accordance with the order documentation. Legal and procurement The award will be made through YPO Framework 1141 to Consultancy+/Reed as the appointed MSP. The call-off terms, supplier/order forms, purchase orders and any required variations must be completed and approved before service delivery begins. Consultancy+ will remain responsible for its supply chain and contractual delivery. Information governance and information security The work involves personal data and special-category information relating to children and young people, families and relevant professionals. A Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) will be required and approved before personal data is exchanged. Case information and completed advice must only be transferred and stored using Council-approved secure arrangements (ANYCOMS). Access is limited to authorised personnel, with appropriate encryption, secure devices, retention and deletion controls, incident reporting, audit arrangements and written confirmation of return or secure deletion at the end of processing. Safeguarding, quality and delivery Providers must supply appropriately qualified and HCPC-registered Educational Psychologists and complete the required identity, right-to-work, safeguarding, DBS, professional-registration and compliance checks before allocation. Risks include delay in mobilisation, insufficient provider capacity, missed statutory timescales, variable quality of advice, loss of continuity and inappropriate handling of sensitive information. These will be mitigated through mobilisation and readiness checks, provider and Council quality assurance, clear deadlines and escalation routes, performance monitoring, secure information-handling requirements and the ability to reallocate work or cease further purchasing where expected benefits or standards are not achieved. Equality The decision is intended to improve timely access to statutory assessment for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. Delivery must comply with the Equality Act 2010, make reasonable adjustments, use accessible and person-centred communication, and ensure that remote or face-to-face delivery decisions do not disadvantage children, young people or families.
Details of any alternative options considered and rejected:	Maintain the existing in-house delivery model only – rejected because the current Educational Psychology Service does not have sufficient capacity to address the level of statutory demand and reduce the backlog within the required timescales. This option would increase the risk of continued delay and would reduce capacity available for early intervention and specialist activity.

	Recruit additional permanent Educational Psychologists – not selected as the immediate solution because permanent recruitment would not provide the additional capacity within the required mobilisation timescale. Permanent workforce options may continue to be considered as part of longer-term service planning. Use a separate open-market procurement – rejected because YPO Framework 1141 provides an established, competitively procured and compliant route to market through its appointed Managed Service Provider. Running a separate procurement would add time and would not address the urgent requirement as quickly. Commission a single delivery supplier – rejected because using two supplier workstreams provides greater capacity, resilience and flexibility, and reduces reliance on a single delivery route. Take no action or extend waiting times – rejected because statutory timescales would continue to be exceeded, children and families would wait longer for assessment and support, and the Council's legal, operational and reputational risks would increase.
Details of any declarations of interest made:	Not applicable