

LONDON BOROUGH OF HAMMERSMITH & FULHAM

Report to: Deputy Leader

Date: 01/09/2025

Subject: Procurement Strategy for the Recommission of Advocacy Services

Report author: Jessie Ellis, Programme Lead

Responsible Director: Katharine Wilmette, Director of Adult Social Care.

SUMMARY

Statutory and community advocacy services are currently delivered under separate contracts which are due to expire in March and November 2026 respectively. This paper seeks approval to commence a competitive procurement exercise to recommission advocacy services under a lead provider model consolidating the two contracts into a single, integrated contract that allows for a broader and more flexible advocacy offer. The new contract, commencing on 1st April 2026, will enable the Council to respond to emerging need while improving service integration, access, and value for money.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To agree that Appendix 1, 2 and 3 are not for publication on the basis that it contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) as set out in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).
 2. The Deputy Leader approves the following procurement strategy for advocacy services. The contract will be awarded for four years with the option to extend for a further two years (4 years +2).
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Wards Affected: All

Our Values	Summary of how this report aligns to the H&F Corporate Plan and the H&F Values
Building shared prosperity	Advocacy services employ local residents and will continue to prioritise social value through the new contract. This includes commitments offer training and development opportunities to local organisations as well as carers and residents.

Creating a compassionate council	Advocates play a vital role in supporting vulnerable residents, including those with disabilities and mental health needs. The service ensures individuals are heard, respected, and empowered to make informed decisions about their care and support.
Doing things with local residents, not to them	Advocacy services are independent of the council and act solely in the interests of the resident. This independence ensures that residents' voices are central to decision making processes.
Being ruthlessly financially efficient	The new contract consolidates advocacy services into a single, integrated model. This approach reduces duplication, streamlines management, and achieves economies of scale, delivering better value for money.
Taking pride in H&F	By investing in non-statutory advocacy, the council demonstrates pride in its diverse communities and its commitment to equity and inclusion.
Rising to the challenge of the climate and ecological emergency	Advocates work face to face as well as remotely via telephones and use public transport when in the borough.

Financial implications

The financial implications of this re- procurement strategy will be included as part of the overall evaluation which will include legal, risk management and finance, once the contract award report is available in November 25, in sufficient time prior to the proposed contract award start date of April 2026.

It is anticipated that this commitment will be met from the Adult Social Care Commissioning Third Sector Revenue Budget in 2026/27 and for each subsequent year, subject to the appropriate annual budget sign off.

These are contained in the Exempt Appendix 1.

By Prakash Daryanani, Head of Finance, 23 July 2025

Verified by James Newman, AD Finance, 12 August 2025

Legal Implications

This report recommends that the Deputy Leader approves a procurement strategy for a contract for advocacy services for parents, carers and unrepresented groups. The

services are above threshold light touch services. The procurement is regulated by the Procurement Act 2023 ('PA 23'). Section 19 of the PA requires that a competitive process is carried out. The process set out in this report the open procedure - a single stage tendering procedure without a restriction on who can submit tenders after pre-market engagement. This satisfies the requirements of the Act and also the Council's Contract Standing Orders.

The decision is a Key Decision.

The appropriate decision maker is a Cabinet Member which includes the Deputy Leader.

Angela Hogan, Chief Solicitor (Contracts and Procurement) 23rd July 2025

Procurement Comments

This project falls under the High Value Contract process set out in the CSO's and under the new procurement regulations 2024. Officers have already undertaken premarket engagement activities that have been used to inform this strategy and the service specification.

Officers from the commissioning team and Procurement functions will continue to work together to develop the tender suite and support the evaluation and award process.

Joe Sardone – Category Lead for People. Procurement and Commercial 23rd July 2025

Background Papers Used in Preparing This Report

DETAILED ANALYSIS

Background

1. Advocacy Services in the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham are currently delivered through separately commissioned contracts.
2. The new contract consolidates both services to deliver a more integrated, person-centred advocacy service that improves access, simplifies referral pathways, and ensures statutory duties are met. By consolidating advocacies into a single contract, the Council seeks to reduce fragmentation, improve efficiency, and achieve better outcomes for residents, particularly those who are vulnerable or face barriers to accessing support. This procurement aligns with the Council's broader strategic priorities around co-production, inclusion, and prevention, and supports ambitions to empower residents to self-advocate and participate in decisions about their care.

3. The approach also complements other adult social care initiatives, including Healthwatch services and leaves scope to pick up emerging advocacy needs of residents that fall outside the remit of the current commissioned services.
4. This procurement strategy has been informed by coproduction with service-users of advocacy, frontline professionals, and feedback from suppliers of advocacy. The contract builds on existing provision by Libra Partnership and H&F Mencap, with a view to expand the scope of advocacy to include a wider range of needs and residents, enhancing value for money, service continuity, and responsiveness to emerging local priorities.

Reasons for Decision

5. The contracts for statutory advocacy and community advocacy are set to expire 31st March 2026 and 30th November 2026. The Council has a contractual right to bring forward the community advocacy contract early through written notice to the provider. This will allow for a unified procurement process and a single contract commencement date.
6. The Council has a statutory duty to provide independent advocacy services under the Care Act 2014, Mental Capacity Act 2005, and Mental Health Act 1983. These duties include ensuring that individuals who would otherwise have substantial difficulty being involved in care and support processes are supported by an independent advocate.
7. The community advocacy is a discretionary service that provides vital support to residents who do not meet the statutory thresholds but still require support to navigate complex situations, express their views, and uphold their rights. This service plays a critical role in preventing the escalation of need by ensuring individuals receive timely support, understand their rights, and access appropriate services early.
8. There has been a growing recognition of emerging advocacy needs that fall outside of the two currently commissioned contracts, such as support for parents navigating complex care systems, carers advocating for family members and people facing financial or housing related challenges. These evolving demands highlight the importance of a flexible and inclusive advocacy model. The proposed model is well placed to respond to these changes by enabling a broader range of advocacy types to be delivered through a network of advocates.
9. Co-production with residents and professionals has highlighted key challenges in the current model. Feedback from workshops with social workers revealed that the existing service structure is fragmented, leading to inconsistent delivery, unclear referral responsibilities, and a disjointed experience when engaging with advocacy services. This complexity makes it harder for professionals to access timely and appropriate support for residents. Capacity constraints within the community advocacy contract were also raised, with concerns that residents are not receiving support quickly enough. Similarly, resident surveys reported

difficulties navigating the system and noted long wait times, reinforcing the need for a more integrated and responsive model.

10. A single contract will reduce fragmentation, increase flexibility, improve service integration, and ensure a more seamless and person-centred advocacy offer for residents. It will also deliver greater efficiency and value for money by streamlining contract management and enabling economies of scale.
11. Pre-market engagement with suppliers of advocacy services has shown support for a single integrated lead provider model, which allows for collaboration with specialist organisations while maintaining clear lines of accountability.
12. Recommissioning the service through a competitive procurement process will ensure continuity of provision, compliance with procurement regulations, and delivery of a high quality, accessible advocacy service for residents across the borough.

Contract Specifications Summary

13. The service will cover statutory advocacy, including Independent Mental Capacity Advocate, Independent Mental Health Advocate, Care Act Advocacy, NHS Complaints Advocacy, and Relevant Person Representative under Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards, in and out of borough.
14. Community advocacy will be delivered to support adults who do not meet statutory thresholds but still need help expressing their views and accessing services. As part of the model, the lead provider will be responsible for training and equipping these organisations to deliver effective advocacy. The lead provider will monitor the effectiveness of this capacity-building work and provide regular feedback to the Council.
15. In addition, the specification will allow for flexibility to respond to emerging advocacy needs, such as support for carers, parents, and other groups who may face barriers in navigating complex systems. This ensures the model remains responsive to evolving local priorities and resident needs.
16. The service will be delivered through a lead provider model, where the provider must form a network of advocates with specialist organisations. The provider will be expected to:
 - Offer a single point of access for referrals.
 - Maintain consistent quality standards across all advocacy types.
 - Demonstrate strong local knowledge and community engagement.
 - Deliver services in line with the Council's values of inclusion, co-production, and financial efficiency.

Procurement Route Analysis of Options

17. The service being procured have been identified as falling within the scope of 85312300. These are contained in the Exempt Appendix 1.

18. **Option 1- Lead Provider Model (Recommended)**

This option is recommended as it enables the Council to deliver a more cohesive, person-centred advocacy offer while improving efficiency and value for money through streamlined contract management.

Consolidating statutory and community advocacy into a single contract means the Council can reduce duplication, simplify referral pathways, and improve access for residents.

The lead provider will be required to provide training and capacity-building support to the borough's network of advocates. This will help upskill the local advocacy workforce, strengthen community resilience, and ensure consistent quality across the borough. It will also support the development of a sustainable pool of qualified advocates within the borough, enabling the service to respond more effectively to the emerging and evolving advocacy needs of residents.

This model supports local VCSEs to contribute meaningfully and creates the flexibility to respond to emerging advocacy needs within a coordinated framework. The single point of access and triage system reduces administrative burden and confusion, while potential savings can be realised through reduced overheads, fewer spot purchases, and more efficient use of advocacy resources.

19. **Option 2- Separate contracts**

This model perpetuates service fragmentation and limits opportunities to align delivery and outcomes. It would also continue the administrative inefficiencies and capacity issues raised by frontline professionals during engagement.

20. **Option 3- Single Provider Model**

This model is not recommended as it risks excluding smaller, specialist providers and creating a monopoly in the market.

Market Analysis and Engagement

21. Market engagement was undertaken for this requirement. The engagement consisted of a multi-stage process designed to gather insights from a range of stakeholders and ensure the specification and procurement approach were informed by current market capabilities and user needs. This included: an open day with potential and current suppliers of advocacy; a pre-market engagement questionnaire for suppliers; a workshop with frontline professionals from the Council and NHS; a survey for social workers; and a survey for service users of current advocacy services. These activities were used to understand the capabilities and capacity of the market, identify best practice models, explore opportunities for service integration, and highlight gaps in current provision that could be addressed through the new contract.

22. Distortion of competition during market engagement activities was avoided by publishing the opportunity to participate on the Find A Tender Service (FTS) ([Hammersmith and Fulham Advocacy Services for Adults - Find a Tender](#))

under reference number 2025/S 000-037486, and by providing a reasonable timeframe for responses. All engagement activities were conducted in an open and transparent manner to ensure equal access to information and to support a fair and competitive procurement process.

Conflicts of Interest

23. All officers and decision makers, including elected members (where appropriate), have been required to complete a Conflict of Interest Declaration form to record any actual, potential, and/or perceived conflicts, along with appropriate mitigations (as appropriate), on the Conflicts Assessment.
24. Approval of, by way of signing, this Procurement Strategy by the elected member constitutes their declaration that they do not have any actual, potential, and/or perceived conflicts, relevant to this procurement, except where a specific Conflict of Interest Declaration form has been completed and provided, advising differently.
25. The Conflicts Assessment will be kept under review and updated throughout the life of the project (from project inception to contract termination).

Local Economy and Social/Added Value

26. The advocacy provider market is limited to a small number of national organisations, and localised specialist providers.
27. Recent pre-market engagement with providers shows interest in a single integrated contract that enables collaboration between national organisations and local specialist providers. This approach creates opportunities for SMEs and VCSEs to contribute meaningfully within a coordinated network.
28. Providers have proposed social value initiatives such as paid apprenticeships for residents with lived experience, student placements, and community outreach, which promote local workforce development and inclusion. As well as free workshops and peer advocacy support for unpaid carers to build advocacy skills. Embedding equity in staffing and governance ensures services reflect the borough's diversity, while insights from advocacy work can inform wider service improvements. Overall, the contract supports long-term community investment, empowerment, and better outcomes for residents.

Lot Considerations

29. The contract is not being split into lots because the recommended proposed model already enables multiple providers, including SMEs and VCSEs, to contribute meaningfully within a coordinated framework. By commissioning a lead provider to work with specialist delivery partners, the Council ensures diversity in service provision without the administrative complexity and financial inefficiencies that can arise from managing multiple separate lots. This

approach supports market inclusivity, maintains service integration, and allows for flexible responses to emerging advocacy needs.

People Based Considerations

30. The Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulation 2006 (UKSI 2006/246) (TUPE) is applicable to this contract.

Risk Assessment and Proposed Mitigations

Key Risks	Mitigations
Short timeframe delaying procurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Implement a clear timeline with responsible officers including contingencies for potential delays
Issues arising from transition to new provider including service quality, TUPE issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create a detailed transitions plan with clear timelines, responsible officers and contingencies to ensure service continuity.• Keep all stakeholder engaged with TUPE process and ensure minimum 30-day TUPE period.• Establish service level agreements with the new provider to maintain service quality
Market engagement and supplier interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conduct market research and engage with potential supplier before going out to tender.• Sub-contracting or joint work with local organisation built into the spec so that contract isn't monopolised by larger providers

Contract Duration Considerations

31. The Contract will run for a maximum of 48 (forty-eight) Months, with the option for 2 (two) further 12 (twelve) Month extensions, in essence a maximum 72 (seventy-two) Month Contract.
32. A longer contract term provides stability for providers, allowing sufficient time to embed collaborative structures, build capacity across the network, and deliver sustained outcomes for residents. It also supports continuity of service for vulnerable individuals who rely on long-term advocacy support. The extension option offers flexibility to respond to changing needs or policy developments without immediate re-procurement. Given the limited provider market and the lead-in time required for market engagement, mobilisation, and service transformation, this duration ensures value for money and reduces disruption to service users.

Timetable

33. Please include an estimated timetable of the competition process through to contract commencing.

Action	Date
1. Key Decision Entry (Strategy)	06/06/25
2. Contracts Assurance Board (Strategy)	20/08/25
3. SLT/Cabinet Member/Cabinet Sign off (Strategy)	01/09/25
4. Preliminary Market Engagement Notice	04/07/25
5. Tender Notice	08/09/25
6. Closing Date for Clarifications	29/09/25
7. Closing Date for Procurement Responses	09/10/25
8. Evaluation of Procurement Responses	26/10/25
9. Moderation	07/11/25
10. Award Recommendation Report	21/11/25
11. SLT/Cabinet Member (Award)	25/11/25
12. CAB (Award)	26/11/25
13. Key Decision Entry (Award)	06/06/25
14. Assessment Summaries	26/11/25
15. Contract Award Notice	26/11/25
16. Standstill Period Ends	09/12/25
17. Contract Engrossment	15/12/25
18. Contract Detail Notice	16/12/25
19. Contract Mobilisation and Implementation	05/01/26
20. Contract Commencement Date	01/04/2026

Selection and Award Criteria

34. The evaluation of quality of this procurement will be based on the written responses of tenderers to a series of questions about the delivery of the service specification. There will be a Tender Appraisal Panel (TAP) made up of council staff and residents with lived experience of care services.

35. The quality/price ratio will be 60 quality 40 price, prioritising high-quality service delivery while being cost-effectiveness. There will be a number of questions in the technical envelope worth a weighted score. The questions will be based on the requirements for the service set out in the service specification including:
- Service Structure and Work Practice
 - Mobilisation
 - Service Pathway
 - Service Delivery
 - Working in Partnership
 - Data Recording and Reporting
 - Recruitment and Retention
 - Independent Service
36. The commercial envelope will be evaluated on a bid-as-submitted basis. Suppliers will be invited to submit their own pricing proposals as part of their tender. Bids that demonstrate clear value for money, alignment with the specification, and a commercially sustainable offer will be considered most competitive.
37. In line with the Council's Added Value Policy and Sourcing Strategy, this procurement will dedicate 20% of the quality envelope weighting to Added Value.

Contract Management

38. This contract will be monitored through contract monitoring meetings by the Council's Adults Social Care Commissioning Programme Lead and Contract Monitoring Officer for Advocacy Services. The provider will attend a service review meeting with the relevant persons on a quarterly basis.
39. The Council will also use a variety of methods to assess the quality and performance of the Service being delivered to People who use the Services in relation to meeting their outcomes. These will include (but not be limited to) the following:
- Feedback from residents, their carers and experts by experience involved in the co-design, co-planning, co-delivery and co-evaluation of the Service
 - Feedback from residents who use the services and/or their carers on the standards of Service being provided
 - Feedback from Council officers reviewing whether the Service is meeting the assessed needs of residents who use the Service and meeting their outcomes in the best possible way
 - Feedback from partners across health and social care reviewing referral processes and their experiences of partnership working with the Service Provider
 - Systematic monitoring of the Service Provider by the Council, in order to evaluate and record the Service delivered against the Specification
 - Consulting with residents who use the Services and/or their representatives
 - Investigating complaints and / or safeguarding instances
 - Reviewing Service Provider Periodic Information Return

- Reviewing written procedures and records for both People who use the Services and Staff
 - Reviewing the outcome of the Service Provider's quality assurance processes and Service improvement plans, as set out in its annual report
 - 'Mystery Shopping'.
40. Annual uplifts will be reviewed and agreed by and at the discretion of the local authority.

Equality and Inclusion Implications

41. The new service model aims to promote greater equity and inclusion by ensuring that individuals with protected characteristics can access advocacy support more easily and effectively. Through inclusive design, improved accessibility, and a focus on person-centred delivery, the service will better meet diverse needs and reduce barriers to engagement
42. The EIA assessment is contained in the Exempt Appendix 3.

Verified by Strategic Lead for EDI, Yvonne Okiyo, date signed

Risk Management Implications

43. The report recommends the procurement strategy to award contracts for advocacy services, which is in line with the objective of being ruthlessly financially efficient. This will enable the Council to discharge its statutory duties and will provide vulnerable individuals with the support of an independent advocate to ensure there are appropriate care and support arrangements in place to meet their needs, demonstrating the objective of being a compassionate council.

David Hughes, Director of Audit, Fraud, Risk and Insurance, 23 July 2025

Climate and Ecological Emergency Implications

44. The Council has committed to making the borough net zero carbon by 2030. It aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions throughout its supply chain by awarding contracts to suppliers with a track record of reducing carbon and commitments to doing so in the future, and by working with existing suppliers to reduce emissions. The successful provider will seek to reduce carbon emissions from their assets and operations, within the contract, in their back office and in their supply chain.
45. Council officers will work with the new provider during the mobilisation period to develop an action plan for the lifetime of the contract that will include reducing carbon emissions.
46. This award will have neutral implications. Advocates work face to face as well as remotely via telephones and use public transport when in the borough.

Charlotte Slaven, Head of Climate Strategy & Engagement, 24th July 2025.

Local Economy and Social Value Implications

47. In line with the Council's Added Value Policy and Sourcing Strategy, this procurement will dedicate 20% of the quality envelope weighting to Added Value.
48. On award of the contract(s), the commissioner will ensure that the Added Value commitment offered at tender stage is stated as a contractual output.
49. Our standard contracts include clauses which refer to penalties for non-delivery against social value commitments.
50. It is recommended the Social Value Officer and commissioner meet at each stage of this procurement to ensure that the Added Value received is aligned with the 3 categories within the Added Value strategy and the Added Value Matrix (Inclusive Economy, Happier and Kinder H&F, Responding to the Climate Emergency).
51. Social Value Portal will be used for evaluating the Added Value element of all tender submissions in compliance with the agreed corporate procurement approach. The commissioner will work closely with the Social Value Officer to ensure commitments are reported regularly on the Social Value Portal by their suppliers.

Harry Buck, Social Value Officer (Procurement), 23rd July 2025

Consultation

52. In July 2024 several activities took place inform advocacy services should be delivered through the recommission took place. Activities included:
 - a. Open day with current and potential advocacy suppliers
 - b. Questionnaire for current and potential advocacy suppliers
 - c. Feedback survey for service-users of commissioned advocacy services

Digital Services and Information Management Implications

53. IT Implications – No direct IT implications are considered to arise from this report. Should this not be the case, for example, by requiring new systems to be procured or existing systems to be modified, Digital services should be consulted.

54. Information Management (IM) Implications – A Data Privacy Impact Assessment (DPIA) will need to be completed to ensure all potential data protection risks arising from this proposal are properly assessed with mitigating actions agreed and implemented.
55. The preferred supplier is expected to have a Data Protection policy in place and all staff will be expected to have received Data Protection training.
56. Any contracts arising from this report will need to include the Council's data protection and processing schedule which is compliant with Data Protection law.
57. H&Fs approved cyber security clauses must be incorporated into all new and renewed contracts regardless of value, or framework. Legal advice should be sought on how to incorporate the cyber security clauses into agreements which do not use the Council's contract templates.

Implications completed by Cinar Altun, Strategy Lead – Digital Services – 18 August 2025