

Nottingham City Council Delegated Decision



Nottingham
City Council

Reference Number:

3714

Author:

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Department:

Strategy and Resources

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Subject:

Procurement of Fostering and Adoption Assessment Framework for D2N2 councils

Total Value:

up to £800,000 (Type: Revenue)

Decision Being Taken:

- 1. To approve the procurement of a single provider framework for the provision of assessments of prospective foster carers, connected persons and adoptive parents, for use by the City as well as Derby City, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire County Councils, and the East Midlands Adoption Agency. The framework would be in place for 4 years.**
- 2. To Delegate Authority to the Director of Procurement and Children's Commissioning to approve the outcome of the tender and the Head of Contracting and Procurement to sign the contract on behalf of the Council.**

Reasons for the Decision(s)	<p>Nottingham City Council is required by law to carry out assessments of people who formally express a desire to foster or adopt, in order to ascertain whether they are suitable to look after children and young people. The assessments must be carried out within specific timescales and failure to do so carries serious consequences.</p> <p>We have run a framework since 2014 to ensure the continuation of adoption and fostering assessments. The contract is due to expire on 31 March 2020. The Council also uses internal assessors to carry out fostering and connected persons assessments, but the framework contract is needed for additional capacity, especially during high volume recruitment campaigns.</p> <p>In 2015, the Government announced its intention to establish Regional Adoption Agencies. The East Midlands Adoption Agency (EMAA) was established in April 2019. The EMAA now carries out all adoption assessments for all four D2N2 Councils - Derby City, Derbyshire County, Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County Councils. Each of these Councils continues to carry out the foster carers and connected persons assessments under whatever arrangements they each deem appropriate.</p> <p>The City Council still requires additional capacity for foster carer and connected persons assessments. The other D2N2 Councils and the EMAA have also requested to be granted access to this external assessment provision to provide additional assessment capacity, should they require it.</p> <p>It is intended that all other D2N2 Councils, and the EMAA, will manage their own call-off and contract / performance management processes with the successful provider, as and when they make use of the provision.</p>
Other Options Considered:	<p>1. Do nothing. This option is rejected on the basis that it will risk the loss of assessment capacity and therefore puts at risk the ability of the Council to fulfill its statutory duty. 2. Develop an in-house assessment service. There is not currently the resource, or time available to invest in and create such an internal service.</p>
Background Papers:	<p>none</p>
Published Works:	<p>none</p>
Affected Wards:	<p>Citywide</p>
Colleague / Councillor Interests:	<p>None</p>
Consultations:	<p>Those not consulted are not directly affected by the decision.</p>

Crime and Disorder Implications:

There are no crime and disorder implications relating to this decision

Equality:

EIA not required. Reasons: The City Council uses this form of external assessment service currently and has done since 2014. The proposed decision does not alter that and therefore has no detrimental impact on any groups or individuals.

Social Value Considerations:

The work of this contract provides local employment opportunities and in supporting the recruitment and assessment of foster carers, connected persons, and adoptive parents, it support the placement of children in care in family settings locally, which in turn also provides financial support to those fostering families.

Decision Type:

Portfolio Holder

Subject to Call In:

Yes

Call In Expiry date:

20/11/2019

Advice Sought:

Legal, Finance, Procurement

Legal Advice:

This report does not raise any significant legal issues. The City Council will go out to tender to appoint a single provider to a framework contract for itself and on behalf of Nottinghamshire County Council, Derby City Council and Derbyshire County Council. The framework will be for fostering and adoption assessments. As Nottinghamshire County Council is acting as the Regional Adoption Agency it is anticipated that it will be the primary user of the adoption services element of the framework. The City Council needs to liaise with its partner councils to ensure the framework meets their requirements. Advice provided by Andrew James (Team Leader Contracts and Commercial) on 20/09/2019.

Finance Advice:

The decision seeks approval to procure a single provider to undertake assessments of potential foster carers and adopters. The current process expires 31 March 2020 and it is proposed the new framework will commence from 01 April 2020 for a period of four years.

Fostering and Adoption assessments are a statutory requirement for anyone who expresses an interest to become a foster carer or adopter. A key focus of the service is to increase foster carers and avoid the reliance on external foster care agencies that are more expensive. Increasing internal foster carers may require additional capacity to ensure the specific timescales are achieved and avoid any associated consequences. Access to external assessors provides this capacity and assurance.

In April 2019 Nottingham City Council and other D2N2 partners created a shared service arrangement for the delivery of a Regional Adoption Agency known as East Midlands Adoption Agency (EMAA). The EMMA and other D2N2 partners have requested access to the framework should they require additional capacity. Any costs associated with this activity will be charged to the authorities and EMMA directly.

In 2018/19 the total gross spend for external assessments was £0.181m, excluding adoption assessments. Based on the current activity levels for external assessments and assumptions for inflation, the estimated costs over the four year contract is £0.775m excluding VAT.

Whilst this framework aims to offer flexibility in terms of capacity, it carries no guarantee of work, therefore spend will vary depending on activity.

Approval to spend will be given through established mechanisms that exist within the Children's placements budget in accordance with the Council's Scheme of Delegation ensuring value for money (VfM).

Advice provided by Christine Green (Strategic Finance Business Partner) on 27/09/2019.

Procurement Advice:

The decision to approve the procurement of a single provider framework for the provision of assessments of prospective foster carers, connected persons and adoptive parents is supported by the Procurement Team, who have been consulted on this proposal and will manage the procurement process. Advice provided by Nicola Harrison (Procurement Lead Officer) on 13/09/2019.

Signatures

Cheryl Barnard (Portfolio Holder- Children and Young People)
SIGNED and Dated: 12/11/2019
Helen Blackman (Director of Children's Social Care)
SIGNED and Dated: 11/11/2019