

Record of operational decision

Decision title:	The provision of the Early Help Service for Children and Families
Date of decision:	19 th December 2024
Decision maker:	Corporate Director, for Children and Young People
Authority for delegated decision:	The Chief Executives scheme of delegation CYP-03 Early help and family support services gives delegated authority to the Corporate Director, for Children and Young People to take this decision.
Ward:	Countywide
Consultation:	Engagement has taken place with internal and external stakeholders; this supported and informed the development of the service.
Decision made:	To award a contract to Vennture for the provision of an Early Help Service for Children and Families for a period of two years from 01 April 2025 to 31 March 2027 at a total cost of £450,000.
Reasons for decision:	<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 complex families in Herefordshire to be able to help themselves and therefore improving their overall well-being and quality of life.</p> <p>Following an open tender exercise in November 2024, conducted in line with the council’s Contracts Procedure Rules and The Public Contract Regulations 2015, five compliant bids were received and evaluated in line with the criteria set out within the tender documentation, resulting in Vennture achieving the highest final moderated overall score.</p> <p>This service will be provided to 131 families (208 children/young people using a calculation of 1.6 children/young people per family) for up to 26 weeks in any 12-month period. Families will have been assessed by social care to be at a minimum Level 3 of the ‘<i>Herefordshire Right Help Right Time Levels of Need</i>’. The Provider will report on the total number of number of families supported, and it is expected that at least 45% of families will achieve sustainable change against all outcomes identified in their support plan for at least 18 months following the end of their support and continue not to require re-referral for Council support services.</p> <p>As cited in clause 142 of the Children and Young Peoples Directorate Scheme of Delegation, ‘the local authority has a statutory duty under the Children Act 1989, Section 17 (and related duties in Schedule 2 to the Act) to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in their area who are in need. And, so far as is consistent with that duty, to promote the upbringing of such children by their families, by providing a range and level early help or edge of care services appropriate to those children's needs’. Not commissioning this service would be a lost opportunity to improve outcomes for vulnerable children and families.</p>
Highlight any associated risks/finance/legal/equality considerations:	The financial risk is low. Traditionally the Supporting Families Programme grant is used to cover funding for this type of contract however as it is known this grant will cease in March 2025, consideration has been given to future funding mechanisms to enable this contract to continue until March 2027.

	The legal risk is low this contract was procured in accordance with Herefordshire's Contract Procedure Rules (CPR's).
Details of any alternative options considered and rejected:	<p>Do nothing. This was not recommended as allowing the existing contracts to cease on 31 March 2025 without ensuring a continuation of service would result in a risk of undesirable levels of service disruption for the families being supported and would negatively impact the local Early Help offer. This would limit the potential for meeting positive outcomes for vulnerable families, with the increased possibility of escalation to social care and/or longer-term interventions.</p> <p>Vary current contracts. This was not recommended as all extension possibilities have been exhausted. Progressing this option would result in non-compliance with procurement regulations and Council policy.</p> <p>Deliver the services fully in-house. This was not recommended as the internal team would need to be increased significantly to have capacity to support additional families. It was considered that some families may also decline or withdraw from support offered directly by Council, as prefer to work with impartial agencies. Additionally, the current service operates models that include volunteers for frontline work which delivers good Social Value, and the in-house service would struggle to replicate this way of working.</p>
Details of any declarations of interest made:	Not applicable

Signed..... Date: 19/12/24