

To: **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: PEOPLE**
28TH FEBRUARY 2024

CONTRACT AWARD REPORT: SKILLS FOR LIFE PROJECT

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report seeks approval to award a contract to a youth work provider for the Skills for Life project (funded via the Department for Education's Short Breaks Innovation Fund.) The provider will be identified through an open procurement process, and a confidential annex to this report will be presented to the Executive Director People on 28th February 2024, containing details of the successful provider.
- 1.2 The provision of the Skills for Life project also supports the delivery of the Written Statement of Action (WSOA.) The WSOA was produced following the 2021 Ofsted and Care Quality Commission (CQC) joint inspection of special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) provision in Bracknell Forest, to address the nine areas of significant weakness which were identified during the inspection.
- 1.3 This project will contribute towards addressing the following areas of significant weakness:
 - Parents' and carers' lack of awareness of available advice, support, or social care provision
 - The lack of age-appropriate social opportunities for older children and young people with SEND
 - The high number of children and young people with SEND who reach a mental health crisis because of a lack of timely support to prevent further escalation
 - Insufficient long-term planning for young people as they move into adulthood

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 That following an open procurement process and identification of the successful provider, that the contract for the Service is awarded for an initial period of one year (commencing April 2024.)

3 Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1 Identification of the successful provider, and award of the contract for the Service following a competitive procurement process, will enable delivery of the Skills for Life project.
- 3.2 The anticipated benefits delivered through awarding the contract to the successful provider will support children and young people by addressing the gap in Bracknell Forest's current provision for independent, youth-club provision for children and young people aged 14 – 25 with mild to moderate SEND.

4 Alternative Options Considered

- 4.1 Do nothing: This is not an appropriate alternative, as it would mean that the gap in the current provision for children and young people aged 14 – 25 with mild to moderate SEND would continue, leaving a key group of children and young people unable to access appropriate services.

5 Supporting Information

- 5.1 The three-year (2022-2025) Short Breaks Innovation Fund programme supports local authorities to develop innovative new Short Breaks services to improve health, education and well-being outcomes for children and young people with SEND and their families, with £30 million total funding available via the fund for successful local authorities to bid from. The aim of the programme is to address gaps in Short Breaks provision, reduce pressures on the High Needs budget (and other associated budgets) and support structural reform and service design.
- 5.2 Bracknell Forest Council (BFC) currently has a three-tier approach to short break provision for children and young people (CYP) under the age of 18. These tiers are as follows:
- **Universal** (Mainstream activities listed on the SEND Local Offer; and funding via the Inclusion Fund to enable CYP with disabilities to attend universal and mainstream settings with 1:1 support)
 - **Targeted** (Kids Play and Leisure Scheme – a Council commissioned playscheme for CYP with disabilities whose needs cannot be met by mainstream settings)
 - **Specialist and Crisis Intervention** (Services accessible for children who are open to the Children's Specialist Support Team, supporting CYP with significant and specialist needs, including: Larchwood Short Break Respite Unit; Short Break foster carers; Direct Payments; Home care and agency support.)
- 5.3 The Inclusion Fund is successful in helping younger children with SEND to access mainstream activities (due to the availability of universal provisions.) The Kids Play and Leisure Scheme is designed for CYP with moderate to complex needs, and Specialist Services support CYP with significant needs. As a result, there is a gap in the current services for older young people with mild to moderate SEND, who require a more independent, youth-club provision.
- 5.4 Therefore, to address this gap, a bid was made to the **Short Breaks Innovation Fund** (previously the Better Integrated Care Fund) via the Department for Education, to run the “**Skills for Life**” project at Bracknell Forest Council.
- 5.5 The opportunity has been advertised on the South East Business Portal and Contracts Finder throughout January 2024. The deadline for tenderers to submit their tenders was 16th February 2024.
- 5.6 Responses to the tender will be reviewed at an Evaluation Panel on 26th February 2024, and the successful provider identified. A confidential annex to this report will be

finalised following this Evaluation Panel, and presented to the Executive Director People on 28th February 2024 for approval.

- 5.7 The procurement process will include two evaluation stages:
- (1) A selection questionnaire to determine providers' suitability and compliance, and
 - (2) The scoring of pricing and quality method statements
- 5.8 The tender evaluation team will include key stakeholders from the Children's Specialist Support Service, Short Breaks team, SEND team, and a member of the Bracknell Forest Parent Carer Forum.

6 Consultation and Other Considerations

Legal Advice

- 6.1 Bracknell Forest Council's Legal Team were consulted regarding the Extended Request for Quotation before it was published.

Financial Advice

- 6.2 Project team has not identified any risk to existing budgets, as funding for the project is being delivered via the DfE Short Breaks Innovation Fund.

Other Consultation Responses

- 6.3 The development of the Specification, and evaluation of the tender responses outlined above was completed in collaboration with colleagues from the Children's Specialist Support Service, Short Breaks team, SEND team, Strategic Commissioning team, Community Team for People with Learning Disabilities, and a member of the Bracknell Forest Parent Carer Forum.
- 6.4 Feedback from children and families accessing the Skills for Life provision will be sought when the project goes live and will be used to inform ongoing delivery of services within the project.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.5 An Equalities Impact Screening was completed at project initiation phase, before procurement commenced. This identified that a Full Equality Impact Assessment was not required.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.6 None identified.

Contact for further information

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