

Open Report on behalf of Peter Duxbury, Executive Director Adults and Children's

Report to:	Councillor Mrs P A Bradwell, Executive Councillor for Children's Services and Adult Learning
Date:	16 January 2012
Subject:	Early Years and Crèche Service Contract - Boston
Decision Reference:	02005
Key decision?	No

Summary:

Interim contracts were put in place for Children's Centres for 2011-12 pending the implementation of a 3 year procurement plan. Whilst a 3 year procurement plan was agreed in principle with Assistant Directors last year, work on implementing that procurement plan was subsequently put on hold, pending a review of core offer and delivery plan arrangements for Lincolnshire Children's Centres, which is still ongoing.

The waiver of contract regulations will enable the existing contracting arrangements to continue to deliver consistent services and ensure continuity of support whilst development work is completed. During the period of this waiver, commissioning intentions will be explored further with a view to a tender process being undertaken during 2012 for all early years and childcare provision, with a countywide contract to be in place from April 2013.

In view of the fact that the service under the current specification will run for 12 months only, during which time there will be a new specification developed for Early Years and Childcare provision that will be subject to open competitive tender, we do not believe that this service will be of interest to other Providers at this point in time.

Recommendation(s):

The Executive Councillor is asked to consider the report and approve recommendation to:

1) enter into a contract with the Lincolnshire Pre School Learning Alliance to continue to deliver the Early Years and Crèche service within Boston from 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2013. The value of this contract being £129,869

2) authorise the Director of Children's Services to take all decisions necessary to implement the contract

Alternatives Considered:

1. The current provider has experience of working in the area and this will enable continuity of delivery and support to the children and families within the area, alternatives in this instance have not been considered.

Advantages

Lincolnshire Pre School Learning Alliance is currently providing the service in Boston, with established relationships with locality teams and service users in place.

Disadvantages

Awarding the contract in this way, precludes competition, however, it is the intention to consider commissioning intentions during 2012, with a view to having a formal tender process for all early years and childcare provision, with a countywide service delivery to start in April 2013. It is therefore not considered viable to go out to competitive tender at this time.

Reasons for Recommendation:

It is the intention of the Director of Children's Services to expose early year's contracts to competition in the future. The timescale for this will be determined to enable new contracts to be in place by April 2013.

In the meantime it is important that the high standard of provision continues to remain with the Lincolnshire Pre School Learning Alliance, who are known to Children's Services

1. Background

The Lincolnshire Pre School Learning Alliance is a well known experienced provider. They offer early years services that support the development of children in line with the Early Years and Foundation Stage Profile, with crèche facilities to enable parents and carers to attend relevant training.

There services are inclusive and have activities available to support target groups of people, such as young parents and dads.

Contract management has taken place and evidence collated from this process shows that the provider has built strong and effective relationships with children and families and that they have achieved deliverables set by the locality team.

2. Conclusion

The current provider has been working in the area for a number of years and is well known to locality teams, children and families. By agreeing to this waiver of contract regulations will mean continued provision of activities to children and their families accessing services at the Boston Children Centres.

3. Legal Comments:

This decision is within the remit of the Executive Councillor's decision-making powers.

4. Resource Comments:

The Council's Contract Regulations state the exceptional circumstances in which competition may be limited. Given the circumstances outlined in this report, it is considered that the recommendations offer the best value for money over the medium term, by allowing the current service to be safeguarded whilst a county-wide procurement exercise takes place.

5. Consultation

a) Has Local Member Been Consulted?

n/a

b) Has Executive Councillor Been Consulted?

n/a

c) Scrutiny Comments

n/a

d) Policy Proofing Actions Required

n/a

6. Background Papers

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

This report was written by Lynn Brammer, who can be contacted on 01522 554076 or lynn.brammer@lincolnshire.gov.uk