

Record of operational decision

Decision title:	Children's Social Care Core Skills Development Service Contract Award
Date of decision:	8 November 2021
Decision maker:	Interim Director for Children and Families
Authority for delegated decision:	Chief Executives scheme of delegation para 5 appendix 1 SA19-20. Updated 7 June 2021
Ward:	Countywide
Consultation:	The tender evaluation panel included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Interim Assistant Director for MASH CIN CP ▪ Interim Assistant Director Quality Assurance Safeguarding and Partnerships ▪ Interim Academy Manager
Decision made:	To award a contract to Griffin Care Ltd, at a value of £42,000, to deliver a Core Skills Development Programme for frontline children's service workers and managers by 31 March 2022
Reasons for decision:	<p>Following a 2021 High Court judgement, the council has established an improvement strategy with oversight from an independently chaired board.</p> <p>In a planned visit to Herefordshire's Children's Services in July 2021, Ofsted Inspectors reviewed the arrangements for children in need and children subject to a child protection plan. They looked at a wide range of evidence, including interviews with staff, discussions with senior leaders and case discussions with social workers and team managers. They also looked at performance management and quality assurance information and children's case records. Ofsted highlighted a range of issues regarding operational practice that required improvement, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Address inconsistent and variable social work practice to ensure that children are the focus of assessments, planning and interventions. ▪ The frequency and effectiveness of case supervision and the monitoring of children who are subject to child in need and child protection planning. ▪ Assessment of children's needs, including direct work with children to understand their experiences. ▪ The oversight and grip of team managers in relation to the progression of children's plans. ▪ The quality of case audits. ▪ The voice of the child in case records and planning. <p>As part of its improvement plan work, the Council has already commissioned an urgent assessment of current skills and experience across the management team to provide a full and accurate picture of manager competence, which is essential in terms of service quality, which will help inform the core skills development training to be delivered through this contract.</p> <p>With the support of time-limited improvement funding from the Department for Education (DfE), the council has undertaken a competitive procurement exercise to deliver:</p> <p>a. Core Skills Development Programme for Managers for a minimum of at least 20 Team managers</p>

	<p>b. Core Skills Development Programme for Social Workers a minimum of 150 staff (including Support Workers, Social Workers, ASYEs and Senior Practitioners from Children’s Social Care and Early Help services)</p> <p>The programme will help to reinforce the council’s Signs of Safety strengths based practice model.</p> <p>A tender evaluation panel has been convened, which is recommending that the contract is awarded to Griffin Care Training Ltd. The contract will commence in October 2021 with a mobilisation phase. It is expected that the first training sessions will be delivered in November 2021, completing as soon as possible before April 2022</p>
<p>Highlight any associated risks/finance/legal/equality considerations:</p>	<p>DfE grant funding allocated to this project is time-limited to 31 March 2022. It is expected that the core skills development programme can be fully delivered within this timescale, but any costs beyond March 2022 will be at the Council’s risk.</p> <p>Individual participants in the programme will be required to attend 5-days training, spread over a period of weeks. This time will need to be balanced with day-to-day operational priorities. There is a risk that the target groups of frontline workers and managers will prioritise other activities over engaging with the development programme, and the full benefit won’t be realised. The Social Care Leadership Team will oversee take-up by employees to ensure that the maximum benefit is achieved and learning contributes to the necessary service improvements.</p> <p>This development programme is intended to provide a short-term ‘back to basics’ refresher. The Social Care Leadership Team and Social Work Academy will ensure that learning is embedded in the longer-term.</p>
<p>Details of any alternative options considered and rejected:</p>	<p>Do nothing. This is not recommended given the clear and urgent need to improve operational practice across children’s services</p>
<p>Details of any declarations of interest made:</p>	<p>None made.</p>

Signed

Darryl Freeman
Interim Director of Children and Families

Date: 8 November 2021