



CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 23 November 2021

REPORT TITLE:	EARLY HELP ALLIANCE REPORT TO AWARD
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

REPORT SUMMARY

This report seeks agreement from the Children, Young People and Education Committee to award and conclude a commission for early help services for children and families. The aim of these services will be to deliver a variety of supportive experiences which Wirral families have told us would help them to thrive.

The proposals in this report have a direct link to two of the five key themes from the Wirral Plan 2025:

Brighter futures for our young people and families – regardless of their background or where they live

Services which help people live happy, healthy, independent, and active lives, with public services there to support them when they need it.

The proposals are directly linked to the Council's Prevention Policy Statement and have been developed using the principles of the Prevention Framework.

The proposed actions affect all wards within the borough.

This is a key decision.

RECOMMENDATION/S

The Children, Young People and Education Committee is recommended to:

1. Agree that delegated authority be given to the Director of Children's Services to award the tender to the successful group of bidders following conclusion of the tender process up to a value of £705,000 per annum for 5 years (a total contract value of £3,525,000), with the option to extend for a further 2 periods of 2 years each
2. That delegated authority be given to the Director of Law and Governance to negotiate and conclude the contract for the new service in consultation with the Director of Children's Services

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

1.1 In 2019, the Community Matters initiative, supported by the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Children, Young People & Education Committee, set out a 2-year plan to work with residents and stakeholders to develop a new model for community-led early intervention. The work plan, which has been managed through Children's Services Senior Leadership Team, has been completed and the proposed early help alliance developed as the preferred model for Wirral children and families. Support was noted for Community Matters at the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 27th February 2019 including the following workstream "Development of early help- Engaging all stakeholders in the process of developing a long-term approach to early help which is sustainable, responsive to need, proactive in delivery, and is owned by communities. - Stakeholder engagement - Capacity building - Evaluation- what works - Collective impact modelling - Launch a new model by April 1st 2021." The recommendations in this report seek to secure approval to bring this work to fruition. Support was also noted at the Children, Young People & Education Committee on Tuesday, 20th October 2020

1.2 To allow Children's Services to implement a new innovative model that will continue to increase community-delivered early intervention for children and families and thereby reduce demand on other parts of the Children's Services system. By reducing demand for acute services, the Early Help Alliance will positively contribute our Preventative Strategy and subsequently play a key role in supporting the Directorate's Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP).

1.3 To support children, young people, and families to achieve better long-term outcomes. Early help means taking action to support a child, young person, or their family as soon as a problem emerges. It can be required at any stage in a child's life, from pre-birth to adulthood, and applies to any problem or need that the family cannot deal with alone. Early help leads to better outcomes for children, prevent problems escalating or overwhelming families, create social mobility and support communities to thrive.

1.4 To build and increase capacity in local community organisations by investing in a long-term contract which supports Wirral's Community Wealth Building Strategy.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

2.1 Do nothing- Removal, or reduction, of this service offer is likely to lead to poorer outcomes for many families across the borough, as well as increased demand within Children's Social Care and Adult Support Services.

2.2 Deliver services internally rather than commission them. However, this is not what families in Wirral want. Over the last few years, we have been listening very closely to our parents, carers, and children as they tell us what family life in Wirral is like: where they feel stretched, overwhelmed, or isolated; what's great; but also, what's missing for them. Families have told us that earliest help needs to feel

different from us as a Council for them to engage sooner and more fully, this contract will be awarded to organisations that are anchored in local communities, who feel like 'trusted friends' to families. The Community Matters initiative, which has been used as a *testbed* for the new model has shown to be more cost-effective than internally provided family support. It has been evidenced that families engaging with the community-led services benefit from more than the commissioned support as they are regularly linked into other initiatives and support mechanisms provided by the community organisations.

2.3 Recommission on the same basis as previously with the Community Matters initiative. Whilst the Community Matters initiative has been successful, it does not have the same ability to generate additional funding from external partners, and it does not promote collaboration across agencies as an alliance will.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1 The Community Matters initiative commenced in January 2019, as part of a medium-term financial strategy to reduce demand for Children's Social Care. As part of the Community Matters commission, Capacity: The Public Services Lab have worked with the Council and families across the borough to create the conditions for a new innovative model that will continue to increase community-delivered early intervention for children and families and thereby contain/reduce demand on other parts of the children's services system.

3.2 In 2019, over 450 children, young people, parents, carers, guardians, and professionals told us what a more effective and sustainable early help model should be like. Wirral residents were unanimous in their feedback: they don't want traditional "services", they are asking for a model that prioritises "relationships", "local", "empowering" and "trust". The Family Toolbox Alliance Prospectus contains further details of the work undertaken by Capacity: The Public Services Lab and the views/experiences of local families (Appendix 1).

3.3 Commissioners from Children's Services have subsequently been working with Capacity Lab as well as colleagues from procurement and legal services to develop the innovative model that will be used to commission and deliver early help services from April 2022. A number of contracting models were considered, and expert advice taken from colleagues across the region and at national level. An alliance model was chosen as the most effective means of achieving an effective and impactful approach.

3.3.1 At the time of writing the tender is currently live on the Chest. The contracting model will consist of an Alliance- a group of providers (plus the council) who choose to work with one another and are contracted together to work towards a common goal. There is no 'lead' provider in an Alliance. Further detail can be found in the Family Toolbox Information Pack For Prospective Providers. The initial value of the contract amounts to £705,000. The contract term is five years (a total contract value of £3,525,000) plus the option to further extend for two periods of two years each.

3.3.2 The successful alliance will consist of innovative and enthusiastic providers with a variety of expertise, skills, and ideas from across the community to form

the Family Toolbox Provider Group. The group will work as one, sharing decisions and responsibility for planning, delivering, and transforming support for families across Wirral.

3.3.3 The Family Toolbox Alliance will have responsibility for the following core strands of work:

- Delivery of a variety of supportive experiences which Wirral families have told us would help them to thrive
- Coordination of backbone functions to grow and sustain the model for the future
- Helping to provide online tools and resources
- Supporting a growing network of wider organisations and partners under the Family Toolbox 'membership mark'

3.3.4 The Alliance will have the following main objectives:

- Ensure the support, activities, and experiences that families have said they want are available and accessible, either through direct delivery or through subcontracting others to deliver these
- Ensure the backbone activities are delivered to promote long-term growth and sustainability of the Family Toolbox
- Develop and embed a core team who inspire and motivate others through clear, honest, and consistent communication and through living the values of Family Toolbox
- Support people to feel confident in using their own resources, and resources in the community to help them and their family thrive
- Work closely with children, families and communities, statutory services, and strategic partners to improve the experience and outcomes for families of seeking additional help
- Create and support a network of Family Toolbox member organisations, raising awareness of the offer for families and opportunities to get involved
- Use a common language and collective approach to describing and measuring change for families The specifics of the Family Toolbox offer will be detailed by the Alliance Providers, who will be contracted to lead Family Toolbox, guided by the principles, values and behaviours outlined in

3.4 The value of the contract amounts to £705,000. The contract term is five years (a total contract value of £3,525,000) plus the option to further extend for two periods of two years each. The current contracts will continue during the recommissioning process and a period of service mobilisation will be built into the tender process to ensure there is no loss of service to residents and a seamless transition for existing service users is maintained.

3.5 In order to ensure the new model has wider connectivity there has been extensive engagement work conducted by the Local Authority and Capacity Lab, in the lead up to the current procurement process, to stimulate the market and ensure interest from potential providers. This has included the VCSE sector and current Community Matters Providers. We have also briefed wider council colleagues on the emerging model via the Joint Commissioning Forum for Children, Young People and Families. In addition, the evaluation and awarding process will be a joint exercise between Children's Services Colleagues, a Parent representative, and a colleague from Public Health.

3.6 The alliance model of commissioning is new to the authority and potentially to the successful party. As such, the commissioning process has included additional safeguards to ensure the successful collaboration of parties within the alliance including a conversation starter to stimulate positive discussions between initial parties prior to bidding, questions within the tender process bidders will be scored upon relating to the alliance's governance and values, as well as service delivery and implementation plan and once the two top scoring bids have been selected, these providers will be required to attend a workshop and asked to respond to a series of scenarios that have been developed in collaboration with an external party who has supported with the commissioning of other alliances. The scenarios are in draft format at the time of report writing but are designed to evidence the relationships between the members of the alliance and to test out how they work together. This contract will be subject to monitoring, as per existing contract management arrangements. In addition, as part of the alliance model, the authority will be a member of the alliance so will be part of all alliance decision making activity.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The contract value will be £705,000 per annum for 5 years (a total contract value of £3,525,000), with the option to extend for a further 2 periods of 2 years each.

4.2 The existing Children's Services Community Matters budget will be used to fund this contract. However, Capacity Lab are currently working with external funders to explore how they might boost the development of the Family Toolbox over the next 5 years with extra funding/grants (on top of the core LA funding). An initial meeting with a range of interested funders and philanthropists took place on Monday 27th September 2021. Further meetings are scheduled to explore mutually beneficial opportunities.

4.3 The work undertaken in developing the new model, through the Community Matters initiative, has demonstrated both a reduction in demand for Children's Social Care (with a 31% decrease) and that unit costs to deliver support for families can be significantly lower (£500 per family as opposed to approximately £900-£1,200).

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (as amended) and Wirral Council Contract Procedure rules apply to the commission and the service will be commissioned in a manner that complies with these

5.2 Commissioning preventative services is not a statutory requirement, but the Council has the power to commission these as part of its overall functions

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING ICT, AND ASSETS

6.1 There will an associated website and work is ongoing with ICT colleagues.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

7.1 There is always a risk of disruption to service provision during service redesign, commissioning, and commencement of new services. To mitigate against this and minimise disruption, adequate time to plan for, and implement the mobilisation of new services, is built into the procurement process between contract award and commencement.

7.2 The procurement process is also subject to scrutiny and at risk of legal challenge. Particular regard is given to contract procedure rules and relevant legislation at all stages of the process and the Children's Commissioning team works closely with the Procurement team to ensure compliance.

7.3 The service will involve data processing and appropriate safeguards will be put in place to ensure data is properly protected and data subjects consent to data processing

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8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

8.1 As previously detailed, this commission incorporates findings from engagement/consultation undertaken by Capacity: The Public Services Lab on behalf of the Local Authority. In 2019, over 450 children, young people, parents, carers, guardians, and professionals shared what a more effective and sustainable early help model should be like. The Family Toolbox Alliance Prospectus contains further details of the work undertaken by Capacity: The Public Services Lab and the views/experiences of local families (Appendix 1).

8.2 There has been extensive engagement work conducted by the Local Authority and Capacity Lab, in the lead up to the current procurement process, to stimulate the market and ensure interest from potential providers.

8.3 There will be ongoing consultation with key stakeholders, community groups, children, young people, and their families using services in order to inform future service design and delivery.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 An equality impact assessment has been completed and will be published via this link <https://www.wirral.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/equality-impact-assessments>

9.2 Equality implications will form part of the procurement and contract award process.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The proposed commissioning process presents an opportunity to encourage suppliers to consider their policies and practices with respect to environment and climate issues. During the procurement process, bids will be evaluated on any social value added to the service. Environment and climate TOMs (Themes, Outcomes and Measures) are included in the social value evaluation.

10.2 The content and/or recommendations contained within this report are expected to have no direct impact on emissions of carbon dioxide.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

11.1 The extensive engagement work which has taken work to develop the model and stimulate the market included work with local VCSE providers.

11.2 The Social Value requirements of the contract require that potential providers supply detail of the anticipated value in relation to the following in their bid submission:

- local direct employees (FTE) hired or retained (for re-tendered contracts) on contract for one year or the whole duration of the contract, whichever is shorter,
- total amount spent in local supply chain through the contract,
- total amount spent through contract with local micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs)

REPORT AUTHOR: Elizabeth Hartley
Assistant Director: Early Help & Prevention
telephone: 0151 666 4238
email: elizabethhartley@wirral.gov.uk

APPENDICES

Appendix 1- Family Toolbox Alliance Prospectus

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Background Paper 1- Why Community Matters Insight Report

Background Paper 2- Provider Resource- Conversation Starters

Background Paper 3- IPT 2019. 20.08.2021

Background Paper 4- Minutes of Children, Young People & Education Committee on Tuesday, 20th October 2020

Background Paper 5- Minutes of Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 27th February 2019

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Children, Young People and Education Committee	September 2020
Children and Families Overview & Scrutiny Committee	February 2019