

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 19 September 2013

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director – Children and Enterprise

SUBJECT: Waiver – Service Level Agreement 2013/14:
Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC), Visits and
Outdoor Education Advice and Guidance

PORTFOLIO: Children, Young People and Families

WARD(S) Borough-wide

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To request a waiver under 1.8.4(e) to enable continuation with the provision from Cheshire West and Chester Council (CWaC) and Edufocus without seeking competition (Standing Order 4.1) via the Chest, as there is a requirement for this service to be delivered by these particular suppliers for a further twelve month period (September 2013 to August 2014 and January 2014 to December 2014 respectively) pending a full service review.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATION: That Executive Board approve the waiver under Procurement Standing Orders 1.8.4(e) to waive Procurement Standing Order 4.1 Competition requirements.**

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Learning outside the classroom and off site activities provide a valuable opportunity for pupils and young people to encounter experiences that are not available to them in the classroom. They are an opportunity to extend the learning of all pupils and can enable young people to learn through new experiences and develop their initiative and independence, and enrich their understanding of themselves, others and the world around them. They can be a catalyst for improved personal performance, promote a lifetime interest and in some cases lead to professional fulfilment.

3.2 Such visits need to be carried out within a robust planning framework that promotes the safety and security of all participants and manages the risk to the Authority. The Council has a policy for the Management of Learning Outside the Classroom and has adopted, as its' employer guidance, National Guidance for the Management of Outdoor Learning, Off-site visits and Learning Outside the Classroom produced by the Outdoor Education Advisers' Panel (OEAP) which provides a source of guidance, information and support for schools and establishments organising educational and offsite visits.

3.3 The Authority engages the services of CWaC Quality Learning Partner's Outdoor Education Adviser (QLP OEA) to enable the Authority to operate within

the requirements of legal frameworks governing the health, safety and welfare of employees and pupils/young people in the context of LOtC, educational visits and outdoor education and to ensure that visits carried out meet with the requirements of the Councils' policy and employer guidance for the Management of Learning Outside the Classroom.

- 3.4 The QLP OEA's service provides technical advice, guidance and recommendations to the Authority and schools/establishments regarding health, safety and current best practice regarding LOtC and educational visits. Through this service Halton maintains representation on the OEAP (the national forum for sharing of good practice relating to LOtC for all Children's Service establishments). The QLP OEA also gives LA approval for visits of a complex nature and routinely monitors visits as part of the Authority wide sampling procedure. The delivery of high quality training and development courses for educational visit co-ordinators, visit leaders and governors and administrative support is also included in the specification.
- 3.5 The QLP OEA service is delivered by a team of professionally qualified teachers with significant experience in delivering LOtC and leading outdoor educational activities and offsite visits. They provide a flexible, proactive and responsive LOtC service that supports statutory and risk management obligations and maintains best practice.
- 3.6 To underpin service delivery the Council operates a web-based educational visits notification, approval and database system provided by Edufocus to support schools and establishments in planning any kind of off-site activity. The system facilitates the LA's approval requirements for complex visits and includes reporting tools and access to guidance and resources.

4.0 **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION**

- 4.1 The combined service provided by CWaC and Edufocus delivers effective support and robust management of LOtC for schools and establishments. A significant majority of schools in Halton use the services and value the quality of provision.

Value for money will be achieved in the longer term as a full review will be undertaken of how advice and guidance and the management of risk from LOtC could be sourced from a provider/system and how we could possibly work together with other public sector partners to create an efficient process. This will be sourced through a market testing exercise and a procurement process within the next 12 months if required. The cost to go out via the Chest, to invite quotations and award a contract to a new provider for just one year would not deliver value as the upheaval of implementing a possible new system/provider and a new way of working for a 12 month period would not be viable due to the risk of this not working effectively, as well as the administration cost/time involved to train and support schools in a new way of working.

As the spend value is below EU value thresholds it is deemed to be low risk in terms of challenge against us making a direct award to the current supplier. This

would be supported as we have the intention to conduct a market testing exercise within 12 months and this would ensure transparency, propriety and accountability to seek the best opportunity in terms of value for money and to ensure we appoint the best provider/system for the longer term. Our main aim is to maintain/reduce risk to the Council and schools around this frontline and essential activity of children and young people gaining experiences through educational visits in a safe and well managed risk management process by undertaking a full and through review before sourcing and awarding a new contract.

- 4.2 The waiver for the CWaC service will be £40,560 for the period 1 September to 31 August 2014 and £4,999 for Edufocus for the period 1 January to 31 December 2014.
- 4.3 The selection of the current providers is based on past performance, their ability to deliver a flexible and responsive service and a proven record of subject knowledge, experience and expertise. Edufocus is used by over 19,000 schools in England and Wales and has a fully managed and reliable service infrastructure.

The service will be monitored by the Children and Enterprise Directorate to ensure prescribed outcomes are achieved.

5.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 None

6.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 The total cost of providing this service will be £45,559. The cost of this provision for Maintained schools will be met centrally from cost centre 8256.

Academy schools are charged for this service as follows:

Primary Schools	£520 retainer p.a. plus £1.04 per pupil p.a.
Secondary Schools	£1040 retainer p.a. plus £1.04 per pupil p.a.
Special Schools	£1040 retainer p.a. plus £1.04 per pupil p.a.

3 Academy schools, The Heath, Palace Fields and Wade Deacon, have purchased the SLA which will generate an income of £5,557.

7.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

7.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

The Council positively promotes the involvement of young people in LOtC and educational / off site visits.

7.2 **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

For many young people, learning outside the classroom involves life changing experiences which keep them positively engaged in education and ultimately widen their prospects for employment and long term economic wellbeing.

7.3 **A Healthy Halton**

Learning outside and off-site visits will often involve physical exercise and provide key experiences that encourage healthier lifestyles and lifetime engagement with outdoor activities.

7.4 **A Safer Halton**

‘Risk education’ is now widely accepted as a key part of preparation for adulthood. Involving young people of all ages in risk benefit assessment is vital if they are to develop an awareness of safety and risk management as opposed to risk aversion.

7.5 **Halton’s Urban Renewal**

None identified.

8.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

8.1 It is a legal expectation that employees **must** work within the requirements their employer’s guidance; therefore, Halton employees must the follow the requirements of “LOtC Employer Guidance”, as well as the requirements of Halton Policy for the Management of LOtC.

As an employer, Halton is required to ensure that its employees are provided with:

- appropriate guidance relating to visits and LOtC activity;
- employer-led training courses to support the guidance to ensure that it is understood;
- suitable systems and processes to ensure that those trained are kept updated;
- access to advice, support and further training from appointed Advisers that have proven expertise and professional understanding of the guidance, the training and expectations set by current good practice.

The engagement of the services provided CWaC QLP OEA and Edufocus enables the Authority to manage the risks associated with LOtC activities and to operate within the requirements of the Council’s policy for LOtC and within legal frameworks governing the health, safety and welfare of employees and pupils/young people in the context of LOtC.

9.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

9.1 This provision is offered to all schools in Halton and all children and young

people are encouraged to participate in learning outside the classroom.

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

DfE Guidance 2001 – Health and Safety: Responsibility and Powers
Health & Safety at Work Act 1974