

Title of report: Recommissioning of Herefordshire Intensive Support Service (HIPSS)

Decision maker: Cabinet member children and young people

Report by: Senior Commissioning Officer, Commissioning Support Officer

Classification

Open

Decision type

Key

Wards affected

(All Wards);

Purpose

To approve the recommissioning of the Herefordshire Intensive Placement Support Service.

Recommendation(s)

That:

- a) **To approve the recommissioning of the Herefordshire Intensive Placement Support Service (HIPSS) for a period of up to five years from 1st April 2024;**
- b) **That the Corporate Director Community Wellbeing be authorised to award the contract for the Intensive Placement Support Service up to the value of £2.2M**
- c) **To delegate authority to the Corporate Director Community Wellbeing to make all decisions to give effect to recommendation a and b and should any changes or amendments need to be made throughout the commissioning process and contract period.**

Alternative options

1. Do nothing and allow the current contract to end in March 2024. This is not recommended. The implications of doing nothing would be that the existing contract would expire on 31 March 2024 and the service would cease. This would immediately reduce clinical support for children with complex needs and increase the risk of placement disruption among the HIPSS cohort. Consequently there will be a greater risk of placement breakdown and the need to accommodate children in residential placements, potentially out of county, and at a significantly higher cost.
2. Develop an in-house specialist therapeutic service. This option is not recommended. It would require a significant long term investment by the council, but at the current time challenges remain with regards to staff recruitment and retention. However, as this situation improves, the council may wish to consider this option in the future

Key considerations

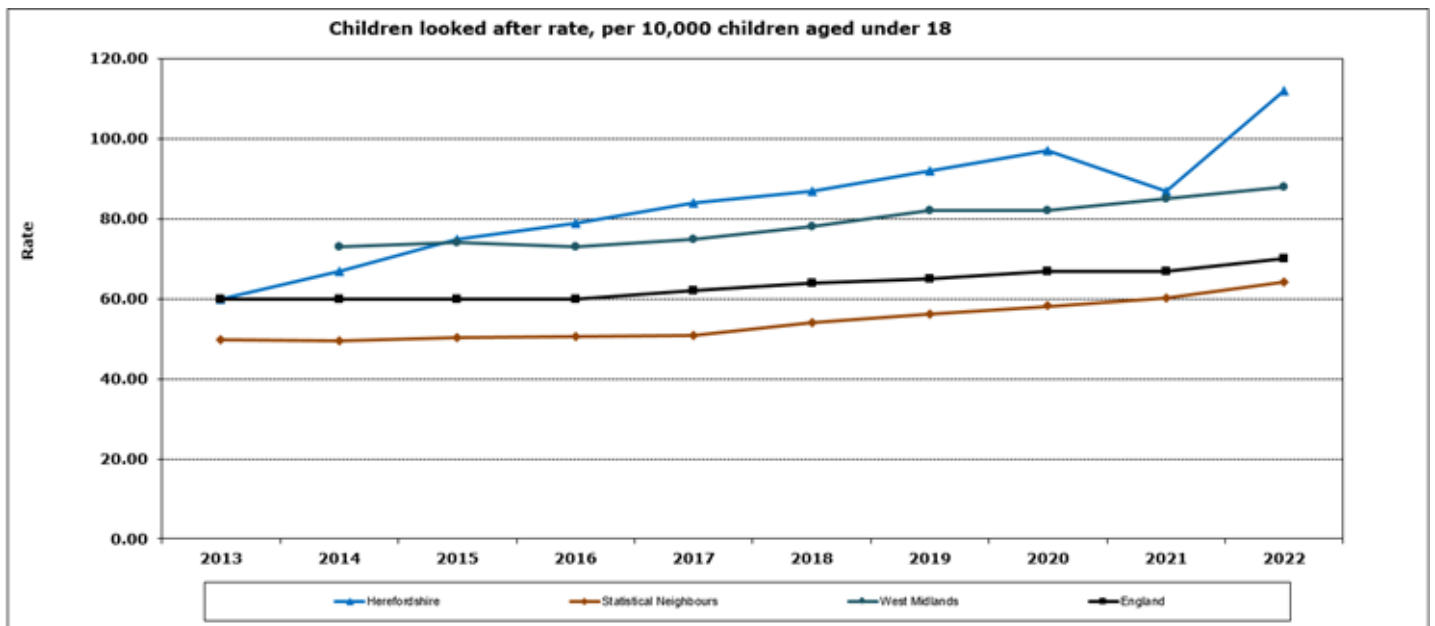
3. Herefordshire Intensive Placement Support Service (HIPSS) is an intensive therapeutic support service for children and young people with very complex vulnerabilities and emotional support needs, who are already in care placements and where there is a risk of that placement breaking down. Working with the Safeguarding and Family Support division, HIPSS aims to reduce the number of children who step up from family based care into residential care and aid the transition of children stepping down to local family based care.
4. The service will provide individually tailored intensive wrap-around (multi-systemic) therapeutic intervention packages that are outcome focused and build on a robust evidence-based approach. The service will support children and their carers in foster placements, kinship care, special guardianship arrangements and those stepping-down from or at risk or requiring residential care.
5. The service will provide wrap-around intensive therapeutic support packaged around the child or young person and their carers targeted by the service. It will aim to help young people to overcome significant adversity in their preceding years and prepare for adult life. To this end it will support the young person to develop greater emotional well-being and control over their behaviours such that they can engage in meaningful relationships, participate positively in the community, take advantage of opportunities in education and learning and live successfully as independent adults.
6. There are currently three levels of service offered by the service as detailed below;
 - a) Level 1 Foster Care Clinics (FCC)
 - b) Level 2 Direct Intervention either with Foster carers (DI FC) or Young person (DI YP) themselves
 - c) Level 3 Wrap-around Therapeutic Intervention (Highest level)
7. It is intended to recommission a similar specialist service via an open tender process with a revised service specification. This tender process will follow PCR2015 and Council Procedure rules where required. We will use feedback and learning from the current HIPSS contract to inform the changes to be made to the new and revised service specification.
8. The revised service will continue to support the council's role as a corporate parent and aims of the sufficiency strategy by providing placement stability and reducing the needs for residential placements.

9. Herefordshire Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) work closely with the HIPSS service providing specialist support to any young person where the complexity of mental wellbeing or emotional trauma necessitates this additional professional input.
10. CAMHS clinicians are trained and qualified specialists, made up of psychiatrists, psychologists, nurses, occupational therapists, and psychotherapists.
11. They have very particular referral criteria, so only a small number of children and young people supported by HIPSS, those with the most complex emotional or mental health issues, will also have this input. However a representative from CAMHS sits on the HIPSS steering group, able to provide advice and guidance across the whole cohort of children and young people being supported by HIPSS.
12. Wherever appropriate, the council, as a corporate parent, aims for its looked after children to benefit from stable family-based placements. To achieve this, the council's fostering service requires confident, capable and well supported carers, to successfully accommodate children and young people with a range of needs. The specialist expertise provided by the HIPSS therapeutic approach helps to enhance the confidence and capabilities of the council's foster carers.
13. The HIPSS approach supports the council's corporate parenting strategy priorities that looked after children have a safe and stable home and are supported to reach their potential in education. It also supports the Children and Young people's Plan (2019 -24) pledges, "to be safe from harm" and "be healthy".
14. The council has a duty to operate a sufficiency strategy to meet the accommodation needs of its looked after children (LAC). The current strategy is in the final stages of review and the main purpose of the strategy is to set out what Herefordshire Council will do to ensure that there is sufficient accommodation of different types for our looked after children and young people (CLA) and care leavers (CL). The strategy is part of a whole-system approach that includes early intervention and preventive services to support children within their family setting, as well as better support services for children who become looked after.
15. One of the activities within the action plan for developing sufficiency in accommodation – foster care is to recommission support programme for Herefordshire Carers which will focus on promoting confident management of challenging presentations and promote stability of placement, avoiding unnecessary placement in residential or IFA.
16. One of the areas for improvement within the Ofsted inspection of Herefordshire local authority children's service report, published on 21 September 2022 (inspected 18 to 29 July 2022) , 'The availability of support and services to meet children and young people's needs, including timely access to therapeutic interventions, access to dentistry, life-story work, emotional and mental health support, help for young people to support transitions into independence and sufficient suitable accommodation'. The service will directly contribute to the Herefordshire Children's Services Improvement Plan.
17. The strategic aims of the HIPSS approach are;
 - a) to support the reduced reliance on agency fostering and residential placements and support the council's approach in enabling looked after children to benefit from growing up in a stable family environment care
 - b) to help children and young people develop greater emotional well-being and control over their behaviours so that they can engage in meaningful relationships, participate positively in the community, take advantage of opportunities in education and learning and live successful independent lives;

- c) to reduce the proportion of budget spend on agency placements

Community impact

18. As can be seen from the graph below, Herefordshire's LAC population is considerably higher than the average of our statistical neighbours. An approximate rate across our statistical neighbours is 58 LAC per 10,000 under 18 population; however Herefordshire's rate has increased for the fifth year in a row, to 112 children per 10,000 population.



19. From April 2018 to the end of March 2022, the HIPSS service supported 41 children deemed at risk of entering, or potentially able to step down from, residential care. A further 126 looked after children have received lower amounts of direct or indirect support via consultations or short term interventions. This has helped to improve carer resilience, which can prevent placement breakdown, reducing the risk of a child entering residential care.

20. During the review period (April 2018 up to end March 22), 76% of children and young people achieved positive outcomes, including:

- stepped down to general foster care
- staying put placement
- stepped down to supported living
- reunified home
- stabilised fostering placement

21. During the period 1 September 2022 to 31 March 2023 the service has seen a change in the numbers being referred into the HIPSS service for the L3 high intensive support. There have been a total of 11 new referrals during this period, of which 73% have been for L1 foster care clinic support.

22. The majority of children who have received intensive support from the service are seen to be showing improvements in their ability to manage their own behaviour and engage in positive relationships.

Environmental Impact

23. Please state how this decision / proposal seeks to deliver the council's [environmental policy commitments](#) and aligns to the following success measures in the County Plan.

- [Reduce the council's carbon emissions](#)
 - One of the key intentions through the provision of the HIPSS service is to prevent children or young people being placed in residential services, or to enable early step down from such provision. As many of the residential placements are outside Herefordshire and therefore requiring additional and sometimes very long car journeys by staff to carry out visits, assessments and reviews, any reduction in the use of out-of-county residential placements will have a positive reducing effect on carbon emissions.
 - The environmental impact of this proposal has been considered through the service specification which encourages the successful service provider to consider ways in which environmental impact of the service could be reduced in line with the council's carbon reduction targets.

Equality duty

24. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to –

- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

25. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services. Our providers will be made aware of their contractual requirements in regards to equality legislation.

26. The provision of the HIPSS service to support foster carers and the young people they care for, helps greatly with improving stability in accommodation and education, and through the provision of a stable and nurturing home environment the children and young people are supported to develop strong and resilient physical and emotional wellbeing.

Resource implications

27. This contract is accounted for within the base budget for Children's Services. Finance have confirmed that a maximum annual budget of £423,582 is available for the duration of the proposed new contract. This would be a maximum available budget for a 5 year contract of £2,117,910
28. During the contract period between April 2018 and March 2022, and as a consequence of HIPSS involvement in avoiding, or supporting the step-down from residential placements, there is a calculated in year cost avoidance of £576k. This relates to 6 CYP: 2 have reunified home, 2 stepped down to general foster care & 2 stepped down to supported accommodation.
29. It should be highlighted that during the above contract period, the COVID 19 pandemic caused a great deal of disruption to normal working activities, with restrictions on face to face contact. Without the challenges caused by the pandemic it is most likely that the costs avoided would have been greater still.
30. The table below sets out the annual and full contract funding requirements.

Revenue budget implications	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	Total
Base budget	£423,582	£423,582	£423,582	£423,582	£423,582	£2,117,910
TOTAL						

Legal implications

31. The reletting of the contract will facilitate the Council's delivery of its statutory duties towards children and young persons.

Risk management

32. Details of identified risks along with mitigations are noted below;

Risk	Mitigation
There are decreasing numbers of foster carers available in Herefordshire.	Work is being undertaken by the Fostering and Adoptions Service to increase the numbers of people becoming foster carers.
The current HIPSS service may not be meeting expectations around engagement and support activities.	The existing service specification for the HIPSS service is being reviewed and revised to ensure clarity of purpose, that monitoring reflects our expected outcomes and that closer working relationships between HIPSS and Herefordshire children's services are developed to improve knowledge and communication

Consultees

33. The following table sets out the consultation and governance timeline

Commissioning Programme Board	25/04/2023
Directorate Leadership Team (DLT)	31/07/2023
Political Groups Consultation	24/10/2023
Cabinet Member Decision	31/10/2023

34. A political group consultation was carried out on 24th October 2023, questions were asked in relation to:

- The performance of the current service provider including the breakdown of the data presented
- The types of trauma informed therapy of which the service will be expected to deliver
- How this service will link in with other mental health services for children and young people
- How was the total contract value derived at and can we be confident this will meet the current need and also allow for growth within the contract
- How this service links in with the current improvement plan
- How this service will ensure better outcomes for children and young people

All questions were answered during the course of the briefing and no changes to the decision to be taken were required.

Appendices

None

Background papers

None identified

Report Reviewers Used for appraising this report:

N.B – This report will be shared for appraisal via Mod.Gov following presentation of the draft document to DLT on Monday 31st July 2023.

Please note this section must be completed before the report can be published		
Governance	John Coleman	Date 18/08/2023
Finance	Wendy Pickering	Date 17/08/2023
Legal	Sean O'Connor	Date 11/08/2023

Communications	Luenne featherstone	Date 14/08/2023
Equality Duty	Harriet Yellin	Date 15/08/2023
Procurement	Lee Robertson	Date 14/08/2023
Risk	Elizabeth Freedland	Date 14/08/2023

Approved by	Darryl Freeman	Date 06/09/2023
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Please include a glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report.