

Operational Decision Record

Publication Date 22/03/2022	Decision Reference Number 4571
Decision Title:	
Virtual School digital inclusion initiative	
Decision Value:	
£41,000	
Revenue or Capital Spend?	
Revenue	
Department:	
Peoples, Virtual School	
Contact Officer (Name, job title, and contact details):	
Jasmin Howell, Head of Nottingham City Virtual School, jasmin.howell@nottinghamcity.gov.uk	
Decision Taken:	
<p>To agree spend of £41,00 to commission from the Stone Group the purchase of 75 laptops for identified children in care in years 9,10 and 11 to prevent digital exclusion.</p> <p>To delegate authority to the Head of the Virtual School to sign and enter into the contract with the Stone Group.</p>	
Reasons for Decision and Background Information:	
<p>Children in care are vulnerable to underachievement and poor educational progression, they are more likely to be excluded and are also more likely to have special educational needs than non-looked after children.</p> <p>The pandemic has highlighted the issue of digital poverty and the impact this has on children's educational development and outcomes. Children in care are at a particular risk of experiencing digital exclusion, as carers are often not in a financial position to purchase laptops for the children in their care.</p> <p>To promote digital inclusion, the Virtual School will provide laptops for all Nottingham City children in care in years 9-11 (that do not already have one) to support their educational achievement at these crucial years of their statutory education.</p> <p>The Virtual School has a statutory duty to support and improve the educational outcomes of its authority's children in care, and receives government grant to</p>	

support with this. The Virtual School intends on commissioning this service from the grant funding provided to support us in our duty to improve the educational outcomes of children in care.

The Virtual School will be seeking to purchase the laptops from the Stone Group, they are a leading provider of laptops and IT equipment for schools, and are able to provide the required number of laptops fully installed with the following software (which are essential given these laptops will be provided to children in care to support them with their studies):

- Anti-virus software
- Safeguarding software to prevent children accessing inappropriate sites.
- Microsoft office suite
- 3 year access to a telephone helpline for any faults,
- Laptop etching with the name of the Virtual School as sponsor.

Other Options Considered and why these were rejected

- 1) Purchasing laptops independently- we were not able to get the same resources and services at the same competitive cost. This option would also require a lot of administration time and coordination.
- 2) Commissioning Nottingham City IT to provide the laptops- It have responded to my request and advised they are unable to provide the laptops with all the software and extras required as they lack the capacity and set up.

Reasons why this decision is classified as operational

The laptops will be purchased from Pupil Premium Plus grant funding, which is funding allocated to the Virtual School specifically to support the educational outcomes of children in care. The Virtual School will purchase this resource using the underspend of this grant, which would otherwise be recouped by the DfE.

Additional Information

You should consider:

- A request for an Exemption from the Contract Procedure Rules has been submitted, we are awaiting approval.
- Finance comments received from Julia Holmes – Senior Commercial Business Partner 2 March 2022:
“Funding for the proposed contract in this report has been earmarked within the Pupil Premium Plus Grant (PPPG). This funding is allocated to the Local Authority by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) each year on a financial year basis. The proposed contract outlined in this report should only be entered into once the Chief Finance Officer has given approval not to follow the Contracts Procurement Rules.

The Pupil Premium Plus Grant for the financial year 2021/22 is £1.112m, this is based on the number of looked after children (LAC) pupils recorded

as being looked after for at least one day as recorded in the March 2021 children looked-after data return (SSDA903) and aged 4 to 15 at 31 August 2020.

As at period 10 the Pupil Premium Plus Grant had £0.121m uncommitted. The proposed cost of the contract is £0.041m. Therefore, there is sufficient funding available in 2021/22 to cover the cost of the laptops. It must be noted that the laptops must be received by 31 March 2022 for them to be eligible to be charged to the financial year 2021/22. It is a requirement that any unspent grant funding at 31 March 2022 has to be returned to the ESFA at the end of the financial year. As an LA we have always maximised the grant not had to return any of the PPPG funding.”

Decision Maker (Name and Job Title)
Catherine Underwood, Corporate Director for People
Scheme of Delegation Reference Number
11
Date Decision Taken
2 nd March 2022