

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 18 January 2018

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, People

PORTFOLIO: Children, Young People and Families

SUBJECT: Contract for Parent to Parent Volunteer Support: Request to Waive Financial Standing Orders

WARDS: Borough–Wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To request a Waiver of Procurement Standing Orders, to comply with Standing Orders 1.14.3 and 1.14.4, due to the aggregate value of the requested waiver being in excess of £50,000.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That Members approve a Waiver to the value of £150,000 for the period from 9 April 2018 to 8 April 2020, to facilitate the rapid implementation of inter-parental relationships provision as part of the existing parent to parent support contract delivered within the Troubled Families initiative.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 The current contract supports the outcomes of, and is funded through, Troubled Families monies; it also provides strategic and operational support to core services for children, young people and families.

3.2 The Early Intervention Foundation (EIF) published a review of [evidence on inter-parental relationships](#) in 2016 which identified the inter-parental relationship as having a primary influence on children's life chances. From the studies identified in the review it can be concluded that, due to several common barriers, families in or at risk of poverty are less likely to access relationship support. In September 2017 the EIF published a guide for commissioners on reducing the impact of inter-parental conflict on children. DCLG, which is responsible for administering Troubled Families, has recently requested information from all local authorities on the inter-parental relationships support available in their area.

3.3 Following on from this, the existing Parent-to-Parent Volunteer Support contract has been identified as exceptionally well-placed to deliver additional provision to support this new initiative, and to do so within the

current financial envelope, complementing and enhancing the existing service and delivering the new provision without loss of momentum.

- 3.4 The Parent-to-Parent Volunteer Support service recruits, trains and supervises local volunteers to work with families meeting Troubled Families criteria, thus ensuring low staffing costs and high social value. It draws down significant resources, training and expertise from its projects in other local authority areas, providing a high level of additionality. The total annual cost of this service is £75,000.
- 3.5 The service is closely monitored through the commissioning performance management framework and formal quarterly reviews of the contract. Since the contract start date in April 2015 the service has consistently exceeded challenging performance targets. In addition to its child, young person and family-focused outcomes, a significant number of volunteers have been supported to move into further training, education and employment following their experience with the service, thus supporting wider corporate objectives.
- 3.6 The Parent-to-Parent Volunteer Support service is staffed by individuals who are qualified, skilled and experienced in delivering inter-parental relationships provision. It is anticipated that these qualified individuals would lead on delivery of the new provision and would focus equally on embedding the key elements and techniques within volunteer training and supervision processes. This would maximise the dissemination of skills, training and experience of inter-parental relationships support amongst current and future local volunteers working with the Troubled Families cohort.
- 3.7 It is proposed that the new arrangements are for a 2 year period, to coincide with the end date of the Troubled Families initiative as advised by DCLG.
- 3.8 Due to the factors outlined above, the Parent-to-Parent Volunteer Support service could begin this work with immediate effect, thus maximising outcomes within the limited time available. If a waiver is approved, no additional costs will be incurred, either through commissioning extra provision or via the resource costs engendered by a new procurement process.
- 3.9 Resulting from the drive from DCLG for local authorities to deliver inter-parental relationships support, the request for a Waiver of Procurement Standing Orders relates specifically to 1.14.3 (b): *Where compliance with Standing Orders is not practicable for reasons of urgency which could not reasonably have been anticipated.*

3.10 Summary of reasons for Waiver request

I. Cost savings and cost avoidance

This proposal ensures that no additional investment will be required to provide a new service delivering inter-parental relationships support. It will be delivered by enhancing an existing service model utilising staff skills that are already in place, funded through current budgets.

Research has identified a very limited number of providers offering the specific skills set required to deliver inter-parental relationships support, with attendant high costs. Other local authorities in the North West have bought in training and resources from specialist national providers at significant cost. This proposal will avoid these costs.

II. **Quality of provision**

The proposal will ensure that individuals working within the current contract, who are trained, qualified and experienced in the delivery of nationally accredited and evidence-based inter-parental support and conflict resolution programmes, will lead on delivery and disseminate skills and techniques to local volunteers.

The current provider is an established community-based organisation delivering a range of innovative programmes within the Liverpool City Region, including Troubled Families initiatives, and provides significant additionality in Halton by drawing on expertise and resources from its projects in other areas. This includes specialist volunteer training and management support for high-impact but low-frequency issues, such as children living in 'hoarded' homes, without the need for commissioning additional services in Halton. Continuing with this delivery model will add value and enhance the quality of inter-parental relationship support provision.

III. **Disruption to Service**

A change in provider would result in:

- i. the interruption of volunteer recruitment and training for the period leading up to, throughout and immediately following the tender process, as it would be inappropriate to train volunteers who may then have to transfer to another organisation with different training requirements and expectations. This will result in reduced service provision to families.
- ii. the potential loss of current volunteers who may be unsettled by changes to their support and supervision processes / personnel and with the lack of continuity in service provision.
- iii. the current provider enjoys a strong reputation in Halton communities and the organisation is well established. Changes to the service may deter new volunteers while a

new provider is established and becomes known and trusted locally.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 This request for a Waiver of Procurement Standing Orders complies with the requirements of Standing Orders 1.14.3, Non-Emergency Procedures (exceeding a value threshold of £50,000).

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The requested waiver will not result in additional financial costs. The inter-parental relationships support provision would be incorporated in a contract that is costed within existing budgets.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children and Young People in Halton

As noted in 3.2, research demonstrates that inter-parental conflict is a primary influence on children's long-term mental health and future life chances. The provision of specialist support to reduce the impact of this conflict within the shortest timescale available has significant implications for this priority.

6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

Research demonstrates that the future life chances of children and young people who experience inter-parental conflict - including their education and employment potential - are diminished. The delivery of specialist provision to reduce the impact of this conflict supports this priority.

Local volunteers accessing skills, training and experience in delivering inter-parental relationship support would enhance their own employment, learning and training potential and opportunities.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

Research demonstrates the benefits to children and young people's mental health of reducing the impact of inter-parental conflict. This will also apply to parents and carers who receive the appropriate support.

6.4 A Safer Halton

Children and young people who experience reduced inter-parental conflict are likely to feel safer and more secure within their family environment and community.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

None.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 7.1 A potential risk of sufficient volunteer recruitment has been offset by the control measure of broadening the offer to volunteers by linking closely to partner services to provide a range of opportunities and roles.
- 7.2 Potential project risks are identified through robust performance management processes and are resolved at the earliest opportunity.

It is not considered that a full risk assessment is required

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

None.

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

None under the meaning of the Act.