

## Record of operational decision

<b>Decision title:</b>	Contract Award – Children’s Advanced Social Work Practitioner Support Services
<b>Date of decision:</b>	12 November 2021
<b>Decision maker:</b>	Interim Director for Children and Families
<b>Authority for delegated decision:</b>	Chief Executive scheme of delegation para 5 appendix 1 SA19-20
<b>Ward:</b>	Countywide
<b>Consultation:</b>	The tender evaluation panel included the Head of Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and Assessment and the Head of Service Safeguarding and Review.
<b>Decision made:</b>	Award a contract to Attenti Consulting Ltd for the provision of Children’s Advanced Social Work Practitioner Support Services from 8 November 2021 to 31 March 2022 at a maximum cost of £579,000
<b>Reasons for decision:</b>	<p>The Council’s Children’s Services are under a non-statutory Improvement Notice from the Department for Education (DfE) following a series of critical external events from 2018 to 2021 which have justifiably raised questions as to the effectiveness of our services.</p> <p>The Council’s Strategic Improvement Plan for Children and Families is now in its approval stages having undergone review and scrutiny from Senior Leadership and elected Members through a variety of engagement activities in order to define and agree the vision and scope of this programme. Frontline practitioners were also invited to contribute to its further development, through workshop activities in September 2021.</p> <p>Among the areas of service that require immediate improvement are the Assessment Service and Child in Need Service.</p> <p>The Assessment service is comprised largely of inexperienced social workers, many still Newly Qualified Social Workers (NQSWS). Due to the lack of experience, and unmanageable caseloads, assessments often take too long, and many are completed to a poor standard with a lack of consideration of the significant history for a family. They do not describe the child’s lived experience. This can lead to inappropriate decision-making, poor plans and families being not well supported.</p> <p>Many Child in Need (CIN) cases often experience drift and delay as they are held inappropriately in the Assessment Teams where the focus is largely on new assessments coming through the front door.</p> <p>The Council have commissioned an external supplier to deliver projects that provide immediate capacity and advanced experience to support the Assessment and CIN services. The projects will achieve tangible outcomes for new cases and those exposed to drift and delay. The project’s Advanced Social Work Practitioners will work with the Council’s permanent, but less experienced, workforce to help improve overall practice. The projects will</p>

	<p>be completed by 31 March 2022 and will help inform the Council's revised delivery models for the Assessment and CIN services to ensure improved practice is sustained into the long-term.</p> <p>It is intended that the project will commence from 8 November 2021, and will provide two teams of six advanced practitioners, each with a team manager. Given the urgency and crucial nature of the work, it has not been possible to run a tendering exercise in compliance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules. However, service proposals have been sought from two potential suppliers and have been evaluated for cost and quality by the Head of MASH and Assessment and the Head of Service Safeguarding and Review. It is recommended that a contract is awarded to Attenti Consulting Ltd.</p>
<b>Highlight any associated risks/finance/legal/equality considerations:</b>	<p>Total funding of £598k for the projects has been sought as part of a wider grant bid for improvement support from the Department for Education (DfE). It is a condition of the DfE grant that funds are spent by 31 March 2022. Having deducted the cost of corporate ICT equipment that would be loaned to the supplier, the maximum value of the contract will be £579k.</p> <p>Similar projects under the improvement programme have taken longer than initially expected. Any expenditure beyond the amounts above or beyond 31 March 2022 will be at the Council's risk and cost. The delivery schedule will be monitored to ensure that costs remain in-budget.</p> <p>As the supplier of a commissioned service, the supplier should make its own assessment of the IR35 status of the workers it is hiring. Attenti Consulting Ltd has confirmed that the projects it delivers are outside of IR35 requirements.</p> <p>The value of the proposed contract is within the Light Touch Regime as set out in the Public Contract Regulations 2015 (PCR 2015) However the contract. The need for the improvement services provided by the proposed contract have arisen from the judgement of The Hon Mr Justice Keehan and the need to take action is urgent.</p>
<b>Details of any alternative options considered and rejected:</b>	Run an open tender process compliant with Contract Procedure Rules. This was rejected because the timescales involved in a compliant process could not be aligned with the urgent and critical nature of the work to be commissioned.
<b>Details of any declarations of interest made:</b>	None made.

Signed

Corporate Director Children and Families

Date: 12 November 2021