

**REPORT TO:** Executive Board

**DATE:** 13 March 2025

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

**PORTFOLIO:** Children Young People and Families

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

**WARD(S)** Borough-wide

## 1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

### 1.1 Request for Waiver of Standing Orders:

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 Tri- Party Missing from Home and Care Service, for a period of one year from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2025 to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2026.

## 2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That Executive Board

- 1) Note the contents of this report; and
- 2) Consider giving approval to the recommendation that the contract with We are With You should be extended for a further twelve months without going through the Procurement process, in pursuance of Procurement Standing Order 1.14.4 (non-emergency procedures – exceeding a value threshold of £100,000), seeking to waive part 3.1 and 3.2 of Procurement Standing Orders.

## 3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 We are With You is commissioned to deliver the Pan Cheshire Missing from home and Care service .The Service works across three 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 existing contract ends on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2025. 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 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 West, Halton and Warrington 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 30<sup>th</sup> June 2026 is £355,899. The three 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                    | £ 118,633 |
| ○ Cheshire West and Chester Borough Council | £ 118,633 |
| ○ Warrington Council                        | £118,633  |

#### **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 The method of procurement complies with both The Procurement Act 2023 and the Council's Procurement Standing Orders.

4.2 The local authorities continued to have a statutory duty to provide services to looked after children within each local authority area.

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

## 5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The value of the contract extension for one year to 30th June 2026 is £355,899. The Halton contribution is available within current budgets.

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

### 6.1 **Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence**

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

### 6.2 **Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy**

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 **Supporting Children, Young People and Families**

This service directly relates to improving the safety and wellbeing of children and young people by reducing the incidents of missing and risky behaviour.

### 6.4 **Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need**

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 **Working Towards a Greener Future**

None.

### 6.6 **Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community**

None

## 7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 The current contract for these services will end on 30th June 2025; 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 West, Halton and Warrington.

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 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 None are applicable.

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

None within the meaning of the Act.