

**REPORT TO:** Executive Board

**DATE:** 7 November 2013

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director, Communities

**PORTFOLIO:** Health and Wellbeing

**SUBJECT:** Tackling Social Isolation Project Pilot Contract  
Procurement Waiver

**WARD(S)** Borough-wide

## 1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To seek approval from Executive Board to issue a pilot contract to Visbuzz in relation to the Tackling Social Isolation Project from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013 for one year which requires a waiver to Procurement Standing Orders.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATION: That Executive Board agree to waive Procurement Standing Order 4.1 in respect of the Visbuzz pilot contract, the value of the one-year contract being £25,000 (Appendix 1).**

## 3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 The Older People (65+) population within Halton is projected to grow by 33% from 18,600 in 2011 to 24,700 in 2021. Many issues exist and are faced by Older People in Halton that impact on social isolation/loneliness, including:-

- Ability to maintain good health;
- Levels of deprivation;
- Access to transport; and
- Loneliness.

3.2 The Government has put loneliness high on the agenda as it affects so many areas across the country. The Ageing Well Programme and the Campaign to End Loneliness are both government initiatives to drive this forward.

3.3 Halton has established a Tackling Social Isolation Project (a joint venture between Halton Borough Council and NHS Halton Clinical Commissioning Group (HCCG)), to develop an overarching strategy to clearly define and develop services to tackle social isolation in older people in Halton. The strategy will aim to inform future commissioning decisions and will focus on a number of areas. One

aspect of the strategy is technological options to manage loneliness. Within HBC and the NHS HCCG a range of options are being considered, one of which is a small company (Visbuzz) who have developed the use of a tablet solution designed to use digital media as a positive communication tool. Appendix 1 of the report gives some detail about Visbuzz. Any further detail can be offered as required. Regular performance and data using (SWEMWB national accredited data collection for measuring well-being) This performance measure will guide this pilot in terms of live tweaks and adaptations to ensure the service reduces loneliness.

3.4 It is proposed that we pilot this option with 100 older people to test out the solutions offered. HBC's Principal Manager for Sure Start to Later Life and the Chief Executive Officer of Wellbeing Enterprises CIC have worked together with the Community Wardens Service to identify lonely people to take part in this pilot. The pilot will inform future strategy development.

3.5 It is proposed to use Visbuzz as:

- They have a proven track record providing bespoke technological equipment;
- The Royal College of Psychology has recommended Visbuzz as a specialist organisation in this domain; and
- There is support from the NHS HCCG in relation to evidence base who have recommended this company following a demonstration of the equipment.

3.6 The planned start date of the project is September 2013 running for one year. This is a joint project being fully funded by NHS HCCG, with resource support from HBC. The pilot will involve the 100 participants in testing out the solutions including:

- Virtual community group;
- Virtual healthcare group; and
- Family members.

#### 4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 Locally the Older People's Commissioning Strategy and the Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy identify the need to support Older People to maintain their independence and a high quality of life.

4.2 Halton is currently in the process of developing a local Social Isolation working group; this group has also recently worked on an Expression of Interest for the Big Lottery, who have as one of their key priorities Fulfilling Lives: Tackling Social Isolation.

## 5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 Whilst recognising that other organisations may be able to provide similar equipment, this is a bespoke loneliness technology that will be evaluated over a 12-month period to help ascertain the future requirements of the project in the long-term.

5.2 This project is being undertaken in a safe, controlled environment for a one-year period whilst a thorough evaluation takes place.

5.3 The total cost of this one-year contract with Visbuzz is £25,000 and is being funded 100% by NHS HCCG with resource support in the form of one member of staff from HBC.

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

### 6.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

None identified.

### 6.2 **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

Halton's health and wellbeing priorities enable local people to maintain good health and improve poor health so they can benefit from employment, learning and skills. The delivery of this project will help people learn new skills and remain independent in their own community for as long as possible.

### 6.3 **A Healthy Halton**

The Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy and the planned Loneliness Strategy will both tackle the issue of loneliness. This can be a significant contributing factor to people accessing services earlier than they would do normally. This project is designed to utilise new technology to support people's health and wellbeing and to help them maintain their own independence.

### 6.4 **A Safer Halton**

None identified.

### 6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

None identified.

## 7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 This is only a pilot project and is supported by robust research from the Royal College of Psychology. By taking this approach it minimises the risk to both Halton Clinical Commissioning Group and Halton Borough Council. The project will also be evaluated

throughout with a final recommendations report submitted at the end of the pilot.

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 Any Equality and Diversity issues will be addressed in the contract and terms and conditions of the pilot.

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

None under the meaning of the Act.