

REPORT TITLE	LIVERPOOL CITY REGION JOINT PROCUREMENT OF SERVICES TO ENCOURAGE, ENABLE AND ASSIST YOUNG PEOPLE TO PARTICIPATION IN EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING.
REPORT OF	DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

REPORT SUMMARY

- 1.1 Local authorities have a duty to make available to all young people aged 13 to 19 (and to those between 20 and 25 with special educational needs and disabilities), support that will encourage, enable and assist them to participate in education or training. This is a duty under Section 68 of the Education and Skills Act 2008.
- 1.2 In addition, the Education and Skills Act 2008 placed two 'Raising the Participation Age' related duties on local authorities with regard to 16 and 17 year olds:
 - 3.2a. Local authorities must promote the effective participation in education and training of 16 and 17 year olds in their area with a view to ensuring that those persons fulfil the duty to participate in education or training. A key element of this is identifying the young people in their area who are covered by the duty to participate and encouraging them to find a suitable education or training place.
 - 3.2b. Local authorities must make arrangements – i.e. maintain a tracking system - to identify 16 and 17 year olds who are not participating in education or training. Putting in place robust arrangements to identify young people who are not engaged in education or training or who have left provision enables local authorities to offer support as soon as possible.
- 1.3 Since April 2013 Wirral Council has been part of a joint Liverpool City Region NEET participation service commissioning group. Halton Council has historically led the procurement process and created a Framework Agreement for the service incorporating Liverpool City Region local authorities, including, Liverpool, Knowsley, Halton and Wirral.
- 1.4 The current service contract was awarded to Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership and came into effect from 1st April 2014 for a period of two years with an option to extend for a further two years. The option to extend has been taken and the current contract will end on 31st March 2018.
- 1.5 Wirral Council and the other partner Liverpool City Region local authorities are again seeking to procure a service to encourage, enable and assist young people's participation employment, education and / or training from 1st April 2018. The

service will maintain similar features to current as all local authorities have found the current service specification to meet their requirements. Halton Council have again agreed to lead on the procurement activity on behalf of the partner local authorities.

- 1.6 The joint procurement process would seek to procure a service from April 2018 for a period of four x 12 month periods. This will allow for consistency of service from 2018 to 2022 but with the option to reduce or terminate the service annually should the Council's statutory duties change or further budget savings require a reduction.
- 1.7 Based on this year's current service provider costs I would estimate the 2018-19 total service value to be circa £489,181. Costs associated with this service will be met from the overall budget provision for NEET participation services which is currently £1,331,600 (FY 2017-18).
- 1.8 The proportion of Wirral children aged 16 and 17 NEET has improved year on year demonstrating the effectiveness of local service delivery and ongoing strategic planning. As at December 2017 Wirral NEET was reported as 3.0 percent against a Northwest average of 3.2 percent. The Department for Education (DfE) published data (December 2017) illustrating Wirral to have the lowest NEET rate of all the Liverpool City Region local authorities. Table 1 below provides a Liverpool City Region comparison.

Table 1. A comparison of NEET rates for 16 and 17 year olds (December 2017)

AREA	% 16-17s NEET
ENGLAND	2.6%
NORTH WEST	3.2%
Halton	4.8%
Knowsley	6.0%
Liverpool	5.3%
Sefton	3.5%
St. Helens	4.9%
Wirral	3.0%

- 1.9 As Halton Council has the most experience of procuring this service, with procurement documentation that only needs minor amendments. There is no cost to Wirral Council for Halton Council leading on the procurement exercise because of the reciprocal arrangement whereby another authority leads another joint procurement exercise.
- 1.10 The service to encourage, enable and support young people to participate in education and training is an important element of the Wirral Plan 20/20 pledges. This specific service impacts on the strategic priorities identified in theme 3, Young People are Ready for Adulthood and Employment. The quarterly quantitative measure for young people not in employment, education and / or training (NEET) rate is a key performance indicator for this pledge.
- 1.11 This matter affects all Wards within the Borough.

1.12 The decision to be taken by the representative Elected Member and is a key decision.

RECOMMENDATION/S

2.0 Given the benefits outlined above, and in order to make the procurement process as efficient as possible for all local authorities involved, Paul Boyce, Director of Children's Services seeks approval to participate in the joint procurement of participation and support services for young people not in education, employment and / or training (NEET) across Wirral, Halton, Liverpool and Knowsley local authorities.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 There is a significant advantage to being involved in a joint procurement process because of the size of the contract across the four local authorities; there are economies of scale which Wirral Council will benefit from.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.0 Wirral Council could procure its own service independent of the other Liverpool City Region local authorities; however, in doing so Wirral would fail to benefit from:
 - a. The financial benefits associated with being part of a much larger commissioning activity where providers can reduce service costs based on economies of scale.
 - b. Reduced issues associated with tracking and providing consistent support for Wirral young people who travel and / or relocate to other Liverpool City Region local authority areas.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 As referenced in paragraph 1.5, the current Liverpool City Region (LCR) local authorities contract with Career Connect expires on 31st March 2018. A new service is required to be commissioned for delivery from 1st April 2018. Service delivery options will, again, need to be aligned to the changes in legislation and duties imposed on local authorities, and are specifically needed to meet the complex needs of Wirral NEET young people.
- 3.2 The proportion of young people currently not in employment, education and / or training (NEET) is 3.0% (December 2017) or 348 young people. Compared to the same period in 2016 the current NEET rate is +0.2% higher. This is a recognised LCR local authorities trend.
- 3.3 Proposed refinements to the current participation and engagement services for Wirral NEET young people include:-
 - i. Development of a Participation Coach role which will support vulnerable young people aged 16-19 NEET and those socially isolated linked to mental health issues.
 - ii. Stronger focus on peripatetic service delivery and use of digital technology – to also include intensive delivery out in the community to include ‘door knocking’.
 - iii. Increased focus on supporting and the re-engagement of young people NEET rather than offering / delivering pure careers guidance.
 - iv. Retain a small, fit for purpose, flexible professional careers guidance service for those young people requiring an intensive 1:1 service.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The costs whilst still to be finalised will be met from the overall budget provision for 14-19 Services which is currently £1,331,600 (FY 2017-18). The tender specification has also been designed in to three discrete investment lots permitting commissioners flexibility at point of procurement and at the end of each contract year dependant on available budget.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Securing a service to encourage, enable and assist young people to participate in education is an essential element of the Council's work to meet its statutory duties.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: ICT, STAFFING AND ASSETS

6.1 There are no direct implications arising from this report

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

7.1 No direct implications arising from this report

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

8.1 Career Connect as the current service provider had been duly made aware of the local authority's plans to procure a new service via Halton Council.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

(a) Yes and impact review is attached.

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APPENDICES

REFERENCE MATERIAL

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Cabinet	June 2014