

**TO: DIRECTOR OF ADULT SOCIAL CARE, HEALTH AND HOUSING  
7 JULY 2016**

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**CONTRACT AWARD FOR ONLINE MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT AND COUNSELLING  
SERVICE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE  
Consultant in Public Health**

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To seek approval to award a new contract for the online mental health support and counselling service for young people.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 **That the Online Mental Health Support and Counselling Service contract due to commence on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2016 be awarded to Tenderer A.**

**3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION**

- 3.1 To ensure that young people aged 11 – 19 yrs (up to 25 years for those who are looked after) can access professional mental health support and counselling at an early stage, in order to prevent the escalation of concerns and reduce the need for them to access the specialist child and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS)

**4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 4.1 To not invest in the continued provision of an online mental health and support counselling service, after the current pilot terminates on 30 September 2016. This is not considered a suitable option for two reasons; One, the pilot has evidenced the need and value of having a preventative, convenient alternative to the traditional face-to-face counselling service, that young people can access with minimum waiting time; and two, children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing has been highlighted as a key priority for the Council, due to the unacceptably long waiting times for the specialist child and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS) and the clear benefits to health and wellbeing of addressing young people's needs for information and confidential advice at an early stage.

**5. SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 5.1 It is estimated that at least one in four people will experience a mental health problem at some point in their life. Half of those with lifetime mental health problems first experience symptoms by the age of 14, and three-quarters before their mid-20s. Time to Change report that as many as one in ten young people will experience mental health problems each year.
- 5.2 The Bracknell Forest Health and Wellbeing Board has provided a clear steer that children and young people need to be able to access emotional and mental health services that they require in a timely manner, and where possible at the lowest level possible to prevent escalation to higher tiers of support.

- 5.3 This approach aligns with the focus on prevention identified in the [“Future in Mind”](#) report (Children and Young People’s Mental Health and Wellbeing Taskforce, 2015) and the [East Berkshire Mental Health Services for Children and Young People Transformation Plan](#) (December 2015), which emphasises the importance of ensuring young people receive the help and support they need, when they need it, delivered in a way that suits them.
- 5.4 Our experience of commissioning online mental health support and counselling over the past 13 months has clearly demonstrated that it dramatically improves the length of time young people have to wait to access professional counselling and specialist mental health advice, compared to other, more traditional methods. Around 70% of log-ins have been made out-of-hours, when many services are closed.
- 5.5 There is now good evidence that online mental health support and counselling is meeting young people’s needs for information, advice and support to improve their emotional wellbeing and is likely to prevent their concerns from escalating.
- 5.6 There is also good evidence of extensive local integration of the service, particularly into secondary schools where it is actively promoted and highly valued according to written and verbal feedback.
- 5.7 The tender process was a single stage process with entry level questions. The opportunity was advertised on the South East Business Portal. As the contract value was below the threshold it was not necessary to advertise in the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU).
- 5.8 Three organisations expressed an interest in the tender on the South East Business Portal, although only one submitted a tender.
- 5.9 The Tender received was evaluated by the Project Team, details of which are set out in the confidential annexe. The evaluation criteria had been agreed by the panel prior to the tender invitations. Evaluation was finalised on 18<sup>th</sup> May 2016 following a presentation.

## **6. ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS**

### Borough Solicitor

- 6.1 No significant legal issues arise from the matters discussed in this report.

### Borough Treasurer

- 6.2 The costs of the service, based on anticipated activity, will be £10,000 less than current costs. The costs of the service will be met from existing budgets allocated for this service. The contract has been awarded after a tender exercise, and the winning tender represents the best value for money of the tenders received.

### Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.3 A full EIA was carried out and has been considered at all stages of the procurement process.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

6.4 None

**7. CONSULTATION**

Principal Groups Consulted

7.1 Young people who have used the service and feedback received from engagement with other key stakeholders (schools, the Pupil Referral Unit, GPs, the CCG, KIDS (the young carers service), the Youth Offending Service and the Looked After Children team).

Method of Consultation

7.2 See above, reported by the provider each quarter.

Representations Received

7.3 None

Background Papers

Annex A (Confidential): Procurement Process Details

Contact for further information

Lisa McNally, Adult Social Care, Health & Housing - 0788 619 3505  
[Lisa.mcnally@bracknell-forest.gov.uk](mailto:Lisa.mcnally@bracknell-forest.gov.uk)