

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

Report to:	<b>Executive Councillor</b>
Date:	<b>05 September 2011</b>
Subject:	<b>Volunteering Service for Families with Complex Needs and Children's Centres</b>
Decision Reference:	<b>01938</b>
Key decision?	<b>No</b>

**Summary:**

In line with the Big Society and Community Development agenda Children's Services now wish to develop Volunteering Support linked to the Lincolnshire Community Budget Pilot - Families Working Together and Children's Centres.

Barnardo's are currently providing volunteer support to the "Think Family" project from their own time limited funds. However this funding is due to finish at the end of August 2011. The ceasing of their funding will mean that staff currently employed to run the volunteering support will be made redundant and their valuable experience lost. In addition, the support of the volunteers will be lost at this time.

Barnardo's already have much of the infrastructure support in place to deliver an interim volunteer service supporting the Community Budget Pilot - Families Working Together and Children's Centres.

Agreeing an interim contract with Barnardo's would prevent gaps in service continuity to vulnerable families who are most in need of these services, and would maintain momentum with existing trained volunteers and support staff.

Due to budget changes earlier in the year, the development of the Community Budget Pilot and the need to develop links with sustainable support services in line with the Big Society and Community Development agenda this has meant that this project could not be completed sooner and that normal contract and procedure rules would be unable to be followed to ensure continuity of service.

For this reason Children's Services is seeking an exception to the normal procurement process. The exception to the contract and procurement procedure rules will enable interim contracting arrangements to be put in place to ensure continuity of service and support. As this is a Part B service, Public Contract Regulations do not apply, however during the period of this exception, this service will be exposed to full competition through a tender process.

The estimated annual contract value for 80 volunteers is £152,603.

**Recommendation(s):**

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

1. Enter into an interim contract by direct negotiation with Barnardo's to deliver a volunteering service to Families with Complex Needs and Children's Centres from 19th September 2011 to 31st August 2012.
2. Authorise the Director of Children's Services to take all decisions necessary to implement the contract

**Alternatives Considered:**

1. Do not negotiate an interim contract:  
  
Advantages  
  
Saving on interim contract costs.  
  
Disadvantages  
  
Gaps in continuity of service.  
Loss of staff with experience of providing volunteer support and training, loss of trained and active volunteers.
2. Complete competitive process:  
  
Advantages  
  
Exposure of service to the market place seeks competition.  
  
Disadvantages  
  
Gaps in continuity of service.  
Loss of staff with experience of providing volunteer support and training, loss of trained and active volunteers whilst tender process is conducted.

**Reasons for Recommendation:**

It is the intention to expose this service to competition in the future. The timescale for this will be determined to enable a new contract to be in place by September 2012 subject to funding availability.

An interim contract for a year is required for a number of reasons; to ensure viability of the project in terms of staffing, to allow for evaluation of the contract

and to monitor the outcomes that are being delivered, enable stakeholder views to be sought through consultation and to determine if enhancements or changes to the service would be of benefit going forward.

In the meantime it is important that the success of the “Think Family” volunteer programme can be utilised and ensure that provision continues, and it is considered that Barnardo's would be best placed to achieve this. In addition, this year Barnardo's Midland region has been awarded the Investors In Volunteers Award. Although other providers exist with volunteers, Barnardo's has the capacity to be up and running with immediate effect with trained volunteers who have already been dealing with our most vulnerable families, therefore already have experience and understand the problems that will be encountered and be able to address these and their needs, without the need for recruitment and training of volunteers which will cause delay and a loss of continuity of service.

As a national organisation with a local presence, communities are able to engage positively with such a well known charity. This enables Barnardo's to recruit and maintain volunteers in order for services to run consistently.

The opportunity to work further with the provider to recruit existing family members of the service as active volunteers, empowering them to gain training and experience to improve their chances of future employability directly meets the key principles of new legislation and guidance.

## **1. Background**

The implementation of this contract will provide the opportunity to respond to new legislation and guidance, engage and empower families within Lincolnshire both through the support volunteers can offer as well as volunteering opportunities for those families to increase their future employability and raise their aspirations.

The Think Family project had started to build on this by supporting families, children and young people. Focusing on the most disadvantage families in Lincolnshire, the service will continue to offer, support to children, young people and their families to fulfil their full potential, by delivering volunteers who are focused on supporting and improving the lives of the most vulnerable children.

For those families with complex needs, this element of the service would predominantly focus around working with and supporting the Family Intervention Service (FIS) to support the top 50 most complex families in Lincolnshire. This support would allow the FIS workers to exit these families earlier to move on to other high need families, leaving the volunteer to continue supporting the family in a step down service and build on the strategies set in place., such as giving advice on boundaries or routines for their children: ensuring they are settled in their rooms earlier in the evening so they can gain a full nights sleep in order to attend school the next day ensuring higher attainment levels for the child, or advice around keeping the home to a reasonable standard of cleanliness, in order for them to maintain their tenancies and reduce homelessness

In addition to addressing the complex needs and child poverty, working with these families would aim to reduce the cycle of worklessness and to stop needs escalating into higher more costly and resource intensive services.

The service will also provide volunteers with a range of skills and experiences, allowing them to be matched to a number of different roles to offer support through Children's Centres and to existing staff and other service providers. Some of the potential roles could include support to; outreach services, parent groups, family support, crèche sessions, play sessions, administration and maintenance.

Even greater priority must be given to ensure effective support to parents (starting in pregnancy and continuing through the transition of the child into primary school.

Volunteer support strengthens parent/carers and children's emotional resilience to develop life skills and make healthy lifestyle choices. The unique attributes of a volunteer service are underpinned by robust recruitment, selection, training, supervision and quality assurance systems.

The volunteer-provided service will also build community capacity – a cycle of volunteer support and family to family friendship who then become volunteers themselves and are then in a position to help others.

As the services to be provided under the contract are Social Services they are Part B services for the purposes of the Public Contracts Regulations 2006. They are therefore not subject to the full advertising requirements of the EU procurement regime.

However the Council is subject to obligations under the EU Treaty of openness transparency and non-discrimination which would normally require an advertisement unless the Council considers that the contract would not be of interest to a potential provider in another EU member state.

In this case it is not considered, due to the value and length of the interim contract that it would be of interest to such a potential Provider.

The Council's Contract Regulations would normally require competition for a contract of this value. Entering into such a contract by direct negotiation requires approval from the Executive Councillor where the value of the contract exceeds £75,000 but does not exceed £250,000.

## **2. Conclusion**

By agreeing to this exception of contract and procurement procedure rules, continuity of provision of a volunteering service for those Families with Complex Needs and developing of services within Children's Centres will be achieved along with the opportunity to develop the service to meet new key areas of legislation and guidance.

### **3. Legal Comments:**

The Council has the power to adopt the recommendation. The Council would not thereby be in breach of its procurement obligations for the reasons given in the Report.

The decision is consistent with the Policy Framework and within the remit of the Executive Councillor.

### **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 in the interim period, by safeguarding the established service.

### **5. Consultation**

#### **a) Has Local Member Been Consulted?**

n/a

#### **b) Has Executive Councillor Been Consulted?**

#### **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.

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