

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

16 NOVEMBER 2011

SUBJECT:	EARLY INTERVENTION GRANT – LESSONS LEARNT
WARD/S AFFECTED:	ALL
REPORT OF:	ACTING DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES
RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	COUNCILLOR ANN MCLACHLAN
KEY DECISION	NO

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report presents to the Committee the lessons learnt following an evaluation of the process used to commission services funded by the Early Intervention Grant (EIG). The commissioning process was complex and a report to identify lessons learnt was requested as a means of identifying improvements in any future commissioning activities.

The main aim of the EIG activities is to effectively intervene to help children, young people and families to move down the continuum of need from high levels which require high cost interventions to a lower level of need and eventually moving to a stage using universal lower cost open access services. This approach is in line with the corporate priority of providing early intervention and support for vulnerable children and families. Although too early to be specific about the impact of the commissioned services, providers are clear about the expectations of their services and also about the way in which they will be monitored to ensure a focus on outcomes. If the required outcomes are achieved, and the level of need is reduced, it is to be expected that future costs will also be reduced for the Council and its partners.

- 1.2 This report has no exempt sections.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to note the report.

3.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 The Early Intervention Grant replaced a number of former funding streams within Children's Services. Its purpose is to help improve outcomes for Children, Young People and families by Early Intervention. The grant is un-ringfenced; authorities are free to allocate funds to meet priority needs.

- 3.2 In February this year a commissioning round was started to commission services to provide appropriate early intervention services.

The services commissioned, costing £2.8m, ranged from targeted support for families and individuals with complex and multiple needs to services which were open access and meeting low level needs with appropriate support and information.

In preparation for the commissioning of services a robust review of relevant data was undertaken by the commissioners, the Safeguarding Quality Assurance Manager, the Children's Centres' Manager and the Link Forum Liaison worker.

Following a thorough needs analysis, three priorities were identified which would underpin decisions. These were:

- Priority Area 1 (PA1) Parenting / Compromised parenting.
- Priority Area 2 (PA2) Short Breaks for Disabled Children.
- Priority Area 3 (PA3) Risk taking Behaviour in Children, Young people and Families.

- 3.3 The identified priorities became the framework for the development of tender specifications and documentation describing the range of services and activities which would be required. In the 2010 commissioning round activities were undertaken separately which resulted in services being seen in isolation. In this case however, they were all part of a continuum of support which worked across age ranges and needs. Using the three priorities in one commissioning process contributed to a better understanding of the aims of early intervention and the view that there was a shared responsibility between providers and commissioners for the delivery of relevant and effective services.

- 3.4 A full open tendering process was used to identify providers. This was undertaken with the full support and guidance of the Corporate Procurement Unit. The approach utilised was in 3 stages 1) a Pre-Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ) 2) to identify providers to Invite To Tender stage (ITT) 3) invite providers to attend for interviews and presentations.

- 3.5 Organisations proceeding to the ITT stage completed full tender documents including detailed method statements and pricing schedules. Each of the 3 Priority Areas were evaluated by a panel. Each panel had a core membership with representation from:

- Children and Young People's Department.
- NHS Wirral.
- Link Forum.
- Young people or Parent/Carers.

Priority Area 3, risk taking behaviour had additional membership from Merseyside Police and Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service.

- 3.6 Panel members were fully involved in the evaluation of tenders. A total of 34 organisations submitted at least one tender resulting in a total of 101 tenders across all priority areas being evaluated. In **PA2** and **PA3** in addition to individual applications, consortia bids were submitted by a national and a local charity.

Included in the submissions were a large number of multiple and cross priority applications. In total 45 organisations were short-listed for interview.

- 3.7 The interview process involved a presentation on a preset topic and was followed by a number of set questions. Prior to the interviews, providers were given copies of the questions and they were allowed thirty minutes to prepare.

In the case of multiple applications in one priority area, providers were given additional time in the interview to enable them to cover all the areas for which they had applied.

- 3.8 A major change to the commissioning process was the use of the Chest to:-

- Advertise the EIG commissioning round.
- Manage all communication from and to providers during the commissioning process.
- Inform short listed, unsuccessful and successful providers of the outcome at appropriate stages of the process.

Other changes included:

- Generic questions which were used in the Method Statements with additional questions added when the area required a specific response
- Giving the providers the interview questions thirty minutes prior to interviews.
- The involvement of service users at all stages of the evaluation across all three priority areas (this was previously difficult to manage with young people during school time).

- 3.9 The assessment of Method Statements is a key part of the evaluation process. It is essential that panels understand what will meet expectations and deliver outcomes. To assist panel members in the assessment process a full set of assessment criteria was developed for each service area. In effect panel members had a full set of model Method Statements from which to start assessing the submitted documents. Whilst this was promoted as an assessment tool, panel members were actively encouraged to use their own experiences to inform their decisions.

- 3.10 A desired outcome of commissioning is that the market is stimulated and there is a mix of providers at the end of the process. In this commissioning round, the volume of applications and the range of providers are evidence that this was achieved.

- 3.11 At the outset there was a commitment to identify the lessons learnt and the areas for improvement in future commissioning rounds. To this end a number of meetings were organised with the Link Forum, Panel Chairs, Central Procurement and providers.

3.12 Lessons Learnt

Stage in Process	Issue	Action
Pre-tender	User friendly Tender Documents	Workshops on how to use The Chest are available through Invest Wirral (www.investwirral.com)
	Possible Conflict of Interest in panel members	<p>i) Panel members to be identified prior to commissioning process. Train panel members to ensure consistency. Increase numbers of panel members.</p> <p>ii) Register all panel members' declaration of pecuniary interest with Audit in advance. (Currently this takes place at the first panel meeting.)</p> <p>iii) Produce panel member's briefing note to cover roles and responsibilities.</p>
	Developing the capacity of Panel Members	<p>i) Commissioning Panels to have mix of experienced and inexperienced members.</p> <p>ii) Training to be provided in advance of commissioning process.</p>
	Understanding the tender requirements.	Training to be provided prior to next commissioning opportunity.
	Working with The Chest system.	Central Procurement to provide training
Specification	Information on requirements.	Allow more time for preparation of documents
	Information on what is wanted from bidders	More information to be included in specification; however this has to be balanced with the need for providers to be innovative in delivery.
Invitation to Tender (Method Statement)	TUPE	Information to be included in tender documents regarding the existing providers and staff at risk of being de-commissioned.

Evaluation	Too many organisations invited to interview. In future fewer but appropriate organisations to be included after Method Statement stage.	Introduce key questions to shortlist. More time for evaluation of tenders is needed in evaluation of tender stage. This approach can only be used when the interview is not part of process but for clarification purposes only.
Decommissioning of services	Grant is reduced, EIG budget reduced.	Build in break free clause to contracts.
Future commissioning of services	Length of time necessary to complete commissioning process is between 6-9 months. With short contracts there is not enough time to effectively evaluate existing services to establish impact before next commissioning round starts.	Consider applying roll-over option to some or all contracts to enable evaluation of impact .

3.13 Each meeting brought to the evaluation a different perspective of the process and this has been included as Appendix A. Some of the points raised have already been addressed and the outcomes are in bold type in italics.

4.0 RELEVANT RISKS

4.1 The Authority has given an undertaking to review how effectively it commissions services. This minimises risks to the commissioning process if brought into question.

5.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

5.1 All options for improvement in commissioning of services have been considered in preparation of this report.

6.0 CONSULTATION

6.1 A number of meetings with partners have been undertaken as part of the process.

7.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

7.1 This report seeks to improve the process whereby the Voluntary, Community and faith Groups can be more involved in future commissioning processes.

8.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS

8.1 In total £2,821,828 was available to commission services for the 12 month period from 1 July 2011.

9.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are none arising from this report.

10.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The Early Intervention Grant fund services that will tackle social inequalities and promote greater social inclusion. Work targeting vulnerable groups and individuals is a priority to be addressed by the EIG commissioned services.

10.2 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

- (a) Is an EIA required? Yes
- (b) If 'yes', has one been completed? Yes 10/01/11

11.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are none in relation to this report.

12.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

12.1 There are no planning and community safety implications linked to this report.

REPORT AUTHOR: Maureen Mc Daid
Principal Manager (Commissioning/ Participation)
051-666 4508
email: maureenmcdaid@wirral.gov.uk

APPENDICES

Evaluation Report Early Intervention Grant Commissioning – Link Forum

REFERENCE MATERIAL

None

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Cabinet Report : Commissioning Better Outcomes	June 2011