

## Record of officer decision

<b>Decision title:</b>	Early Help Family Mentoring and Family Befriending contracts
<b>Date of decision:</b>	13 <sup>th</sup> March 2023
<b>Decision maker:</b>	Corporate Director, Children and Young People
<b>Authority for delegated decision:</b>	Under the Chief Executive scheme of delegation (CYP-01) Commissioning for children's services including schools, early years, colleges, adult learning, social care and vulnerable may be undertaken by the Corporate Director, Children and Young People.
<b>Ward:</b>	Countywide
<b>Consultation:</b>	Consultation has been undertaken with the Early Help Head of Service and the current providers, Homestart Herefordshire and Herefordshire Vennture.
<b>Decision made:</b>	<p>To vary the contract to extend the term for a period of 11 months from 1st April 2023 to 29th February 2024 to enable a continuation of the befriending service at a cost £60,500 for the 11 month period.</p> <p>To vary the contract to extend the term and uplift the price for a period of 11 months from 1st April 2023 to 29th February 2024 to enable a continuation of the family mentoring services at a cost of £129,850 for the 11 month period.</p>
<b>Reasons for decision:</b>	<p>Herefordshire's Early Help approach aims to provide early and effective help and support to children and families when they need it, with the long term aim of helping more families in Herefordshire to be able to help themselves and therefore improving their overall well-being and quality of life.</p> <p>A continuation of the Family mentoring and family befriending services is vital as it links to the governments Supporting Families programme and the delivery of Herefordshire's Health and Wellbeing Strategy. Due to unforeseen circumstances within Children and young peoples service the Early Help and Prevention Strategy was not finalised in the expected timeframe as such a further extension to contracts is required as the Early Help Strategy plays a key part in informing future commissioning decisions.</p> <p>Allowing the contracts to end without ensuring a continuation of service would leave a significant gap and negatively impact the local Early Help offer potentially leaving a large number of families without assistance. This may limit the potential for meeting positive outcomes for vulnerable families, with the increased possibility of escalation to social care.</p>

<p><b>Highlight any associated risks/finance/legal/equality considerations:</b></p>	<p>There are low financial risks associated with this decision. Funding is provided by a mix of core budget and Supporting Families funding. Confirmation of available budget has been obtained.</p> <p>The risk of legal challenge is low. Legal and commercial services colleagues have been involved in the decision making and have approved the appropriate route to vary the existing contracts.</p> <p>There are no equality issues, these contracts are in place to provide support to vulnerable families assessed as level 2 and mid-level 3 under the safeguarding levels of need threshold and contribute to preventing an escalation to social care.</p>
<p><b>Details of any alternative options considered and rejected:</b></p>	<p><b>Terminate the Family Mentoring and Befriending contracts</b>  This was not recommended. Allowing the contracts to end without ensuring a continuation of service would leave a significant gap and negatively impact the local Early Help offer potentially leaving a large number of families without assistance. This may limit the potential for meeting positive outcomes for vulnerable families, with the increased possibility of escalation to social care.</p> <p><b>Full procurement – open tender.</b>  This option is not recommended. The current provider was the sole bidder the last time the Family Mentoring contract was commissioned and further work is required to develop the market. Due to time constraints going to open tender may also result in a gap in provision and would not give sufficient time to redesign and recommission the service to ensure a high quality service continues to be provided to families.</p> <p><b>Deliver the services fully in house.</b>  This option was not recommended. The commissioned services provide support tailored to families according to need, identified through the early help assessment. Local family mentoring and befriending models utilise volunteers where appropriate enabling the families to benefit from the considerable experience and local community networks provided by local voluntary organisations. Delivering the services fully in house would increase pressures on the Early Help team whose primary focus is high level 3 families whilst some additional capacity can be achieved in this team this will not support all of the families which the current contract supports.</p>
<p><b>Details of any declarations of interest made:</b></p>	<p>Not applicable.</p>

Signed..... Date:

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