

Record of officer decision

Decision title:	Social Worker (Degree) Apprenticeships
Date of decision:	28 th April 2023
Decision maker:	Director of HR and OD
Authority for delegated decision:	Corporate Services Scheme of Delegation: Article 91 - Approval of spend and the allocation of funds to providers from the Council's Apprenticeship Levy Fund.
Ward:	Countywide
Consultation:	<p>The following colleagues have been consulted and advice provided has been incorporated into the decision:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workforce development leads in Community Wellbeing Directorate • Social Work Academy Lead in Children & Young Peoples Directorate • Hoople • Head of Learning & Organisational Development
Decision made:	To make a direct award of contract to Coventry University to deliver Social Worker (Degree) Apprenticeships. The maximum value of the contract is £360,000. This will support the delivery of up to 15 apprenticeships from September 2023.
Reasons for decision:	<p>Herefordshire Council is seeking to train up to 15 Social Worker (degree) apprentices starting in 2023. Recruiting Social Workers to work in Herefordshire, as across the country, continues to be challenging. Herefordshire Council is committed to developing the workforce by providing quality education and development opportunities, including a Social Work Apprenticeship Programme.</p> <p>A tender was issued, which did not attract any bids, follow up contact was made with a number of potential Training Providers and it was identified that Coventry University would be able to provide the service required. Herefordshire Council has an existing relationship with Coventry University as part of the West Midlands Social Work Teaching Partnership education and training for social work students and practitioners.</p> <p>As a large employer, Herefordshire council is required to make a mandatory contribution to the Government Apprenticeship Levy. This contract for £360,000 will be funded in full by levy funding and Coventry University will be required to draw down the funding directly from the Government Apprenticeship Levy. The maximum that can be claimed for each Apprentice is £24,000 for the three year Social Work (degree) Apprenticeship programme.</p>
Highlight any associated risks/finance/legal/equality considerations:	<p>The financial risk is low as the funding is accessed by the provider from the Apprenticeship Levy, not from a Council budget.</p> <p>Apprentices will be recruited internally through expressions of interest and an Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out to ensure the process is fair to all.</p> <p>No health and safety implications or other risks have been anticipated.</p>

	By providing a direct award of contract, there is always some risk of challenge from other providers. In this case the risk is deemed low, as the previous procurement exercises for this service did not attract any bids.
Details of any alternative options considered and rejected:	<p>Reissue the tender This option is not recommended, the service was designed for a contract to commence in May to enable uptake of apprenticeships from Sept 2023. Should a further tender result in a lack of interest there would be no time to explore alternative options in order to meet the timeframe required to on board apprentices for a September 2023 start date.</p> <p>Utilise the existing contract with the University of Kent This option is not recommended. Extending the contract term would provide for an additional 9 apprenticeships under this contract. However the provider has indicated they would be unable to supply practice educators and the majority of training would be delivered virtually, this does not meet our current requirements.</p> <p>Vary the existing contract with The Open University This option is not recommended. Whilst the contract could be extended by way of a contract variation in line with the councils contract procedure rules this would only enable an additional 4 apprenticeships which is not sufficient capacity for the current level of demand required. This provider is also unable to supply practice educators and all training would be delivered virtually, this does not meet our current requirements.</p>
Details of any declarations of interest made:	None.

Signed..... Date: