

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 14th April 2022

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, People

PORTFOLIO: Children & Young People

SUBJECT: Services for Missing from Home and Care for young people across Cheshire for Halton, Cheshire East, Cheshire West & Chester and Warrington: Request for Waiver of Standing Orders

WARD(S) Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To request Members of the Executive Board to approve a request for a waiver in compliance with Procurement Standing Order 1.14.4 iv of part 3.1 and 3.2 of Procurement Standing Orders is sought to allow the continuation of a contract with We are With You to deliver, on behalf of the Council, the Pan Cheshire Missing from Home and Care Service, for a period of one year from 1st July 2022 to 30th June 2023.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That Executive Board

- 1. Note the contents of this report; and**
- 2. That the Board approves the waiver of Parts 3.1 and 3.2 of Procurement Standing Orders (non-emergency procedures – exceeding a value threshold of £100,000) by virtue of Procurement Standing Order 1.14.4 (v) and the contract with ‘We are With You’ be extended for a further twelve months.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 We are With You has been commissioned to deliver the Pan Cheshire Missing from home and Care service since July 2018. The Service works across all of the four local authority areas with clear links with Cheshire Constabulary’s missing from home co-ordinators to support young people who have been notified as missing from home or care. There is a co-ordinated and organised response including return interviews will facilitate direct intervention work with children, young people and their families.

3.2 The service has adapted to Covid-19 and lockdown restrictions by continuing to provide face to face interventions where appropriate as well support young people, families and carers via telephone, email and video consultations.

3.3 The existing contract ends on 30th June 2022. The request for authorisation of a waiver rather than implementing a tender process is due to the following:

- i It is proposed to include a young person's interview and evaluation panel in the tender process, as this indicates the competence and approach of a potential provider in working with young people and families. It would not be possible to include this at present, which would reduce the effectiveness of the process for this specific service.
- ii The current service is well known and well regarded across the four local authority areas. It has good networks in place with foster carers and residential providers. In the current situation it would be difficult for a new provider to become established as it a specialist provision. All local authorities continue to have a statutory duty to provide services to looked after children.
- iii To continue with a collaborative approach across Cheshire to deliver a high quality service that is effective in improving outcomes delivered by skilled practitioners which safeguards children and young people that are identified at risk.

3.4 The value of a contract extension for one year to 30th June 2023 is £474,133, which is an £16,000 increase to support some additional management and quality assurance support. All local authorities have agreed to continue with a joint commissioning approach with Halton acting as the lead.

3.5 In respect of the delivery of the Service, each local authority has an agreed funding commitment which is set out in a Deed of Agreement. The annual fees are:

Halton Borough Council	£ 110,533.25
Cheshire West and Chester Borough Council	£ 110,533.25
Cheshire East Council	£ 142,533.25
Warrington Council	£110,533.25

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 The method of procurement complies with both Public Contract Regulations 2015 and the Council's Procurement Standing Orders.

4.2 The authority continues to have a statutory duty to provide services

to looked after children within the authority.

- 4.3 The service supports the Pan Cheshire Missing from Home and Care Protocol with Cheshire Constabulary

5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The value of a contract extension for one year to 30th June 2023 is £474,133, which is an £16,000 increase. This increase is an equal split across each of the four local authorities to support some additional management and quality assurance input. The additional £4,000 for Halton is available within current budgets.

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

6.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

This service directly relates to improving the safety and wellbeing of children and young people by reducing the incidents of missing and risky behaviour. This service supports key elements within Halton's Safeguarding and Children and Young People's Plans.

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

The provider will ensure that children and young people that go missing from home or care or that are vulnerable to exploitation are supported in their learning and future employment and skills development.

6.3 **A Healthy Halton**

The service support people to minimise reduce the risks of harm, and access relevant services to improve their physical and mental health and wellbeing.

6.4 **A Safer Halton**

The service provides support to vulnerable children, young people and families to assist them to access appropriate service provision within their local communities. This links to satisfaction with services and overall perception of the area in which people live.

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

None identified.

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

- 7.1 The current contracts for these services will end on 30th June 2022; should the above not be agreed, the services will cease delivery of the provision and there will be a detrimental effect on children and

young people across Cheshire.

- 7.2 If contracts for Missing from Home and Care are not in place, this may lead to the Council being unable to fulfil its statutory duty regarding looked after children. Failure to have this service in place will additionally lead to vulnerable children, young people and families being placed under increased pressure.

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

- 8.1 The current proposal would not impact upon any equality and diversity issues as all relevant protected characteristics would be unaffected by the proposal.

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

None within the meaning of the Act.