

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Decision Report

Decision Maker:	Executive Lead Member for Children's Services
Date:	11 July 2023
Title:	Children's Services Procurement – Approval to Spend [HIEP]
Report From:	Director of Children's Services

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Purpose of this Report

1. The purpose of this report is to seek approval to spend in relation to the commissioning of locum educational psychologists (EPs) to support the production of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs).
2. This report seeks to:
 - Give relevant information on the planned procurement activity for this service;
 - Give information on the value and council spend in relation to this service;
 - Request approval to spend in line with the Council's Contract Standing Orders.

Recommendation(s)

3. It is recommended that the Executive Lead Member for Children's Services gives approval to spend for the commissioning of locum EPs up to the value of £3,348,000 over a five year period.

Executive Summary

4. This report seeks to:
 - set out the background to the procurement need;
 - consider the finance for the project and the impact on the budget;
 - detail the contractual spend;
 - highlight the impact the project has made on the performance of the County Council and
 - recommend approval.

Contextual information

5. Hampshire and Isle of Wight Educational Psychology (HIEP) provides psychological advice as an input into the production of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) as part of its statutory responsibilities.
6. The average demand for input into EHCPs per month has risen from just under 150 per month in 2019 to 225 written advice per month in 2022, with increased demand expected in 2023 and beyond.
7. There is a national shortage of EPs and only a limited number are trained each year. The locum market is limited, and few providers are able to provide in bulk. The market rate for locum EPs has increased in recent years, and currently stands at around £1,100 to £1,200 per written advice.
8. It is not possible to recruit enough EPs to the service, due to the above national shortage, and the service is reliant on the use of locum EPs, who typically provide psychological advice remotely to meet increased statutory demand.
9. Expenditure on locum EPs within the service over the past three years has been: £1,558K (22/23), £991K (21/22) and £789K (20/21).

Finance

10. The service has recently received an increase to its base budget of £1.66m to address historic deficit positions resulting from increased statutory demand. This led to the service pulling back from sold service work, which is preventative in nature and generates revenue.
11. This increase to the base budget allows for the funding of locum EPs to produce advice in lieu of being able to employ EPs directly.
12. Council officers will commission locum EP services through a compliant procurement route. The maximum value for the contract under a three-year framework is £2,008,800 and with the option to extend a further two years, with a total cost of £3,348,000.

Performance

13. Performance will be measured against both agreed monthly advice submitted (output), and the timeliness of output in line with statutory requirements for a 6 week turnaround in psychological advice.
14. The historic use of locum EPs has enabled both the service, and the Special Education Needs (SEN) Service to increase the number of advices produced within statutory requirements from around 2% to above 50%.

Consultation and Equalities

15. There are very clear benefits to the procurement of additional EP capacity (locum or otherwise). These include timely output of EHCPs, which ensures children's needs are met at the earliest opportunity and within statutory timescales. As a consequence, no consultation has been undertaken.
16. An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed for this recommendation.

Climate Change Impact Assessment

17. Climate Change. Hampshire County Council utilises two decision-making tools to assess the carbon emissions and resilience impacts of its projects and decisions. These tools provide a clear, robust, and transparent way of assessing how projects, policies and initiatives contribute towards the County Council's climate change targets of being carbon neutral and resilient to the impacts of a 2°C temperature rise by 2050. This process ensures that climate change considerations are built into everything the Authority does. The carbon mitigation tool and climate change adaptation tool were both considered but were deemed not applicable to this report because the projects detailed within will not have a carbon emissions impact and are not vulnerable to climate change.

Conclusions

18. It is recommended that the Executive Lead Member for Children's Services gives approval to spend for the commissioning of locum EPs to the value of £3,348,000 over a five year period.

REQUIRED CORPORATE AND LEGAL INFORMATION:

Links to the Strategic Plan

Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity:	No
People in Hampshire live safe, healthy and independent lives:	Yes
People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment:	No
People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities:	Yes

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

Document

Location

None

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT:

1. Equality Duty

The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under the Act with regard to the protected characteristics as set out in section 4 of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation);
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (see above) and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

- The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

2. Equalities Impact Assessment:

The Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) is included as a separate attachment.