

Nottingham City Council Delegated Decision



Nottingham
City Council

Reference Number:

4169

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Department:

Children and Adults

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Subject:

Extension of contract to Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Refugee Forum for the 'Into the Mainstream' service.

Total Value:

£51,939 (Type: Revenue)

Decision Being Taken:

- 1) To approve funding at a total of £51,939 for 1 year for the 'Into the Mainstream' Service;
- 2) To approve dispensation from Contract Procedure Rule 4.1.1 in accordance with Financial Regulation 3.29 to allow for the contract with Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Refugee Forum to provide the 'Into the Mainstream' Service to be extended for 1 year commencing on 1 April 2021; and
- 3) To delegate authority to the Head of Contracting and Procurement to extend the contract and sign the contract.

Reasons for the Decision(s)

1) Asylum seekers experience multiple health problems both before and after entering the UK. It is recognised that despite having free access to healthcare in the UK, the health of asylum seekers deteriorates in the first 2-3 years following arrival.

Asylum seekers face a number of barriers to accessing mainstream services, including difficulties registering with practices; language and literacy; poverty; understanding of NHS services.

These barriers to mainstream services have increased during the COVID pandemic, and this has increased the health risk to this population group.

The service works with all new asylum seekers and refugees arriving in Nottingham to ensure GP registration and facilitate access into mainstream services. This includes individuals in dispersed accommodation as well as temporarily accommodating in hotels during COVID. The service identifies and priorities asylum seekers with immediate health and mental health needs to ensure these are appropriately met.

2) 'Into the Mainstream' is a specialist service delivered by Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Refugee Forum (NNRF) who are experts in this field of work. The service has always performed well and provided good value for money since it was first commissioned and awarded in 2013. Into the Mainstream supported 229 newly arrived individuals in 2019/20. A further 35 in the first 6 months of 2020/21, however this does not fully represent their activity during this period of COVID restrictions. The service has been creative in finding alternative ways to work to continue to support clients during the COVID pandemic.

Other Options Considered:

1) Do not have a service: This option has been rejected. Nottingham City is a designated dispersal area for asylum seekers receiving UK Borders Agency (UKBA) support in the East Midlands. Therefore, Nottingham will continue to receive asylum seekers and refugees. Into the Mainstream is the only service in Nottingham City that supports asylum seekers and refugees to access mainstream services. In 2019/20 Into the Mainstream worked with 229 newly arrived asylum seekers/refugees, 82 of whom had immediate health needs to include (pregnant, Female Genital Mutilation, psychological needs, communicable diseases and sexual health). Without the service, it's likely that these vulnerable groups would not access health services, increasing the risk of the transmission of disease within the wider community (e.g, HIV, Hepatitis, tuberculosis, COVID-19 outbreaks).

2) Award via procurement: NNRF are well-known, accessible and established within the community of asylum seekers and refugees in Nottingham, with extensive experience and local knowledge. The organisation provides wider support services to this community, so its clients benefit from being linked into other advice and support services beyond health.

During the COVID pandemic, two hotels are providing temporary accommodation to around 280 asylum seekers in Nottingham. NNRF have provided a hotel liaison worker (based in the hotel) to link individuals up to services, reduce the COVID-19 risk (provide COVID messages etc) and this support is partly linked to the Into the Mainstream contract.

Due to COVID, there is reduced capacity for Nottingham City Council public health to lead an open tender commissioning process. At the same time, a gap in provision could present a greater risk in ensuring access to healthcare for this vulnerable group.

There also continue to be uncertainties around the long term funding available for this contract due to continued budget pressures across Nottingham City Council.

This 1 year extension will be used to consider future requirements with a view to reprocurring in a timely manner, so that appropriate arrangements are in place before the end of this extension (April 2022).

Given the issues raised above, a tender process it is not considered appropriate at this time.

Background Papers:

None

Published Works:

Asylum Seeker, Refugee and Migrant Health Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (2018)

Affected Wards:

Citywide

Colleague / Councillor Interests:

None

Dispensation from Financial Regulations:

Yes

Consultations:	Those not consulted are not directly affected by the decision.
Crime and Disorder Implications:	This decision is unlikely to have a direct impact on crime and disorder
Equality:	EIA not required. Reasons: The proposal is to extend the service, therefore the request does not relate to a new or changing service and there is no direct impact on any groups.
Social Value Considerations:	N/A
Regard for NHS Constitution:	Local authorities have a statutory duty to have regard to the NHS Constitution when exercising their public health functions under the NHS Act 2006. In making this decision relating to public health functions, we have properly considered the NHS Constitution where applicable and have taken into account how it can be applied in order to commission services to improve the health of the local community.
Decision Type:	Portfolio Holder
Subject to Call In:	Yes
Call In Expiry date:	01/04/2021
Advice Sought:	Legal, Finance, Procurement

Legal Advice:

The proposals in this report raise no significant legal issues and are supported.

It is understood that the service provided offers essential support to refugees coming into the City, which has been impacted adversely as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Funding for these services is only provided on a yearly basis and so the Council is not able to offer further commitment for these services beyond an additional one year period at this time.

It is understood that an extension to the existing contract will not only offer value for money but an experienced service provider to continue service provision in the city.

For the reasons given within the report, dispensation from Contract Procedure Rule 4.1.1 in accordance with Financial Regulation 3.29 is supported.

The current provider has been delivering the services for a number of years and whilst the value of this decision and early payments with respect to this service fall below the Light Touch Procurement Regime thresholds, future service requirements and associated costs should be considered in a timely manner prior to the end of this contract extension should future funding become available and which would likely require a procurement exercise to be undertaken. Advice provided by Dionne Claire Sreaton (Solicitor) on 02/02/2021.

Finance Advice:

This decision seeks to provide approval to extend the contract for the delivery of "Into the Mainstream" service for the period of one year (to end on 31st March 2022) In addition, that dispensation from Contract Procedure Rule 4.1.1 for operational reasons in accordance with Financial Regulation 3.29 to issue a contract extension variation to the provider.

The reasons for this decision are outlined in the brief, and in the current circumstances, the plan for current providers to continue for a further year at a total cost of £51,939 allows for continuation of service. This seems to be a value for money option and dispensation is supported due to reasons outlined in the brief.

Within the current Public Health grant for 2020/21 there is provision to fund the costs of this £51,939 contract, and this is currently planned within subsequent years plans for Public Health grant expenditure, and therefore, as the costs of this decision are funded through the Public Health grant this will result in no additional pressure to the Council.

Advice provided by Graeme Black (Commercial Business Partner) on 18/12/2020.

Procurement Advice:

The decision to approve dispensation from Contract Procedure Rule 4.1.1 in accordance with Financial Regulation (3.29) to allow for the contract with Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Refugee Forum for delivery of the 'Into the Mainstream' service be extended for 1 year from 1 April 2021 is supported by Procurement. The value of this decision and previous extensions to this contract fall below the threshold for application of the Light Touch Regime of the European Procurement Regulations. The Procurement Team have been involved in discussions about the decision and it is felt for the reasons outlined in the Other Options Considered section, this is an appropriate proposal, subject to the service being reviewed during the extension period with a view to conducting a procurement exercise should it be deemed that the service continue beyond this extension period. Advice provided by Nicola Harrison (Procurement Lead Officer) on 01/02/2021.

Signatures

Eunice Campbell-Clark (Portfolio Holder Health, HR and Equalities)
SIGNED and Dated: 25/03/2021
Alison Challenger (Director of Public Health)
SIGNED and Dated: 24/03/2021
Clive Heaphy (Chief Finance Officer) - Dispensation from Financial Regulations
SIGNED and Dated: 25/02/2021
Chief Finance Officer's Comments: