

Record of officer decision

Decision title:	Apprenticeship programme for Social Work (Degree) procurement.
Date of decision:	31 July 2020
Decision maker:	Assistant Director for People
Authority for delegated decision:	Corporate Centre Scheme of Delegation: Article 79 - Approval of spend and the allocation of funds to providers from the council's apprenticeship levy fund.
Ward:	Countywide
Consultation:	Not applicable
Decision made:	To undertake full open tender process via ProContract portal to secure the best provider to deliver the Social Work (degree) apprenticeship.
Reasons for decision:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The council has a skills gap and challenge in recruiting qualified social workers, this is a challenge mirrored nationally. The council therefore has a plan to 'Grow Our Own' social workers in both Adults' and Children's directorates to address this issue. • The increase in the number of social workers will lead to improved service provision for service users • As a large employer the council is required to make mandatory contribution to the government apprenticeship levy pot. However, the council is also able to benefit from this levy by accessing Apprenticeship courses funded by the levy. • The Apprenticeship provider draws down the funding directly from the government Apprenticeship levy. The maximum that can be claimed for each Apprentice is £23,000 for the three year Social Work (degree) Apprenticeship programme. The council is seeking to train 21 Apprentices starting in 2021. Therefore, the contract value will be approximately £483,000, which requires an open tender process to procure a provider. • The provider must be registered on the Register of Approved Training Providers to deliver an approved apprenticeship leading to a degree-level qualification in social work.
Highlight any associated risks/finance/legal/equality considerations:	<p>The risk of a challenge to the procurement process is mitigated by following the full open tender procurement process, in line with the council procurement and contract procedures.</p> <p>The financial risk is low as the funding is accessed by the provider from the apprenticeship levy, not from a council budget.</p> <p>Apprentices will be recruited internally through expressions of interest and an Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out to ensure the process is fair to all.</p> <p>No health and safety implications or other risks have been anticipated.</p>

<p>Details of any alternative options considered and rejected:</p>	<p>Using a framework was considered, but was rejected because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • only a limited number of suppliers are registered on a framework, which further restricted the pool of potential bidders • there is no direct or rapid award option, so a competitive process would still need to be undertaken, therefore there would be no time advantage to enable a cohort to start in Autumn 2020 • there is no opportunity for adding local requirements. <p>Another option is to not proceed with the apprenticeships. This was rejected as the council already pays into the apprenticeship levy and if this money is not used then it will expire and be lost. Also, there is a shortage of qualified social workers in the county.</p>
<p>Details of any declarations of interest made:</p>	<p>None</p>

Signed

Date: 24.09.2020