1. Meeting:

2. Date

3. Title: Leaving Care Service and Care Leavers Accommodation service Tender Options

4. Programme Area: Children and Young Peoples

5. Summary

The contract between Rotherham MBC and NCH for management of Leaving Care and Care Leavers Accommodation services ends in April 2009. The service provision will require external tender and this report considers the tender options available.

Developments in legislation, the commissioning market and service provision have provided a background for a review of service expectations which underpin a service review and proposals for amendments to the service under tender.

6. Recommendations

The Leaving Care service is subject to an external tender. As there are considerable benefits in management of this service by an external provider, that Rotherham MBC does not submit an in-house tender.

The Accommodation project is subject to a separate tender. The tender for this service would include the post 16 service provision currently operated in house (Hollowgate). An in house tender is submitted for this element of the service, to fully explore all options for Best Value in service provision.

7. Proposals and Details:

The Children, Leaving Care Act 2000, requires Local Authorities to provide a comprehensive service to all children leaving the care of the Local Authority who are looked after aged 16 and who have been Looked After for 14 weeks or more. This service also requires Local Authorities to ensure Care leavers have access to a range of accommodation options, in the case of care leavers aged 16 and 17 this Accommodation should be appropriately supported.

Currently the Leaving Care service is provided by NCH. The specialist Leaving Care Accommodation provision is provided in house (Hollowgate post 16 unit) and by NCH (Floating Support and supported Lodgings) an element of the NCH service is funded by Supporting people, which enables support to be provided for Care Leavers over the age of 18 and provides for Foster
Carer conversion to supported lodging providers, therefore enabling care leavers to remain in foster care.

The contract with NCH for provision of both services will end in April 2009 and a full Tender process has commenced to ensure that the new contract is agreed by October 2008, giving a 6 month notice period.

**Tender Options**

It is proposed that the current Leaving Care service and Care Leavers Accommodation service are tendered separately. Organisations will be free to tender for either or both services. Though there has been some ease of communication in one organisation providing both services, there is no reason why this is necessary and the separate projects may attract tenders from differing types of organisations, with specialist skills. The Commissioning Team Manager and Service Manager, provider services have undertaken a joint review of service provision and projection of service requirements over the next 5 years.

1. **Leaving Care Service.** There is evidence of consistency in the leaving care populations over the last 5 years, which is projected to continue. The leaving care population comprises of approximately 30 to 35 individuals each year, who require support for at least 5 years (more if in education). The gender split varies widely from year to year but averages out at 50% Male and Female. 95% of care leavers are white British, the remainder being mostly Unaccompanied Asylum seekers and from no consistent BME population. 68% of Care Leavers require support from more than one agency and 33% of Care leavers are recorded as having complex needs, which require intensive interventions. Current performance indicators show positive trends and it is unlikely that the service specification would benefit from significant amendment.

**Tender Options.** This service will require external tender, the option to be considered is whether to place an R.M.B.C. tender to manage the service in-house.

External management of the Leaving Care service has brought many benefits. Children, Leaving Care respond positively to the separation from Children's social care which has for many become a complex relationship. The voluntary sector has also an enhanced ability to attract external funding, bringing added value to the service. There is a considerable degree of interest in tendering for Leaving Care services within the established Children’s Voluntary sector and it is likely that the tendering process will provide a response sufficient to test service provision on the basis of quality of service provision and value for money.

2. **Care Leavers Accommodation Service.** The current NCH service provides 16 units of tenancy support with a capacity to provide intensive tenancy support for 5 young people (up to 7 contacts per
week) and up to 10 places within Supported Lodgings. An improved partnership with Neighbourhoods and Adult services has enabled provision of accommodation for the use of care leavers who require intensive support and are aged 16 and 17. In addition 6 units of accommodation with 24 hour staffing are provided in house at the Hollowgate unit. Demand for supported accommodation is high, especially within the Hollowgate unit and for supported Lodgings. Recruitment for supported lodgings providers is subject to all the same pressures as for Foster Carers and the team work closely with the fostering team. Options for the expansion of the current Hollowgate resource through a new build, funded in partnership with a Registered Social Landlord and the Housing Corporation are currently being explored.

**Tender Options.** The Accommodation project currently managed by NCH will require external tender. The options for consideration are: inclusion of the current in house supported accommodation resource and consideration of an in-house Tender.

Expansion of the current Hollowgate unit to a 9 or 10 bedded unit will require a greater staffing input. The most effective means of increasing the availability of staff without increasing the revenue costs is through the use of a core and cluster model of service provision whereby floating support staff provide services to all service users including Hollowgate residents. Tender of the whole Accommodation service would enable a creative response to the staffing and management of all service provision. The Supporting People Team, who part fund the current NCH provision have indicated that they have no objections to this process and would provide practical support and advice.

It is likely that this tender would attract some interest from the Children’s Voluntary sector and from The Housing support sector. As some provision is currently in-house and the management of scarce resources is an issue, it may, however be advisable to test this tender for best value through an in-house Tender bid.

**Finance**

The service provision proposed within this Tender would be managed within the current budget agreed for Leaving Care services. Should the proposal for the unified Accommodation project be agreed this also allows for efficiency savings which would be used to improve staffing to the Hollowgate service to enable expansion of provision should the proposals for a new build resource be successful. The financial implications of the tender process will be managed within existing resources.

1. **Risk and Uncertainties**

For the Leaving Care service, the main risk is that the tender process may not attract suitable applications, however, the Leaving Care Field is currently strong and Rotherham has a good profile which will encourage positive
applications. The current service providers have indicated that they will wish to re-tender for the service.

The Accommodation project is also likely to attract tenders from a variety of differing organisations from both the Children’s and Supported Housing Sectors. Should the proposal to tender out the whole service provision (including Hollowgate) be accepted, advice will be taken about management of a tender of a service in development. Early discussions with the voluntary sector have indicated that change management processes of this type are acceptable within an external tender.

Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

The Leaving Care service will be managed within the new Targeted support team and future service provision will be developed within the wider Targeted youth support agendas.

2. Background and Consultation

This proposal is made with consideration of:
Children, Leaving Care Act 2000
Every Child Matters
Change Matters
Supporting People 5 Year Plan
Rotherham Leaving Care Policies and Procedures

Consultation with
Service Manager, resources
Commissioning Team
Supporting people team

Statistical information from
NCH
RMBC Children and Young people’s services
National DFES statistics

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