

## Appendix A

### Response from Wirral Link Forum to the Commissioning Process for the Early Intervention Grant 2011

#### Introduction

The Early Intervention Grant brought together a number of funding streams along with a planning process for the tendering of funds to deliver services to children and young people 0 to 19. A number of Third Sector, Statutory and Private Sector organisations submitted tenders and the process for procurement was presented by Wirral Borough Council and managed by a Commissioning Panel with representatives from the Link Forum (the Third Sector Assembly sub-group for Children and Young People).

This report was principally compiled from feedback gathered at a meeting of Link Forum members on 22<sup>nd</sup> June, along with written and verbal feedback from members before and after that meeting. The purpose of the report is to consider the Framework and Processes undertaken for the Early Intervention Grant Commissioning round 2011/12.

The report was presented as a discussion document between the Link Forum Management Group on behalf of its membership and the Liaison Group (Branch Heads) from the Children and Young People's Department, Wirral Borough Council on 29<sup>th</sup> June. Some of the issues raised were addressed at that meeting and the responses are shown in ***bold in italics***.

The final report has been sent to the Principal Manager, Participation & Commissioning for submission to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

#### Link Forum Feedback on the Process with recommendations

##### Awareness-Raising stage

- Generally happy with the way the tender opportunity was publicised as members received the information from several sources
- It helped that members were forewarned of the need to register with The Chest, thereby receiving email notification of the tender opportunity.

##### Application Process - general

- The Workshop was well-organised and useful, giving clear guidelines
- Inexperienced organisations experienced difficulties with the language used in the paperwork
- Excessive paperwork deterred some smaller organisations from applying
- Members had concerns that they would be penalised if they did not meet the word-count
- The forms didn't suit consortia bids and they should have been allowed a greater word-count

***Link Forum representative (Link Worker) will be involved in review of paperwork***

#### Pre-Qualification Questionnaire

- As this is aimed to show that the organisation is fit and proper to deliver the service, it should be about governance and capability. Some of the questions seemed to be better suited to the Method Statement
- There should be one PQQ for all similar contracts (and all priority areas) and organisations should not have to repeat the process for the next round
- Referee issue – conflicting responses re whether they can use exiting commissioner. Contracts said yes, commissioner said no.
- Applicants queried whether referees would be contacted as no contact appeared to have been made yet
- No acknowledgement of existing quality standards/accreditation held by organisations, negating need for some of the checks

### Method statement

- Some of the questions asked were repetitive
- One method statement should have sufficed for all priority areas, with additional questions as required
- A workshop would have been welcomed

***CYPD will be working on this in partnership with Link Forum***

### Interview

- Well co-ordinated welcome
- A quiet room to prepare should be provided, rather than coffee lounge, or questions sent by email in advance
- Concerns raised over how much influence the VCF and service user representatives had on the panel
- Concerns about the balance of membership of the panel
- An independent chair should be provided
- ***The local authority feels justified in having a local authority staff member as Chair as it is the local authority's responsibility to regulate how their money is commissioned.***
- No panel member should be part of an organisation that have submitted a tender
- ***It was agreed that panel members should be identified prior to commissioning process.***
- Some confusion over the amount of time for questions
- Having supplementary questions mostly from service users was very helpful as gave opportunity to give real-life situation
- The rooms were stuffy and cramped
- Not all organisations should be interviewed. A minimum method statement score should be used to short-list

***This will be looked at with a view to shortlisting at method statement stage***

### Pricing

- Some concerns were raised that statutory organisations are not using full-cost recovery in their calculations as they are “subsidised”, causing prices to be disproportionate

### Timescales

- Happy with the timescales to complete and submit paperwork, although the process fell over several bank holidays.

- However there should ideally be a 3-month period between the notification of the contract award and commencement of contract. This gives sufficient notice for unsuccessful organisations to inform service users as well as statutory notice to staff
- TUPE issues were difficult to deal with in the timescales allowed

### **Communication of Decision**

- Other than the timescale issues mentioned above, members were generally happy with the way decisions had been communicated.
- One organisation was given incorrect information, rectified the following day
- Query over the statement that the contract is for “One year with option for 2”. How does this fit with the next round that is for 3 years?

### **The Chest**

- Happy with Q&A feature, quick responses, except for one which took 6 days
- No acknowledgement that everything has been received okay. System that Skills Funding Agency uses acknowledges/ticks each one  
***Acknowledgement of receipt of tenders are sent, applicants can also amend their application until the deadline for submission.***  
A workshop on The Chest would be useful for organisations  
***CYPD will arrange this in partnership with Link Forum***

**Lynn Loughran**  
**For and on Behalf of Wirral Link Forum**  
**1<sup>st</sup> August 2011**