

REPORT TO: Executive Board Sub Committee

DATE: 11th September 2008

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director – Children and Young People’s Directorate

SUBJECT: The Setting up of Service Level Agreements with Key Stage 4 Pupil Referral Unit Providers Kid’s First and Riverside College

WARDS: Boroughwide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To seek authority to set up Service Level Agreements with the following providers who make up part of Halton’s Key Stage 4 Pupil Referral Unit.
- Kid’s First
 - Riverside College

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the Strategic Director – Children and Young People be authorised to enter into Service Level Agreements with Key Stage 4 Pupil Referral Unit Providers Kid’s First and Riverside College.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 There is a statutory duty on Local Authorities to provide education for pupils who are permanently excluded from school. This is undertaken in most Councils through the provision of Pupil Referral Units.
- 3.2 The Key Stage 4 Pupil Referral Unit in Halton employs a model of service delivery whereby the provision for pupils is made via external providers, who are coordinated, supported and quality assured by the Council.
- 3.3 Halton’s Key Stage 4 Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) was created four years ago for students aged 14 to 16 excluded from mainstream schools because of significant behavioral problems. Most pupils have significant barriers to their learning, including high levels of social and economic disadvantage. A proportion of the pupils in the KS 4 PRU have statements of Special Educational Need and have had their places withdrawn by Independent Special Schools
- 3.4 The structure of Halton’s Key Stage 4 Pupil Referral Unit is innovative in that external providers, supported by a Headteacher and support staff employed by the Local Authority, provide all of the teaching.

3.5 The KS4 PRU was inspected by OfSTED in February 2006 and their overall finding was that this is a Good (Grade 2) PRU. The following extract from the OfSTED team's report summarises their findings.

"The effectiveness of the unit is good. This judgment, as with most of the main inspection judgments, is better than the views of the staff, who have been modest in their self-evaluation. The views of the inspection team and the staff match in relation to the quality of care, support and guidance, and capacity to improve.

As a result of significant improvements to provision in the 18 months since the appointment of the current teacher-in-charge, most students achieve well in their personal and academic development, though standards in subjects are low. Most students become motivated to take a real interest in learning basic and vocational skills because of the good levels of care, support and guidance.

Because of the poor attendance of a small minority, attendance overall is unsatisfactory. Relationships between staff at the unit, the independent providers and students are good and as a result, the behaviour of most students is satisfactory. The quality of teaching and learning is good and excellent use is made of the independent providers to enhance learning. Because of the increase in the range of these providers, the curriculum is good but there are insufficient opportunities for work experience. Leadership and management of the unit are good.

Recent developments by the local authority in the strategic management of the unit are intended to make it more accountable, but this needs time to have greater impact. The unit has good capacity to improve. Parents are very positive about the way the unit helps their children; students similarly value what they learn. The unit provides good value for money."

3.6 Student timetables work in the KS4 PRU by students spending Monday to Wednesday with their 'base' provider. On Thursday and Friday they attend either one or two of the other providers in order to ensure a breadth of curriculum. As well as providing in their core area of specialism, the providers also deliver teaching in the core subjects at levels appropriate to the young people.

3.7 This model was endorsed when OfSTED inspected this provision in February 2006 and the subsequent report give the provision a Grade 2 judgment - "Good with potential to be outstanding". This is in a national context where a high proportion of Pupil Referral Units have attracted unsatisfactory inspection reports. There is therefore confidence in this approach to PRU delivery.

3.8 At the end of last academic year tenders were invited for provision in the following areas:

- Support and Emotional Literacy
- Academic – GCSE

3.9 The specifications for these tenders were widely distributed to organisations in the region that provide in these areas and expressions of interest were requested. However this year only single tenders were received in each of these areas of provision. This reflects the limited number of organisations who are willing and

equipped to work with some of the most demanding and challenging young people that we have within the Borough.

3.10 Tenders were received from:-

Riverside College who are currently contracted to provide a curriculum for the more academically able of the KS4 PRU students that leads to GCSE's in Maths, English, Science, ICT and Citizenship. We currently contract with them for 8 places at a cost of £68,400.per annum.

Kids First who currently provide additional support for pupils whose needs or challenging behaviour means that they require support to access the other PRU providers. Kids First is a local faith based charity based in Runcorn Old Town. Their role is particularly important as in some instances the KS 4 PRU is required to meet the needs of some very challenging young people who have been placed in out of authority emotional, behavioural difficulty special schools when these schools are unable to manage their behaviour. At this point these pupils become the Council's responsibility to place. The cost of this provision is £80,000 per annum.

3.11 These tenders are from existing providers who were part of the successful OfSTED inspection and who have met the quality assurance processes administered by the Head of Key Stage 4 PRU.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The KS4 PRU has been running a successful 'virtual' model of provision for four years. The recent Government White Paper on Alternative Education, "Back on Track", proposes that PRU's nationally ally themselves with private enterprises and national charitable organisations very much along the lines that our provision has developed over the last four years. This means that Halton is seen very much as a pathfinder in the development of alternative provision nationally, and is externally recognised as so.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

None.

6.0 RISK ANALYSIS

6.1 Failure to award contracts to deliver this provision will result in the authority not meeting statutory duties.

7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

7.1 The purpose of this provision is to include pupils whose behaviour has meant that they have not been able to succeed in mainstream schools. A key objective of this provision is to ensure that these young people are retained in education, employment and training post 16.

8.0 REASON(S) FOR DECISION

N/A.

9.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

To use internally sourced provision – neither practicable nor effective.
To not commission the service – this is a statutory requirement.

10.0 IMPLEMENTATION DATE

N/A.

11.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
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