

**REPORT TO:** Executive Board

**DATE:** 19 January 2023

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Executive Director Children's Services

**PORTFOLIO:** Children and Young People

**SUBJECT:** Children and Young People's Speech and Language Therapy services:  
Recommissioning in partnership with NHS Cheshire and Merseyside ICB

**WARDS:** Borough wide

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 To request authorisation to recommission Children and Young People's Speech and Language Therapy services in partnership with NHS Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care Board (ICB), with the new contract to start in August 2023.

**2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the Board approves the recommissioning of the service in partnership with NHS Cheshire and Merseyside ICB.**

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 Halton Borough Council (HBC) and Halton Clinical Commissioning Group (HCCG), and now NHS Cheshire and Merseyside ICB, have jointly commissioned Children and Young People's Speech and Language Therapy since 2017. NHS Cheshire and Merseyside ICB supports the continuation of the joint commissioning arrangements.

3.2 The provision of Children and Young People's Speech and Language Therapy is a statutory responsibility held by local authorities in respect of children and young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan. Children and young people's communication and language skills and attainment are a key priority for Halton, particularly in the Early Years, for those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), and for first-time entrants to the Youth Justice system.

- 3.3 A comprehensive consultation on the requirements of the new service is currently in progress, in which a key focus is the impact of Covid-19 restrictions on the communication and language development of all children and young people, including vulnerable groups such as Early Years and SEND, and how their needs can be most effectively met going forwards.
- 3.4 A broad range of stakeholders are participating in the consultation, including parents, carers, young people, schools, settings, and partners in all sectors across Education, Health and Early Help. Co-production of the service specification with parents, carers and young people, and their active participation throughout the tender process, are a priority.
- 3.5 The current annual contract value is £685,875.87, to which HBC contributes £222,223.78. The service specification for the new contract will be costed following the conclusion of the consultation.

#### **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 Undertaking the stakeholder consultation and subsequent review and reshaping of the service in preparation for the tender process is part of a broader focus on communication and language development in Halton. It will support the integrated approach of key partners towards working together to maximise outcomes and efficiency.

#### **5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Provision of Children and Young People's Speech and Language Therapy services is a statutory requirement for both HBC and NHS Cheshire and Merseyside ICB. Preparation and implementation of the tender process for the new contract will support ensuring best value and highlight further opportunities for pooling resources.

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

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

The delivery of Speech and Language Therapy provision to children and young people is key to supporting the priorities in the Halton Children, Young People and Families Plan, particularly in relation to Early Intervention and Achievement and Ambition, and the One Halton Health and Wellbeing Strategy priority of improved levels of early child development.

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

Support for children and young people with identified Speech and Language needs exerts a critical impact upon their learning and future employment and skills development.

## **6.3 A Healthy Halton**

Speech and Language Therapy services impact directly upon the health and well-being of children and young people with an identified language or communication need, including their mental health.

## **6.4 A Safer Halton**

Speech and Language Therapy services provide support to vulnerable children and their parents/carers, and help 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.

## **7.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

The current contract for Children and Young People's Speech and Language Therapy services ends in August 2023 without further scope for extension. If the service is not recommissioned, both HBC and NHS Cheshire and Merseyside ICB would be in breach of their statutory responsibilities.

## **8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

The current proposal would not impact upon any equality and diversity issues as all relevant protected characteristics will continue to be provided for during the tender process and after award of the new contract.

## **9.0 REASON(S) FOR DECISION**

The current contract for Children and Young People's Speech and Language Therapy, which is both a statutory responsibility and a key priority for Halton, will end in August 2023. Legislative regulations require a competitive tender process to be undertaken in order to procure the service.

## **10.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

**Extension of the existing contract:** as there is no provision within the current contractual terms for a further extension, this option is not feasible and has been rejected.

**Submission of a waiver to extend the existing contract:** as a first waiver has already been approved to allow stakeholder engagement and consultation to take place with a view to reshaping the new service, this option would be counter to best practice and has therefore been rejected.

**Existing contract to lapse without recommissioning and the service to end:** as the service is a statutory responsibility for both HBC and NHS Cheshire and Merseyside ICB, this option would present a breach of these responsibilities and has therefore been rejected.

**Sole recommissioning by HBC:** this option would not represent best value or best service quality and has therefore been rejected.

## **11.0 IMPLEMENTATION DATE**

Tender process to commence: February 2023.

New Contract to start: 16 August 2023.

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

None under the meaning of the Act.