

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET – 22 JULY 2010

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

STEP UP INTO SOCIAL WORK PILOT PROGRAMME: OUTCOME OF PROCUREMENT PROCESS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Learn Together Partnership consists of the Merseyside local authorities plus Warrington and Halton and on a shared basis develops training and learning for the childrens workforce. Step Up into Social Work is a national pilot programme offering an employment based route to qualifying as a social worker. Cabinet on 18 March 2010 granted permission for Wirral as the Lead Local Authority to begin the procurement process for the provision of the delivery of the social work training. This report contains the outcome of the procurement process.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Step Up to Social Work Programme is a national programme funded by the Childrens Workforce Development Council. The programme aims to attract high quality graduates into social work and is a "fast-track" programme over 18 months.
- 1.2 The procurement process has been undertaken in line with the rules and regulations of the OJEU – Accelerated Restricted process in conjunction with Corporate Procurement. The tender is to deliver a social work Master (MA) degree over 18 months for 40 students. The contract value was set at below £9,500 per student.
- 1.3 The pre-qualification stage closed on 12 April 2010 and two universities submitted and met the requirements to move to the next stage – Liverpool John Moores University and the University of Chester. Both universities have substantial experience of delivering MA degrees in social work.
- 1.4 Both Universities submitted full tenders by the deadline of 26 April 2010.
- 1.5 The tender evaluation panel consisted of representatives from Wirral, St Helens, Knowsley and Sefton Councils. Manchester Metropolitan University who are the awarders of the Masters qualification and on whose behalf the training will be delivered were also members of the panel.
- 1.6 The evaluation of the tender was in two parts. The balance of the tender was 80% of the overall score on quality and the price 20%. Weighting of scores was also attributed to each element and are indicated below.
- 1.7 The 80% quality of the tender submission was evaluated on the programme team experience (10%), creative and innovative methods of delivery (10%), engagement of service users (10%), action plan and detailed timescales (10%), programme delivery (50%) and risk management and quality assurance (10%). The scores for this part of the tender were very close but the University of Chester scored slightly higher.
- 1.7 The second part of the tender evaluation on price was evaluated on development costs (5%), delivery costs (85%), premises and resources costs (5%) and quality assurance (5%).

1.8 In the evaluation of this aspect of the tender, the University of Chester scored significantly better with a clearer balance of price across delivery costs and premises and resources.

2. Risk Assessment

2.1 Wirral is the lead authority for this programme on behalf of the other local authority members of the Learn Together Partnership. Contract arrangements between Wirral and the other local authorities to agree responsibilities and financial arrangements will be in place before the programme begins.

3. Financial Implications

3.1 The funding for the delivery of the Step Up to Social Work was detailed in the Cabinet report of 18 March 2010. The elements for the funding of the training course aspects are received from the Higher Education Funding Council (HEFC). The standard funding is £416k for the 18 month period for 40 students and will be released to Wirral on behalf of the Learn Together Partnership.

3.2 The tender price submitted by the University of Chester is £367,840 which can be met from the grant. The Step Up to Social Work programme is fully funded by the Children's Workforce Development Council; the Government have confirmed funding for this programme, through the CWDC for 2010/2011.

4. Staffing Implications

4.1 There are no staffing implications arising from this report.

5. Equal Opportunities Implications/Health Impact Assessment

5.1 There are no implications arising from this report.

6. Community Safety Implications

6.1 There are no community safety implications.

7. Local Agenda 21 Implications

7.1 There are no Local Agenda 21 implications.

8. Planning Implications

8.1 There are no planning implications.

9. Anti-poverty Implications

9.1 There are no anti-poverty implications.

10. Social Inclusion Implications

10.1 The programme will be of particular interest to people who are wishing to change career and will attract a wider range of people to social work training.

11. Local Member Support Implications

11.1 There are no local member support implications.

12. Background Papers

Cabinet Report: Step Up to Social Work Programme 18 March 2010.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That:

- (1) Members confirm acceptance of the tender by the University of Chester of £367,840.
- (2) Members give agreement for the Director of Children's Services to enter into a contract with the University of Chester to deliver MA in social work training on behalf of the Learn Together Partnership.

Howard Cooper
Director of Children's Services