



# EXECUTIVE BOARD DECISION

<b>REPORT OF:</b>	Children's Young People and Education
<b>LEAD OFFICERS:</b>	Strategic Director Children's and Education (DCS)
<b>DATE:</b>	10 <sup>th</sup> March 2022

<b>PORTFOLIO/S AFFECTED:</b>	Children's Young People and Education
<b>WARD/S AFFECTED:</b>	All
<b>KEY DECISION:</b>	YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>

**SUBJECT: Procurement process for the concurrent planning service**

## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To note that the provision of the concurrent planning service will be retendered due to the current contract coming to an end. The concurrent planning service is a Blackburn with Darwen led regional commission on behalf of four Regional Adoption Agencies across the North West of England.

## 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Executive Board:

- Approves the commencement of a tendering and procurement activity to offer this service to the wider market, with a contract start date of the 1st of June 2022. The contract will be awarded for 2 years with an option to extend for a further two years on a 1 + 1 year basis subject to satisfactory delivery which will be monitored via robust contract review processes.
- Delegates authority to the Strategic Director Children's and Education in consultation with the Executive Member for Children, Young People and Education to award the final contract following the procurement process.

## 3. BACKGROUND

The concurrent planning service is a Blackburn with Darwen led regional commission on behalf of four Regional Adoption Agencies across the North West of England. The requirement for the service is provision of up to 36 concurrent planning placements per year for children across the Northwest region which are allocated across each Regional Adoption Agency.

The four Regional Adoption Agencies are:

- Adoption Now (Blackburn with Darwen, Bolton, Bury, Oldham, Rochdale, Tameside), total of 15 placements per year
- Adoption Counts (Stockport, Manchester, Salford, Trafford, Cheshire East), total of 5 placements per year

- Adoption Together (Wigan, Warrington, St Helens, Cheshire West, Halton), total of 8 placements per year
- Adoption in Merseyside (Liverpool, Knowsley, Wirral, Sefton), total of 8 placements per year.

The current contract has been in place since the 2nd of October 2017 and is with Caritas Care and Adoption Matters North West, who are responsible for the provision of concurrent planning placements across the North West region and for providing placement continuity and stability for looked after children under the age of 4 who cannot live with their birth families.

The service provides vulnerable children with the highest quality of care whilst their future is decided by the courts, and to support the plan to rehabilitate children to their birth families if possible. Where rehabilitation is not possible, to provide a permanent placement up to and including adoption by recruited foster carers.

The provider will train and support the carers and provide training to the local authorities who are part of each Regional Adoption Agency.

#### **4. KEY ISSUES & RISKS**

To test the market, an Expression of Interest was advertised on the CHEST on the 11<sup>th</sup> of August 2021. There was one joint application from the current providers, Adoption Matters and Caritas Care.

Although only the current providers submitted an Expression of Interest, due to the contract value, the concurrent planning service will have to be advertised as a full tender to comply with Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

The tender documentation, contract and service specification will incorporate details to ensure that the successful provider will adhere to quality standards and legal requirements to promote timely decisions regarding the appropriate placement of young children who are subject to care proceedings.

TUPE transfer implications will be considered as part of the process.

#### **5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

Local authorities have a duty to identify which permanence option is most likely to meet the needs of an individual child. Where the local authority considers that adoption might be the right plan for the child, early permanence ensures that, when appropriate, the child is placed in a foster placement with a family who is also able to adopt them if that is the outcome of the care or placement order proceedings.

The EIA checklist has been completed.

#### **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The inter-agency fee is a nationally agreed mechanism for covering the costs incurred in the preparation, approval and matching of prospective adopters, and the support provided during the first 12 months of a placement.

The level of the inter-agency fee is decided by the relevant organisations for local authorities in each country of the UK in discussion with the Consortium of Voluntary Adoption Agencies UK. Any updates to the rates being charged will be made available on the CoramBAAF and Consortium of Voluntary Adoption Agencies UK websites.

The cost per placement is £30,250 with the costings allocated for  $\frac{1}{3}$  to support the child / family through the adoption process and  $\frac{2}{3}$  for training and recruitment.

The initial  $\frac{1}{3}$  is paid up front at the point of placement in the fostering phase and the remaining  $\frac{2}{3}$  is paid when the placement converts to an adoptive placement.

An additional weekly payment is paid to Caritas Care for the cost of the actual foster placement:

- One child £500 per week.
- Sibling Fees for two children £894 per week.
- Sibling Fees for three children £1,297 per week.

The table below shows the annual cost implications of the contract, both for the group of regional adoption agencies as a whole, and individually for Blackburn with Darwen. We have provided calculations based on the current fees and the calculations are based on a worst case scenario of a child being in the concurrent placement for a full year prior to the adoption going through, although the target would be for all placements to be finalised within 26 weeks, in which case the weekly fees incurred would be less than illustrated.

The adoption budget is reviewed annually as part of the council's medium term financial plan. Any potential inflationary changes to the fees detailed below would be factored into this process and the budget amended accordingly.

Current cost of placements						
	Weekly Fee	52 Weeks	Placement Fee			
All Regional Adoption Agencies (assuming 36 placements)	500	26,070	30,250			
	<b>Annual Cost</b>	938,520		1,089,000	2,027,520	<b>Total</b>
Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council (assuming 3 placements)		26,070				
	<b>Annual Cost</b>	78,210		90,750	168,960	<b>Total</b>

## 7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

An open tender process will be followed to ensure this tender attracts providers with sufficient knowledge and expertise to enable quality delivery. The tendering process will need to comply with the Public Contracts Regulations and the Council's Contract and Procurement Procedure Rules. Contracts will be in a form approved by legal officers in the contracts and procurement team.

## 8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

The management and implementation of the tender will be actioned within Blackburn with Darwen team resources including input from Legal, Finance, Strategic Commissioning and Children's Social Care.

## 9. EQUALITY AND HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

Please select one of the options below. Where appropriate please include the hyperlink to the EIA.

Option 1  Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) not required – the EIA checklist has been completed.

Option 2  In determining this matter the Executive Member needs to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision. *(insert EIA link here)*

Option 3  In determining this matter the Executive Board Members need to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision. *(insert EIA attachment)*

## 10. CONSULTATIONS

The proposal for the procurement has been discussed with the Regional Adoption Agencies across the North West of England: Adoption Now, Adoption Counts, Together for Adoption and Adoption in Merseyside.

## 11. STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

The recommendations are made further to advice from the Monitoring Officer and the Section 151 Officer has confirmed that they do not incur unlawful expenditure. They are also compliant with equality legislation and an equality analysis and impact assessment has been considered. The recommendations reflect the core principles of good governance set out in the Council's Code of Corporate Governance.

## 12. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

All Declarations of Interest of any Executive Member consulted and note of any dispensation granted by the Chief Executive will be recorded in the Summary of Decisions published on the day following the meeting.

<b>VERSION:</b>	<b>4</b>
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<b>CONTACT OFFICER:</b>	<b>Cathy Fisk</b>
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<b>DATE:</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup> March 2022
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<b>BACKGROUND PAPER:</b>	
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