



RECORD OF DECISION TAKEN UNDER DELEGATED POWERS OUTLINED IN THE CONSTITUTION – Part 3 Section 16

DELEGATED OFFICER DECISION Jayne Ivory
TAKEN BY:
PORTFOLIO
AREA: Children's Services, Young People & Education

SUBJECT: Bid for Seed funding *"Improving Commissioning and Sufficiency Planning to Increase Stability and Permanence for Looked After Children"*

1. DECISION

"Improving Commissioning and Sufficiency Planning to Increase Stability and Permanence for Looked After Children" seed funding

1. Blackburn with Darwen Children's Services will submit a partnership bid with Child Action Northwest (CANW) and Antser to jointly deliver a feasibility study project.
2. Blackburn with Darwen will be part of a bid in partnership with Lancashire CC, Blackpool and Cumbria Children's Services Departments to jointly deliver a feasibility study.

2. REASON FOR DECISION

To bid for DFE funding to carry out a feasibility the study to address some of the difficulties faced by local authority in building sufficiency of placements for looked after children and in maintaining positive placement stability.

3. BACKGROUND

Last year two reports were published on the UK fostering system, the independent review of Foster care in England and the Education Select Committee's Fostering report. A key message from both reports and a priority for the National Stability Forum is the need to increase stability for children in care.

Placement sufficiency and placement choice are critical to effective placement matching. Foster carer recruitment and the need to develop foster carer skills are central concerns. The reports also identified that work is needed on strategic commissioning and sufficiency planning, with a focus on longer term supply of provision tailored to meet the needs of children in each area.

The DFE has made a fund of £500,000 available for local authorities to bid into for the development of feasibility studies designed to explore innovative ways of improving commissioning and sufficiency planning to increase stability and permanence for looked after children. Bids are invited from local or combined authorities, either alone or as part of a consortia, working with providers or partner organisations.

Target areas include

- Sufficiency planning at scale, with a view to increasing stability and permanence;
- Recruitment and retention of foster parents, particularly based on the results of needs analysis;
- Building the capability of foster parents through training in order to reduce placement breakdowns and/or increase capacity of specialist provision;

- Improved commissioning practice, including joint commissioning arrangements;
- Gaining a better understanding of the relationship between children's needs and placement costs to ensure greater value in spend on placements;
- Models that create or strengthen links between different types of care placements, e.g. supporting children moving between residential care and fostering;
- Enabling children on the edge of care and their families to gain earlier access to foster care through support foster care; and
- Introducing fostering respite to enable looked after children to return home.

Bid 1 which is submitted in partnership with Child Action North West and Antser proposes a feasibility study which will address 5 out of the 8 criteria and seek to answer the following key questions:

- Does collective partnership working, and a shared pool of carers allow for better matching?
- Does early matching of children and young people with a foster carer prevent delay in care planning?
- Does choice of carer based on increased shared capacity improves placement post approval and reduce placement moves?
- Is placement stability improved by enabling children and young people to have a voice in care planning through having placement options?
- Does collaboration in recruitment, building capacity together and increased communication reduce the cost of care to Local Authorities, as placement stability reduces the risk of the higher placement costs?
- Does better or earlier matching enable better planning through the transition from foster care, Staying Put, into forms of independence such as own tenancy, supported Lodgings, accessing wrap around support and semi independence units?

Bid 2 submitted with Lancashire CC, Cumbria and Blackpool

This project will enable:

- development of a BBCL market position statement, clearly articulating demand and gaps in provision to enable more effective shaping of the market;
- identification of more collaborative ways of working between LAs and IFAs to explore how we can place more children locally in placements that meet their needs;
- sharing of promising practice across BBCL;
- sharing of learning across IFAs;
- a clear options appraisal of how the four LAs can better work together to maximise use of local placements.

Impact of the work:

- Improved and more efficient commissioning practice;
- Greater placement choice;
- More carers able to provide more complex fostering placements;
- More children placed locally in placements that meet their needs;
- Improved access to services due to ability to place more locally;
- Improved placement stability due to improved choice and more locally placed children and young people

The seed funding secured will fund a consultant for a period of 4 months to carry out the feasibility study. A working group, including representatives from the four local authorities and IFAs, will drive this work. The feasibility study will consider current and predicted demand, existing processes and promising practice. It will examine ways that LAs and IFAs can work more collaboratively and will consider the benefits and barriers of different ways of working. Learning from the study will be cascaded to other IFAs

through a specific report and shared learning event and will inform future commissioning arrangements and joint working

4. OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

None

Further information is available via the following link [] or from the report author

5. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

All Declarations of Interest of the officer with delegation and the any Member who has been consulted, and note of any dispensation granted should be recorded below:

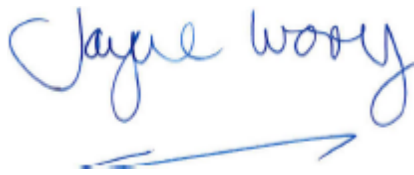
VERSION: 1

CONTACT OFFICER: Alyson Hanson

DATE: 23rd May 2019

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS: None

Signed:



Director: Children's Services

Date: 02/07/2019