

## Record of officer decision

<b>Decision title:</b>	Variation to existing contract to deliver additional training to safeguarding practitioners and multi-agency partners to support the implementation of Signs of Safety social care practice model
<b>Date of decision:</b>	<b>26 January 2022</b>
<b>Decision maker:</b>	Corporate Director Children and Young People
<b>Authority for delegated decision:</b>	<p>Under the Chief Executive's Scheme of Delegation (updated June 2021), 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 (SA19).</p> <p>4.6.9 of the Contract Procedure Rules describes that 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 total aggregate contract value up to £500,000.</p> <p>4.6.11(a) of the Contract Procedure Rules further requires a formal decision for contract extensions where the aggregate value of the contract is above £50,000, if the original decision did not authorise the extension.</p>
<b>Ward:</b>	All wards
<b>Consultation:</b>	None
<b>Decision made:</b>	<p>The existing contract with Beverley Edwards Training and Consultancy Limited is varied:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. by extension from 01 January 2022 to 31 March 2022 to enable the delivery of an additional 17 practice-led training sessions for social care practitioners and multi-agency partners at an additional cost of £35,000 making the total value of the contract £139,080</li> <li>2. with the option to further extend to 31 March 2024 to continue to train social care practitioners and multi-agency partners if required subject to funding being secured and compliance with the council's contract procedure rules.</li> </ol>
<b>Reasons for decision:</b>	<p>On 03 April 2019, Cabinet made the decision to appoint a licensed consultant to deliver training and support the implementation of the Signs of Safety model as Herefordshire's children and families' social care practice model.  <a href="https://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?id=5879">https://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?id=5879</a>  This was at a cost of £79,000 over a 2 year delivery plan, however the project was not fully delivered during this period due to a number of factors outside of the provider's control, including the Covid-19 pandemic and Herefordshire Council's High Court judgement in March 2021 resulting in a change of personnel at all levels.</p> <p>A variation was approved by the Director for Children and Families in May 2021 to include the delivery of an additional practitioner and multi-agency training programme at a further cost of £25,000 which made the total value of the contract, including the variation, a maximum of £104,080.  <a href="https://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=7920">https://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=7920</a></p> <p>The council's Signs of Safety Project Board conducted an initial baseline survey with practitioners and multi-agency partners in June 2021, where results indicated an average level of confidence in using the approach as 'six' (when ten was very confident and one was not confident at all). Low confidence in staff and decreased performance was also highlighted in July 2021 during an Ofsted focused visit and through the internal auditing</p>

	<p>of social care cases, where staff were not fully trained or supported in the use of this model. In August 2021 the Board reported that 239 (91%) social care practitioners and Family Support Workers had completed a 2-day training course, 118 (45%) had completed a 5-day course out of a total of 263 staff members at that time.</p> <p>It is essential for multi-agency partners in Herefordshire to also understand the Signs of Safety approach and to think through how they can use the Signs of Safety model in their every-day practice and when they are working alongside children’s social care. These additional training sessions will further explain Signs of Safety as a practice framework and introduce partners to the tools, language and approach when working with children and families across the spectrum of Early Help to care experienced young people. To date, training has been offered to approximately 300 partners, including health professionals (e.g. nurses, health visitors), educational staff (e.g. teachers, childminders), police, housing, and other professionals who interact with children and families and participate in safeguarding by identifying concerns and making referrals, working with families at an Early Help level, and participating in Child Protection Conferences and core groups, among other safeguarding functions.</p> <p>As set out in the Signs of Safety Project Board’s ‘Terms of Reference’, the Board aims to ensure the successful delivery of the Signs of Safety project against the approved Implementation Plan for Children and Families, following the Council’s applied governance model for project delivery.</p> <p>The need for additional training was identified by the Project Board in October 2021, with the aim of rolling out further 2 and 5 day training sessions to any social care staff that had not undertaken the targeted training, and any new staff that had joined the Local Authority (approximately 110 staff members). The additional training programme also includes workshops for Child Protection (CP) Chairs and Team Managers on the journey from Strategy/Section 47 meetings to CP conferences, upskills, builds confidence, strengths practice and supports in ensuring quality, time-limited CP conferences. Training is now also to be offered to Foster Panel Members.</p>
<p><b>Highlight any associated risks/finance/legal/equality considerations:</b></p>	<p>The cost for the additional training sessions will be at a maximum £35,000 to be funded from grant funding secured from the Department of Education (DfE), which is time-limited to be spent by 31 March 2022. These additional sessions will be delivered between 01 January 2022 and 31 March 2022 and will be delivered virtually, however this will be reviewed as Covid-19 pandemic restrictions ease and in-line with government and council guidance.</p> <p>There is a risk of the additional training not meeting its objectives. The following actions are undertaken to support to mitigate this risk:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Evaluations will be completed by attendees following training. The Signs of Safety Project Board will take the feedback into account where appropriate.</li> <li>2) If any issues are raised, the Project Board, chaired by the Interim Assistant Director Quality Assurance Safeguarding and Partnerships, will identify best way of addressing them in close liaison with DfE.</li> <li>3) Retaining social care staff is an issue both nationally and locally. The authority is continuing to experience a high staff turn-over, which risks creating a deficit in the awareness of the model and the consistent implementation of practice improvements. The service is working on a new Workforce Strategy in order to retain and recruit practitioners.</li> <li>4) The DfE grant must be spent by 31 March 2022. Training of all social care practitioners may not be completed by this date, however the numbers of practitioners and partners is being closely monitored through regular meetings between the DfE and the Project Manager. Meetings focus on risk management, ensuring that training is delivered within the timescales and set bench marks are being worked towards/achieved. The Board is aiming for at least 80% of new</li> </ol>

	<p>staff/those who require further upskilling (currently 110 practitioners in total) to have completed their training by 31 March 2022.</p> <p>5) Signs of Safety has a minimum 2 year implementation plan, and a timeframe of 5 years until it is fully embedded into social care practice with the ultimate aim of training being brought in-house and facilitated by the Social Work Academy. The Project Chair (Interim Assistant Director Quality Assurance Safeguarding and Partnerships) is intending to submit a request to the Directorate Leadership Team to extend the Signs of Safety project until March 2024. If additional training is required beyond 31 March 2022 this will be subject to the identification of further budget. The contract variation proposed by the report will enable some flexibility to further extend the contract if required and subject to appropriate funding being secured. Any further extension beyond 31 March 2022 will likely require approval of a further exemption to the council's contract procedure rules once the scope and value of a further extension had been determined.</p>
<p><b>Details of any alternative options considered and rejected:</b></p>	<p>Not to provide additional training sessions. This is not recommended as there could be the potential for social care practitioners and multi-agency partners to have limited or no understanding of Signs of Safety and this could impact on the successful implementation the model and the required practice improvements.</p>
<p><b>Details of any declarations of interest made:</b></p>	<p>N/A</p>

Signed

Corporate Director Children and Young People

Date: 26/01/2022