

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET

1ST SEPTEMBER 2011

SUBJECT:	STEP UP TO SOCIAL WORK – COHORT 2: OUTCOME OF PROCUREMENT PROCESS
WARD/S AFFECTED:	ALL
REPORT OF:	INTERIM DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES
RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	COUNCILLOR ANN MCLACHLAN
KEY DECISION	NO

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Learn Together Partnership, a partnership of the Children and Young People's Directorates in Cheshire East, Cheshire West & Chester, Halton, Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, St Helens, Warrington and Wirral Councils, has been working collaboratively to develop a range of activities, within a public sector ethos, that augments the capacity of member organisations.
- 1.2 Step Up To Social Work is a national pilot programme, which offers an employment-based route for non-specialists to qualify as a social worker with a Master's degree in Social Work. The first cohort of trainees is currently completing it. The original tender to provide training was only for this pilot group and so we have been advised to retender for the contract for further cohorts.
- 1.3 The Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) has agreed to provide funding for a second cohort of trainees. Wirral Council, as the Lead Local Authority for the programme, on behalf of the Learn Together Partnership, has begun the procurement process to supply the academic delivery of the programme. This report contains the outcome of the procurement process.
- 1.4 All exempt information is set out in an exempt appendix to this report. This information is exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) as the information is considered to be commercially sensitive as it would be likely to prejudice the commercial interest of the successful tenderer and the public interest in not disclosing the information outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION/S

- 2.1 That:
- (a) Members confirm acceptance of the tender by Liverpool John Moores University.

- (b) Members give agreement for the Director of Children's Services to enter into a contract with Liverpool John Moores University to deliver MA in Social work training on behalf of the Learn Together Partnership.
- (c) Members give agreement for there to be up to two renewals of the contract, each for a period of 18 months, in the event of funding continuing beyond a second cohort and of the Learn Together Partnership wishing to take part.

3.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 3.1 The tender process has been rigorous, following all the rules and regulations of OJEU – Accelerated Restricted Process in conjunction with Corporate Procurement.

4.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 4.1 The Learn Together Partnership was successful in its bid to be one of eight regional national pilot programmes of Step Up To Social Work from September 2010. The Step Up To Social Work Programme is a national programme funded by the Children's Workforce Development Council. The programme aims to attract high quality graduates, without a background of social work, into social work and is a "fast track" programme over 18 months.
- 4.2 Wirral Borough Council is the lead authority, nominated to contract on behalf of the Learn Together Partnership and all contracts associated with the pilot were with Wirral Borough Council. The pilot has now successfully completed 9 months of the programme and the Learn Together Partnership has been offered funding to attract a second cohort of students to start in February 2012.
- 4.3 The pilot contract was awarded to the University of Chester. Due to funding changes, we are obliged to retender for an academic provider for the second cohort.
- 4.4 The programme for cohort 2 will commence in February 2012 and completes in August 2013. This programme may be renewable beyond 2013, for a maximum of 2 renewals, each for a period of 18 months, subject to funding availability and need for training Newly Qualified Social Workers.
- 4.5 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 23 trainees. The contract value was set below £10,000 per student, which includes the cost of validating the Master's degree.
- 4.6 The pre-qualification stage closed on 7th June 2011 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 and University of Chester has delivered the pilot programme to Cohort 1.
- 4.7 Both Universities submitted full tenders by the deadline of 22nd June 2011.
- 4.8 The tender evaluation panel consisted of representatives from Wirral, Cheshire West and Chester and Cheshire East Councils as well as the Learn Together Partnership Manager and the Project Support Officer.
- 4.9 The tender was evaluated in two parts. The weighting of the tender was 50% for quality and 50% for price.

4.10 The 50% quality sub-criteria and weightings are as follows:

Programme delivery	40%
Programme team experience	15%
Resources	10%
Partnership work	5%
Recruitment	10%
Student support	10%
Monitoring and evaluation	5%
Risk management and Quality Assurance	5%

4.11 In the evaluation of the tender, Liverpool John Moores had a higher overall score.

5.0 RELEVANT RISKS

5.1 Wirral Council is the lead authority for this programme on behalf of the other Local Authority members of the Learn Together Partnership. Contractual arrangements between Wirral Council and the other Local Authorities to agree responsibilities and financial arrangements will be in place before the programme begins.

6.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

6.1 No other options considered.

7.0 CONSULTATION

7.1 Consultation has been carried out with cohort 2 stakeholders in order to evaluate the programme and also as a process of continuous quality improvement.

7.2 CWDC has carried out its own consultation on a national level. Step Up To Social Work was initiated in response to a recognised need to encourage candidates from a wider range of professional backgrounds to consider front-line children's social work as a future career. The aim was to develop a condensed, bespoke, work-based entry route into children's social work for higher calibre, experienced candidates. The primary intention was to support employer involvement in devising and delivering social work courses.¹ This was to ensure the delivery of high quality education and training to produce social workers who are ready to practise effectively as newly qualified social workers (NQSW) on successful completion of their course.

¹ (*The final report of the Social Work Task Force: November 2009*) and (*Building a Safe and Confident Future: Implementing the recommendations of the Social Work Task Force – DCSF - 2010*).

8.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

8.1 There may be training opportunities and service users will be involved at the assessment centres during recruitment and in taught sessions at the university. This may be through voluntary, community and faith organisations as appropriate to the course.

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

9.1 There are no staffing, IT or asset implications.

9.2 Financial Implications: There is funding of £460,000 for the delivery of Cohort 2 of Step Up to Social Work.

- 9.3 The funding for the Academic delivery of Cohort 2 of Step Up To Social Work for the 18 month period for 23 trainees will be released to Wirral on behalf of the Learn Together Partnership.
- 9.4 The tender price submitted by Liverpool John Moores University for the academic delivery of the programme, can be met from the grant.
- 9.5 The remaining element of the grant will be used by the Local authorities to fund trainee placements, administration support, further training and other costs such as attending national meetings called by the CWDC.
- 9.6 The Step Up to Social Work programme is funded by the Children's Workforce Development Council. The government has confirmed funding for the programme of February 2012 through to August 2013.

10.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 A contract will be drawn up between Wirral and the other Local authorities involved in each cohort.
- 10.2 A contract with Liverpool John Moores University will be drawn up, including the option of two renewals if funding is available and there is demand for Social Workers.
- 10.3 A Memorandum of Understanding, supplied by CWDC, will be signed by the DCS of Wirral. This clearly sets out the roles and responsibilities of all partners working on this programme, and outlines the funding available for cohort 2.

11.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 There are no implications arising from this report.
- 11.2 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)
- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| (a) Is an EIA required? | Yes |
| (b) If 'yes', has one been completed? | No - This will be completed prior to the start of the recruitment process for the cohort 2 trainees |

12.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 There are no implications arising from this report.

13.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 There are no implications arising from this report.

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APPENDICES

REFERENCE MATERIAL

www.cwdcouncil.org.uk/step-up

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Cabinet Report	18 March 2010
Cabinet Report	22 July 2010