

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 14th October 2021

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, People

PORTFOLIO: Children and Young People

SUBJECT: Request for Halton Borough Council to lead the procurement of an IAG service for Halton, Knowsley and Wirral Local Authorities

WARD(S) Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To obtain Executive Board approval for Halton Borough Council to lead the procurement of services to encourage, enable and assist young people to participation in education and training

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That:

- i) the report be noted; and**
- ii) the Board approves Halton Borough Council acting as lead in a joint procurement process with Knowsley and Wirral local authorities.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Local Authorities have a duty to make available to all young people aged 13-19 and to those between 20 and 25 with an Education, Health and Care Plan, support that will encourage, enable and assist them to participate in education or training. This is a duty under Section 68 of the Education and Skills Act 2008.

3.2 In addition, the Education and Skills Act 2008 placed two 'Raising the Participation Age' related duties on local authorities with regard to 16 and 17 year olds:

3.2.1 Local authorities must promote the effective participation in education and training of 16 and 17 year olds in their area with a view to ensuring that those persons fulfil the duty to participate in education or training. A key element of this is identifying the young people in their area who are covered by the duty to participate and encouraging them to find a suitable education or training place.

3.2.2 Local authorities must make arrangements – i.e. maintain a tracking system - to identify 16 and 17 year olds who are not participating in

education or training. Putting in place robust arrangements to identify young people who are not engaged in education or training or who have left provision enables local authorities to offer support as soon as possible.

- 3.3 Since April 2014 the 14-19 Team within Halton Borough Council have implemented the Halton Participation Strategy to meet the above duties. The revised approach to this area of work, brought about by the Halton Participation Strategy, brought a large element of the work in house and achieved financial and resource efficiencies in doing so.
- 3.4 The Halton Participation Strategy has also significantly reduced the percentage of young people who are not in education, employment or training or whose activity is not known to the Council. In April 2014 the reported figure for Halton was 9.2%. The published annual average for Halton in 2020/21 is 4%.
- 3.5 An element within the Halton Participation Strategy is the commissioning of a specialist service to encourage, enable and assist young people to participation in education and training through the provision of information, advice and guidance by appropriately trained advisers.
- 3.6 The commissioning of a service to provide information, advice and guidance to young people has been carried out in collaboration with Knowsley, Liverpool and Wirral authorities since 2014. The Executive Board approved Halton Borough Council to lead the first procurement process on the 17th October 2013 and to lead a new procurement round on the 20th July 2017.
- 3.7 On both occasions the contract was awarded to Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership/Career Connect as the most able to deliver to the scale and the requirements of the contract. The current contract came into effect from 1st April 2018 for a period of one year with an option to extend for a further three 12 month periods. The options to extend has been taken and the current contract will end on 31st March 2022.
- 3.8 Halton and the two Liverpool City Region Authorities of Knowsley and Wirral seek to procure a service to encourage, enable and assist young people from 1st April 2022. The service would maintain similar features to current as all local authorities have found the current service specification to support them in meeting their statutory duties.
- 3.9 The joint procurement process would seek to procure a service from April 2022 for 4 x 12 month periods. This would allow for consistency of service from 2022 to 2026 with the option to reduce or terminate the service annually should the Council's statutory

duties change or further budget savings require a reduction.

3.10 The expected maximum total contract value annually would be:

Halton	£154,000
Combined Knowsley & Wirral	£781,000
<i>Maximum total annual value</i>	<i>£935,000</i>

3.11 The joint procurement process would once again lead to a Framework Agreement for the service, with each local authority responsible for their own element of service delivery and managing their own payment schedules direct to the service provider.

3.12 There is a significant advantage to Halton to be involved in a joint procurement process because of the size of the contract across the three local authorities; there are economies of scale Halton will benefit from, and given the size of Halton's budget it's likely the Council will benefit the most from being part of a much larger contract.

3.13 As the lead for the development of the current Framework Agreement to encourage, enable and assist young people the authorities have asked Halton to act as the lead once again to procure a joint service from April 2022.

3.14 As Halton has the most experience of procuring this service there is an advantage to the procurement teams of all the local authorities involved for Halton to lead. Given the scale of Halton's budget compared to the investment in this procurement from other local authorities Halton's procurement team will negotiate with the other local authorities a reciprocal arrangement whereby another authority leads another joint procurement exercise.

3.15 Given the benefits outlined above, and in order to make the procurement process as efficient as possible for all local authorities involved, the Strategic Director, People, seeks Executive Board approval to lead the procurement across Halton, Knowsley and Wirral Local Authorities.

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 Securing a service to encourage, enable and assist young people to participate in education is an essential element of the Council's work to meet its statutory duties.

5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 A joint procurement process offers the best option for all local authorities to achieve value for money through economies of scale.

As the smallest budget holder Halton has the potential to benefit most from this joint procurement.

- 5.2 The staffing resource from all local authorities involved can be best utilised by allowing Halton to lead this particular joint procurement process, given the vast experience and documentation already available in Halton.

6.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

6.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

The service to encourage, enable and support young people to participate in education and training is an important element of the Halton Participation Strategy, which is proving successful in providing young people who are not in education, employment or training with the support they need to progress.

6.2 **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

The Halton Participation Strategy supports key priorities in encouraging young people to access learning or training that will lead to longer term, more sustainable employment options.

6.3 **A Healthy Halton**

None identified.

6.4 **A Safer Halton**

None identified.

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

None identified.

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

- 7.1 There is a financial risk in not being part of a joint procurement process and therefore incurring a higher level of service charge from any supplier delivering to Halton only.

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

- 8.1 None identified.

9.0 **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

- 9.1 None under the meaning of the Act.