

**REPORT TO:** Executive Board Sub Committee

**DATE:** 12<sup>th</sup> January 2012

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director Children and Enterprise

**PORTFOLIO:** Children, Young People and Families

**SUBJECT:** Purchase of U-Explore software licences for re-sale to Schools and providers

**WARD(S)** Borough-wide

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 To seek agreement to enter into a contract without conducting a tender exercise or seeking three written quotations in order to comply with procurement standing order 4.1 and 4.2, which places a requirement on the Council to invite quotations or tender for contracts with a value less than £156,442.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That**

- (1) the Operational Director for Children, Organisation and Provision be authorised to award the contract for 10 U-Explore software licences to the contractor U-Explore Ltd for the sum of £11,000; and**
- (2) in light of the exceptional circumstances namely there being only one possible supplier of the service and in accordance with Procurement SO 1.8.2 Standing Orders 3.1 – 3.7 and 3.9 be waived on this occasion in view of U-Explore being the only supplier of the service and agreement within the Liverpool City Region to collectively implement this software package which will support schools in delivering their new Careers Education, Information Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) responsibilities under the duties of the Education Act 2011.**

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 3.1 U-Explore is an unique innovative, online teaching and learning resource that is accessible 24/7 by learners, teachers and parents. It will support schools to deliver their new duty to secure access to independent and impartial careers guidance for pupils in years 9-11.
- 3.2 The duty will come into effect from September 2012, however it is

proposed that U-Explore is implemented from January 2012 to support the transition following the end of the current Connexions contract on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2012.

3.3 U-Explore uses media-rich applications such as video case studies, virtual tours and interactive skills logs to help learners make informed choices and decisions about their future. U-Explore delivers the Careers Education framework through:

- Video overviews of 14 industry sectors
- A Job Bank, which delivers information on hundreds of job roles via video case study interviews and text profiles outlining key duties, required skills and recommended progression paths and qualifications
- Jobcasts, which provide detailed video case studies of interviews with real employees and employers along with actual footage of them performing job role duties and responsibilities
- Interactive 360 virtual tours of real working environments
- Bank of real business profiles
- Team Work explains how departments and employees within real business work as a team

3.4 U-Explore navigator contains a vast bank of careers and employability resources delivered as 4 part lesson plans, accompanying handouts and PowerPoint presentations all downloadable and editable.

3.5 The software is web-based and is therefore accessible from anywhere by learners of all abilities. The system features industry information by sector and there is the potential, as Cheshire and Lancashire have, to tailor information to include local businesses.

3.6 U-Explore is exceptional in that Halton Borough Council will own all the search details and management information and will be able to analyse the jobs and sector areas of interest of young people. This would inform the direction of careers guidance and the planning and commissioning of educational services in the future. Establishments can track cohorts of learners via the system for example potential NEET or borderline C/D grade learners.

3.7 The Local Authorities within the Liverpool City Region are working in partnership with a collective proposal to implement U-Explore across the City Region. This has already brought economies of scale to the price of an annual U-Explore licence which has reduced from £1800 to £1000 and which will, in this first year, be sold onto schools in Halton for £1200.

3.8 As part of the contract Halton Borough Council also proposes that

the Council purchase a Halton Commercial License for U-Explore. This will provide Halton with the opportunity to explore further the potential of U-Explore as an income generator. Gaining the commercial licence would ensure that any provider wanting to use U-Explore in the borough would have to purchase the system through the Borough Council bringing with it the prospect of a future income stream.

3.9 This contract will be subject to issues of confidentiality and be open to scrutiny under the Freedom of Information Act, through the internal and external audit process and through the Policy & Performance Board scrutiny arrangements.

3.10 Integrity clauses will be built into the contract document and only staff with a need to know will have information about the contract.

3.11 This will remain with the Operational Director awarding the contract and the internal and external audit process and through the Policy & Performance Board scrutiny arrangements.

#### **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 Schools will be responsible for securing access to independent and impartial careers guidance for pupils in years 9 to 11. This new duty will come into force in September 2012. Government will consult on extending this duty down to Year 8 and up to Year 13.

4.2 Government expects that schools will work in partnership with local authorities and external careers guidance providers to ensure that young people are appropriately supported, without the need for legislation. There is also an expectation that schools will work in partnership with local authorities to ensure that vulnerable young people receive the support that they need, and that there will be local arrangements to ensure this partnership.

#### **5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

n/a

#### **6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

6.1 Children and Young People in Halton  
Up-to-date and widely available information on progression routes will assist young people in the borough to make informed decisions on future pathways to learning and employment.

6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton  
See 6.1

6.3 A Healthy Halton  
n/a

6.4 A Safer Halton  
n/a

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal  
n/a

## **7.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 There are no risks associated with product proprietary.

7.2 If we do not proceed there is a risk, following the end of the Connexions contract on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2012 that up-to-date careers information may not be consistently available throughout the secondary schools. The licences will help to ensure that a comprehensive package of information and curriculum materials are accessible via the web for practitioners, young people and parents on future opportunities, skills and progression routes.

## **8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 The U-Explore product is available to all and not limited to equality and diversity issues.

## **9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

	<b>Document</b>	<b>Place of Inspection</b>	<b>Contact Officer</b>
9.1	Lord Hill's letter 17/02/2011	14-19 Team	14-19 Divisional Manager
9.2	Education Bill 15/11/2011	14-19 Team	14-19 Divisional Manager