

Record of operational decision

Decision title:	Decision to extend the Child Protection and Court Teams contract														
Date of decision:	31 March 2023														
Decision maker:	Director for Children and Young People														
Authority for delegated decision:	<p>On 23 November 2022 the Cabinet Member Children and Families made the Key decision (Issue details - Contract Award: Child Protection and Court Teams - Herefordshire Council) to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) award, following a competitive procurement process, the contract for Child Protection and Court Teams from 28 November 2022 to 31 March 2023 at a value not exceeding £1.2m, with an option to extend for up to a further 12-months to 31 March 2024; at a maximum value of £3.4m and b) delegate authority to the Director for Children and Young People to take a further operational decisions, in consultation with the Cabinet Member and Section 151 Officer, to implement an optional extension period, if required, in line with the council's standing procurement, financial and governance requirements. 														
Ward:	Countywide														
Consultation:	Not applicable.														
Decision made:	To extend the current contract from 1 April 2023 to 10 November 2023, with a reducing level of capacity over the period as demand is expected to reduce at a maximum cost of £1,308,454.														
Reasons for decision:	<p>The current contract was awarded following a competitive procurement process and includes the option to extend for up to 12-months from 1 April 2023.</p> <p>The current provider has performed well and is meeting the contract's key objectives. Since the start of the current contract period, the service has supported over 560 cases in the child protection and court workload. By the end of February 2023, it had achieved the following rates:</p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <thead> <tr> <th>Performance measure</th> <th>Average to w/e 26 Feb</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Child in need visits completed and recorded within timescale (every 4 weeks)</td> <td>95%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Child protection visits completed and recorded within timescale (10 working days)</td> <td>91%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Child in care visits completed and recorded in timescale (no longer than 6 weeks apart during the first year of any placement)</td> <td>94%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Strategy meetings in timescales (1-3 working days)</td> <td>95%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Section 47 completed in timescales (15 working days)</td> <td>97%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Initial core groups completed within 10 days of initial child protection conference</td> <td>100%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Performance measure	Average to w/e 26 Feb	Child in need visits completed and recorded within timescale (every 4 weeks)	95%	Child protection visits completed and recorded within timescale (10 working days)	91%	Child in care visits completed and recorded in timescale (no longer than 6 weeks apart during the first year of any placement)	94%	Strategy meetings in timescales (1-3 working days)	95%	Section 47 completed in timescales (15 working days)	97%	Initial core groups completed within 10 days of initial child protection conference	100%
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	<p>While a contracted approach is not the long term solution, it has provided essential interim capacity to help manage caseloads, improve practice and ensure that children and families are supported at the right time and in the right way. The service has made good progress since the contract was awarded in November 2023. As a result, it is now anticipated that the remaining pressure on the Council’s established Child Protection and Court Service will reduce to an appropriate level by the end of November 2023. To help manage the reduction, the capacity of the contracted service will be reduced gradually between April and November 2023 to the point where the contract can be ended earlier than April 2024, which was the potential maximum period for the contract. From the end of November 2023, all ongoing Child Protection and Court work will be taken forward by the established service within the Children and Families Directorate.</p>								
Equality Considerations	<p>External service providers are made aware of their contractual requirements in regards to equality legislation.</p>								
Highlight any associated risks/finance/legal/equality considerations:	<p>The contract involves the provision of four teams of social workers. It has been planned that the required capacity will be reduced over the proposed extension period, as follows:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Team 1: 01/04/2023 – 28/04/2023 Team 2: 01/04/2023 – 14/07/2023 Team 3: 01/04/2023 – 27/10/2023 Team 4: 01/04/2023 – 10/11/2023</p> <p>There is no change to the contract’s unit costs. The overall cost of the provision as planned above will be £1,308,454. Should it be feasible to complete work and exit a team early, the overall cost could be reduced.</p> <p>The value of the proposed extension is within the total budget envelope approved by the Key decision taken on 23 November 2022. The Section 151 Officer has confirmed the available budget for the proposed extension.</p> <p>As required by the previous decision, the Director for Children and Young People has consulted with the Cabinet Member and Section 151 Officer regarding the costs of proposed contract extension.</p> <p>The Council’s Contract Procedure Rules state that Directors within the relevant directorate can authorise a contract variation/ extension of a contract value in excess of £500,000 provided that authority to award the contract has been obtained by way of a key decision.</p>								
Details of any alternative options considered and rejected:	<p>Ending the contract on 31 March 2023 has not been recommended because of the additional pressure it would place on the Council’s in-house service as it progresses through its improvement journey.</p>								

**Details of any
declarations
of interest made:**

None declared.

Signed..... Date: 31/03/2023

Please ensure that signatures are redacted before publishing.