

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1.	Meeting:	Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families' Services
2.	Date:	9th April, 2014
3.	Title:	Recommended Provider for the contract to deliver Advocacy for Children and Young People Involved in Child Protection Processes
4.	Directorate:	Neighbourhood and Adult Services

5. Summary:

A new advocacy service for children and young people involved in child protection processes was commissioned in August 2013 for a 7 month pilot from 1st September, 2013 to 31st March, 2014 and the contract was awarded to the in-house Rights 2 Rights Service. The short term nature of the project was to enable CYPS to be part of the wider RMBC review of advocacy.

The wider review of existing advocacy services provided in Rotherham was completed and the findings reported to NAS and CYPS DLTs in December, 2013.

CYPS DLT agreed to the proposal that a new one year contract for children and young people involved in child protection processes should be commissioned from 1st April, 2014 with an option to extend for a further year.

A competitive tendering process has now been completed to determine the best provider to deliver this service. This included a robust evaluation process against the method statement requirements and some detail of this evaluation is detailed in the proposals at 7.2. In total there were three tenders received, from Rotherham Advocacy Partnership (RAP), Rights 2 Rights Service and Barnardo's. Given two of these providers could have successfully delivered the service, the evaluation criteria had to be applied rigidly.

The recommended provider is Barnardo's and they have been informed of the intention to award them the contract subject to the approval of CYPS DLT, Cabinet Member, Children, Young People and Families, and following the 10 day standstill period which gives the opportunity for unsuccessful providers to challenge the decision.

6. Recommendations

Cabinet Member:-

- 6.1 **Retrospectively approve the recommended provider to deliver the advocacy contract for children and young people involved in the child protection process.**

7. Proposal

7.1 Background Information

Advocacy Services for children and young people involved in child protection was commissioned in August 2013 for a 7 month pilot project. The Rights 2 Rights Service were successful and awarded the contract. The short term basis of this contract was deliberate to enable CYPS to contribute to the review of advocacy provision across RMBC. This review has now been concluded and the changes will ensure all advocacy services provide issue based, short-term advocacy which is to be consistently performance managed and monitored against the outcomes.

One of the priorities for Children and Young People's Services is around ensuring the voice of the child is heard. The new Ofsted Framework (October 2013) states that "the views and experiences of children, young people and their families are at the centre of service design, influence development and strategic thinking". Given this and the success of the pilot project, CYPS DLT agreed to commission the advocacy service on a longer term basis from 1st April, 2014.

7.2 Commissioning Process including Evaluation of Tenders

A competitive tendering process has now been completed to determine the best provider to deliver the advocacy service. In total three tenders were received and given two providers were above the threshold and could have successfully delivered the service, the evaluation criteria therefore had to be applied rigidly and as a result the preferred provider to deliver the service is Barnardo's.

Each question in the tender process has a score and a weighting dependent on importance. Barnardo's total score is 290, Rights 2 Rights Service 270 and RAP 200.

Some of the detail around the evaluation of each tender is included below:-

Barnardo's

The level of experience Barnardo's have in delivering advocacy within the child protection process for three other local authorities was evident from their tender. They also have local knowledge through delivering other contracts such as Junction project, at the Rowan Centre in Rotherham. The key features of the service were set out along with how the outcomes within the specification would be met and Barnardo's have a system enabling live reports to be extracted for evaluation, improvement and to demonstrate the impact/distance travelled. Barnardo's also have an outcomes assessment model to enable consistency of application which is also used to discuss progress with the young person. All advocates are trained to NYAS Level 3 and given advocates operate on an 'As and When' basis, staff absence and capacity issues can be addressed. The evaluation panel did have to ask two further questions of Barnardo's which related to the 'service charge' within their budget proposals but also the number of children and young people supported through previous advocacy contract, which has delayed the process slightly.

Rights 2 Rights Service

Although the Rights 2 Rights service have established the advocacy service for children and young people involved in child protection process, unfortunately the outcomes achieved and the impact made by this pilot were not clearly illustrated in their tender response. On the whole the tender was good especially around the experience of the service, how the service would utilise volunteers, add value through their LAC service and the detail around the processes to be used. Unfortunately however, some of the responses were insufficient in detail, for example, in relation to the outcomes required and how these would be implemented, how the service would respond to staff absence and capacity, how young people would be encouraged to take up the offer, and what innovative ways of engagement would be utilised.

Rotherham Advocacy Partnership (RAP)

Whilst RAP have vast experience of working with learning disabled adults they were unable to provide sufficient information to demonstrate their experience of working with children and young people involved in child protection. Whilst the detail around the structure of the proposed service was clear no reference was made to responding to the demand or capacity to deliver the service.

An intention to award notice has now been issued to Barnardo's and subject to their acceptance of this, plus approval by CYPS DLT, Cabinet Member and the 10 day standstill period, where any of the unsuccessful providers could challenge the decision, Barnardo's will officially be awarded the contract on the 21st March, 2014. In the meanwhile discussions will be held to facilitate the handover of priority cases from Rights to Rights to Barnardo's ready for when the contract commences on the 1st April, 2014.

8. Finance

The value of the advocacy contract for children and young people involved in child protection processes is £50,000 for 12 months, commencing 1st April, 2014. There is also an option to extend this contract for a further year, subject to funding being available.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

It has already been acknowledged that the capacity within this contract to respond to the potential number of children and young people involved in child protection processes in Rotherham is a significant challenge. The demand for the service against the capacity to respond to it should continue to be reviewed.

As with any new provider, it will take time to establish the service and build relationships with relevant teams. However, given the experience of Barnardo's in delivering similar contracts elsewhere, the risk is felt to be low.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

Ensuring young people are empowered to voice their opinions on decisions made about them continues to be a priority for CYPS.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

Ofsted Framework and evaluation schedule for the inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and care leavers (October 2013).

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