

Open Report on behalf of Debbie Barnes, Interim Director of Children's Services

Report to:	Councillor Mrs P A Bradwell, Executive Councillor for Children's Services and Adult Learning
Date:	19 March 2012
Subject:	Home-Start home visiting service in Lincolnshire
Decision Reference:	02037
Key decision?	No

Summary:

The provision of a home visiting service (Tier 1 / universal family support services) is currently delivered by a number of separate individual Home-Start schemes which are due to expire in March 2012.

This provision is currently joint funded by Children's Services and NHS Lincolnshire.

This report sets out a proposal for the waiver of contract regulations and to enter into direct negotiations with the eight Home-Start schemes for the continuation of the home visiting service for two years from 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2014.

NHS Lincolnshire and Children's Services originally identified monies from their Choosing Health budget and Children's Services budgets respectively to commission Tier One Family Support services from the eight 8 Home-start providers identified in Section 1 through a Section 256 agreement under the NHS Act 2006. Children's Services manage the joint budget and contracting arrangements for each of the Home-Start Schemes.

Whilst Health were able to confirm their intention to continue to commission this provision, Children's Services were unable to confirm their commissioning intentions at the same time, due to a number of reasons:

Children's Services wanted to review how effective the separate Home Start Services are;
Children's Services wished to review needs assessment to ensure funding was being allocated to meet the need;
Children's Services wanted to ensure that this service compliments other family support services it delivers/commissions.

Children's Services have now completed this work and wish to continue to commission the service until March 2014.

Recommendation(s):

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

1. Approve the adoption of a closed tender route as an exception to the normal tender process laid down by the Council's Contract and Procurement Procedure Regulations and to enter into separate contracting arrangements with each organisation (identified in Section 1) from 1 April 2012 to 31 March 2014.
2. Authorise the Director of Children's Services to take all necessary decisions to implement these contracts.

Alternatives Considered:

1. Extend the current Agreement for a period of two years

Advantages

- Continuity of service for vulnerable families and their children.
- The County continues to benefit from the external funding attracted,
- Would allow time for the service to transfer to a self funded model,
- Would avoid transaction costs of tender,
- Retention of an active set of volunteers.

Disadvantages

- The service would not be subject to open competition.

2. Terminate the existing provision

Advantages

- This would avoid the direct and in-direct costs of the contract.

Disadvantages

- Loss of active volunteer base,
- There would be no continuity of service for vulnerable families,
- There may be increased demand on higher tier and higher cost services,
- Vulnerable families and children may be without services they need.

Reasons for Recommendation:

A review of family support provision as well as additional funding being available through the early intervention grant has led to Children's Services confirming its commissioning intentions to continue to fund tier 1 family support - Therefore it is now necessary to seek extensions to the existing contract arrangements in order that the providers are able to continue the service until 31 March 2014.

Due to the way this service is jointly funded, the termination from one of the partner funders will have a significant impact on the other being able to continue to commission the services they require and for Home-Start to be in a position to continue to provide services they have with reduced funding. The extension to existing contract arrangements will allow time for transition to a self funded model and ensure continuity of the service whilst a self funded model is explored.

The extension to the current contracts will also ensure continuity of the current high standard of provision by a provider who is well known to Children's Services and is Section 11 (safeguarding) compliant.

The providers also have access to, and support from 400 volunteers which is seen as a significant link to the Big Society agenda. It would be disappointing to lose the capacity and the goodwill of this resource due to the loss of funding, and need to ensure that this resource is not lost but re-directed.

In addition, the provider is able to bid for and attract a significant amount of external funding that is of benefit to the County. In all, a total of £499,945 has been brought into Lincolnshire by the Home-Start schemes during the last financial year. This funding enables schemes to provide additional focused home-visiting work around issues such as healthy eating and living, behaviour management and support to new parents, as well additional services such as family groups, courses, trips and events. It also enable the schemes to extend their reach into the most rural parts of the county.

1. Background

The eight Home-Start schemes and their contract values are shown below:

Home-Start Scheme	Annual contract values	Overall Contract Values
Lincoln	£74,400.22	£148,800.44
Gainsborough	£48,273.91	£96,547.82
East Lindsey	£80,711.35	£161,422.70
Boston	£54,585.03	£109,170.06
Sleaford	£54,585.03	£109,170.06
South Holland	£26,146.63	£52,293.26
SW Lincolnshire	£48,273.91	£96,547.82
Grantham	£48,273.91	£96,547.82

The Tier One services meet the core requirements of the Children's Services strengthening families' agenda and outcomes for children and young people. Home-Start offers emotional support and practical help and information to families in order to help parents and children to cope with difficult times, prevent situations from worsening and encourage positive, healthy and enjoyable family relationships.

This type of provision within Tier 1/universal family support significantly reduces the need for more targeted work, therefore investment in this area reduces the work and also costs to the locality teams. In addition, the recent review work undertaken has highlighted the need for these services to continue, and ensure that funding will be allocated to meet the most need.

In Lincolnshire eight Home-Start schemes serve all the districts of the county and access families in the most rural and hard to reach localities. The nature of the Home-Start service enables them to engage the most vulnerable families in Lincolnshire and help them access the range of family services available to them.

The Home-Start schemes are well established third sector providers in Lincolnshire and are managed by a co-ordinator with the services being delivered by a flexible volunteer based workforce that adds a significant contribution to the dynamic of the provider market in Lincolnshire.

The volunteering approach that the Home-Start schemes operate, encourage and support parents to share their views, plan their support, and feed into the development and improvement of services. In addition:

- Parents supported by Home-Start are encouraged to become trustees of the Home-Start Schemes.
- Many parents go on to become volunteers themselves after their support has ended.
- Parents are supported to become involved in and have a voice within the community; at Children's Centres, schools and other community groups.

This approach ensures that parents/families can begin the process of self help and also meet our aspirations for this area.

In order to support each of the Home-Start Schemes to be self funded, we will work with them to identify opportunities that will be best suited to their volunteer structure, but also encourage them to diversify.

Each Home-start organisation has successfully added value to the services they deliver by securing additional funding to provide services for families to have access to less intensive support services. The total of this additional funding brought into Lincolnshire in 2011/12 is £499,945. Further funding for 2012/13 which has already been confirmed is currently standing at £376,792.

2. Conclusion

The extension of these contracts should provide continuity for those children and their families already accessing the provision, and ensure that a high quality, consistent and reliable service remains accessible county wide during this period, whilst the service moves towards a self funding model.

It will also ensure that Children's Services continue to benefit from the additional funding *brought* into Lincolnshire and represents value for money.

3. Legal Comments:

The individual contract waivers are within the remit of the Executive Councillor's decision making. The legal background to these decisions is set out fully within the report.

4. Resource Comments:

The Council's Contract Regulations state the exceptional circumstances in which competition may be limited. The report explains the circumstances and why the recommendation represents the best way forward.

5. Consultation

a) Has Local Member Been Consulted?

n/a

b) Has Executive Councillor Been Consulted?

Yes

c) Scrutiny Comments

This has not been considered by a scrutiny committee.

d) Policy Proofing Actions Required

n/a

6. Appendices

These are listed below and attached at the back of the report	
Appendix A	Home-Start home visiting service performance data

7. 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 Jonas Gibson, who can be contacted on 01522 553258 or jonas.gibson@lincolnshire.gov.uk