


<p style="text-align: center;">London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham</p> <p style="text-align: center;">CABINET</p> <p style="text-align: center;">16 JANUARY 2017</p>	
<p>COMMISSIONING HIGHER EDUCATION PARTNER FOR STEP-UP TO SOCIAL WORK PROGRAMME</p>	
<p>Report of the Cabinet Member for Children and Education - Councillor Sue Macmillan</p>	
<p>Open Report</p>	
<p>Classification - For Decision</p> <p>Key Decision: Yes</p>	
<p>Wards Affected: None</p>	
<p>Accountable Director: Steve Miley, Director of Family Services and Rachael Wright-Turner, Director of Commissioning</p>	
<p>Report Author: Steve Comber, Strategic Commissioner</p>	<p>Contact Details: E-mail: steve.comber@rbkc.gov.uk</p>

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report seeks approval for the procurement strategy to commission a Higher Education Partner to deliver the educational elements of the “Step Up to Social Work” Programme, in partnership with eight local authorities in West London.
- 1.2 Fully funded by central Government via a grant from the Department for Education, this innovative programme seeks to train children’s social workers so that, at the end of the course, they gain a Post-Graduate Diploma with the opportunity to obtain credits towards a Master’s degree in Social Work; the objective being that participating local authorities will be better able to attract and retain well-qualified children’s social workers at a time when this is proving difficult nationally.
- 1.3 In August 2011, The Council awarded a contract to the University of Hertfordshire for a period of two years, up until August 2013. The contract

was extendable at the absolute discretion of the Council by further periods or period to give a potential contract duration of up to six years.

- 1.4 This period is due to expire in August 2017 and, in order to continue delivery of the programme for the fifth cohort (due to start in January 2018), a recommissioning process is required.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the procurement strategy, be approved.
- 2.2 That delegated authority be granted to the Director of Family Services and Director of Commissioning in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children and Education to award a six-year contract to a Higher Education Institution with a total value of c.£1,100,000 (c.£380,000 for each of the three potential cohorts).
- 2.2 To note that this contract will be let by Hammersmith and Fulham Council and will include break clauses at two-year intervals. The contract will only continue on the basis of satisfactory performance by the Provider and continued funding from the Department for Education.

3 REASONS FOR DECISION

- 3.1 The overall value of the proposed tender, which will be led by Hammersmith and Fulham Council, meets the thresholds for authorisation by the following decision making bodies as a Key Decision:
- Children's Services Contracts and Commissioning Board (approval received on 19 October 2016)
 - Cabinet

4 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Hammersmith and Fulham is the lead borough for the delivery of the Step Up to Social Work programme on behalf of the eight West London Alliance authorities listed below:
- Brent
 - Ealing
 - Hammersmith & Fulham (lead borough)
 - Harrow
 - Hillingdon
 - Hounslow
 - Kensington and Chelsea
 - Westminster

- 4.2 In 2011 Hammersmith and Fulham competitively tendered a contract for a higher education institution to develop and deliver the “Step-Up” programme on behalf of a West London Alliance).
- 4.3 In August 2011, The Council awarded a contract to the University of Hertfordshire for a period of two years, up until August 2013. The contract was extendable at the absolute discretion of the Council by further periods to give a potential contract duration of up to six years.
- 4.4 This period is due to expire in August 2017 and, in order to continue delivery of the programme for the fifth cohort (due to start in January 2018), a recommissioning process is required.

The Step-up programme

- 4.5 As with every other London authority the eight boroughs within the West London Alliance have experienced difficulties in the recruitment and retention of children's social workers.
- 4.6 Funded by DfE, the Step-up programme is a 14-month Post Graduate Diploma in Social Work with the option to top up to a Master's Degree, which has been specifically designed as an innovative way to train social workers. The programme has significantly greater employer input into the course design and content in comparison with other qualifying social work programmes. Students are contracted to work with their host authority and upon successful completion of the course will be expected to continue their employment for two years with the Council they are paired with.
- 4.7 Across the West London Alliance, there have been four Step-up cohorts comprising of 126 trainees overall, 33 of which are due to complete the programme in June 2017.

Cohort	Number of students	Date
Cohort 1	33	2011
Cohort 2	27	2013
Cohort 3	33	2015
Cohort 4	33	2017

- 4.8 Of the 13 students who have completed the course in either cohort 1, 2 or 3 in Hammersmith and Fulham, 12 are still registered social workers and two thirds are still working in the borough. A further five Hammersmith and Fulham students are due to complete in August 2017.
- 4.9 Reports of the performance of Step-up graduates are extremely positive and it is considered that they are better prepared for frontline social work in comparison with newly-qualified social workers from traditional routes. Of those graduates from cohorts 1, 2 and 3 that are still working in the Hammersmith and Fulham, 50% have been promoted into Senior Social Worker roles.

- 4.10 The programme has also been validated nationally. The review of social work education commissioned by the DfE views the programme very highly, as does the first national evaluation of the programme completed in June 2013 by Baginsky and Teague.

Continued funding

- 4.11 On 4 July 2016, the Department for Education (DfE) announced their continued support of fast-track programmes, including Step Up, for a further two years as part of the Social Work Reform agenda. A bid for continued funding now needs to be produced by the West London Alliance and the deadline for submitting this is 16 December 2016.
- 4.12 We expect to know the results of this bid by mid-to-late-January, and the completion of any procurement process will be dependent on the success of this.

5 PROPOSAL AND ISSUES

Overarching proposal

- 5.1 The contract will be let to an appropriate education provider to deliver a Step Up to Social Work Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) validated 16-month programme to around 30-35 students.
- 5.2 The contract is to be let by Hammersmith and Fulham Council on behalf of the West London Alliance. The contract will commence on or around mid-May 2017 and will run for six-years, until August 2023 (the 'Contract Period'). The contract will have break clauses at two-year intervals. The continuation of the contract following each two-year period will be at the absolute discretion of the Council and will be dependent on:
- a) continued funding of the programme by the DfE
 - b) satisfactory performance by the provider. This will be monitored via regular contract management meetings and demonstrated via a report to be produced at the end of each cohort.
- 5.3 This approach means that, if and when further funding is obtained from the DfE, the process to extend the contract to deliver the programme to further cohorts will be more efficient.

Funding the programme

- 5.4 The procurement will only take place if the West London Alliance is successful in its bid for further funding from the DfE to implement Cohort 5.
- 5.5 The bid for this will be submitted to the DfE on 16 December 2016 and the outcome will be known by mid-to-late January 2017.

Market engagement

- 5.6 A market warming event was held at Kensington Town Hall on 27 July 2016 and was attended by representatives from various Higher Education Providers.
- 5.7 The event was positive and it is considered that the providers in attendance are likely to submit a bid. Furthermore, there are other providers who have declared an interest but were unable to attend on the day and are also likely to submit a bid.

Developing the specification

- 5.8 The commissioning team have met with the Step-up steering group to present discuss improvements that could be made to the programme, which can be incorporated into the specification. Furthermore, the findings from the market engagement event have also been used to develop the specification.

Meeting the deadlines for Cohort 5

- 5.9 In order to deliver Cohort 5, the provider will need to be in place by 5 June 2017, so that they can support the assessment centres that take place in mid-June.
- 5.10 The milestones required to meet this deadline are outlined in the project plan at appendix 1.

6 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The successful Higher Education Institution will assess student suitability for the programme, in partnership with the WLA Steering Group members, taking into account its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 for all protected characteristics.

7 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no legal implications to the proposed recommendation of the procurement strategy (the “Strategy”) under this report. It is noted that a Prior Information Notice (the “PIN”) has been issued in respect to the Strategy. Therefore, Council should publish the advertising Contract Notice in the Official Journal of European Union within twelve (12) months to the PIN being issued in accordance with Regulation 48 of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (the “Regulations”).
- 7.2 A preliminary market consultation has been undertaken to assist the planning and conduct of the Strategy. In the circumstances it is important that the chosen procedure followed will not have the effect of distorting competition so the Council does not fall foul of Regulation 18 of the Regulations.

Legal comments provided by: Sharon Cudjoe, Solicitor – 020 7361 2993
(17 October 2016)

8 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Hammersmith and Fulham Council has previously tendered the HEI contract, on behalf of the 8 boroughs that make up the West London Alliance. The new contract is to be let the Council on behalf of the WLA and the expectation is that the “Step Up to Social Work” Programme will be fully funded, by central Government, via a grant from the Department for Education. Hammersmith and Fulham Council will receive and administer this grant on behalf of the WLA. The Assistant Directors Project Board will oversee the running of the programme and they will receive regular updates from the programme manager, who has direct oversight of the programme budget.
- 8.2 It is important to note that across Hammersmith and Fulham, Kensington and Chelsea and Westminster there is no dedicated general fund available to cover expenditure related to the Step Up to Social Work programme. Costs incurred over and above the allocated grant funding amount, will result in pressure on Family services budgets. It is therefore essential that the programme spend does not exceed the allocated grant funding available and that procurement will not go ahead if the DfE withholds grant funding.

Finance comments provided by: Lize Ferreira, Finance Officer, Children’s Services

9 PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 To judge from past performance, the rationale and solution offered by the Step Up programme would appear to answer the need across London boroughs to recruit and retain well trained and experienced social workers for children’s services. This experience informs the decision to bid for further Department for Education (DfE) funding and to procure a new Higher Education Institution (HEI) provider to carry forward the programme in the 2017/18 academic year and beyond. The Lead Commissioner and Programme Manager have assembled a detailed project plan and made an early start by publishing a Prior Information Notice (PIN) to make known the contracting authorities’ intention for the planned procurement and to extend an invitation to interested parties to a market engagement event.
- 9.2 The PIN was a good start but there are compelling reasons to extend the remit further now: HEIs, like local government, are more usually buyers of goods and services than suppliers. For them, the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU) may not be the most obvious place to search for funding opportunities.

- 9.3 Following the market event, just six HEI providers are thought likely to submit a tender. Experience shows, however, that initial expressions of interest do not necessarily translate into bids – and, of those returned, there is inevitably some “wastage”: those that are deemed incomplete or non-compliant and have to be disqualified. Whilst there is no minimum prescribed for the number of qualified candidates who may participate in an Open procedure, a strong field of contenders gives stakeholders and the DfE the confidence of a genuine competition insofar as there are enough tenders and qualified candidates to ensure a robust selection process.
- 9.4 It is worth considering a mini direct mail campaign in the form of a monthly letter between now and late January 2017 when the funding decision will be made. [There are already resources in place to construct a bespoke mailing list.] It needs only be an update with brief highlights of new developments to maintain the momentum and interest for those already familiar with the programme, and engage others who might not have been aware but may be encouraged to bid.
- 9.5 It would also suit present purposes to adopt a more flexible approach towards the provision of classroom venues. London is well-served by public transport and the cohorts have historically been quite small; for a non-London HEI provider, the problem of providing a central learning location could be overcome if just one or two of the participating councils can licence a suitably-sized room to the provider for use during term time. The advantages are obvious: it will help the HEI provider to conserve grant monies that could be better deployed elsewhere – and encourage out-of-London providers, who might otherwise have been put off by the need to find and fund a London venue, to tender for the contract. Bear in mind as well that, from a procurement perspective, the bidding criterion for a central London location could be seen to be artificially narrowing the competition which is illegal.

Procurement comments provided by: Oluwakemi Ore, Procurement Officer, Children’s Services.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000
LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS USED IN PREPARING THIS REPORT

No.	Description of Background Papers	Name/Ext of holder of file/copy	Department/ Location
1.	None		

LIST OF APPENDICES:

Appendix 1 Project Plan

APPENDIX 1 – PROJECT PLAN

Timescales		Commissioning and Procurement Activities	Local Authority Governance	Step-Up Activities
Start	End			
July 2016		Notify legal		
July 2016		Publish Prior Information Notice (PIN)		
July 2016	August 2016	Conduct market engagement activity		
July 2016	September 2016	Drafting of COCO Commissioning Strategy		
wb 12 September 2016		Commence additional market engagement activity		
20 September 2016				Discussion with WLA members at Steering Group - developing specification

07 October 2016	Deadline for COCO Commissioning Strategy to be sent to Finance and legal		
11 October 2016	Market Engagement Event 2		
04 November 2016	Councillor Briefing		
12 December 2016	Receipt of final specification and technical questions by Procurement Team		
16 December 2016			Deadline for bid to be provided to DfE
03 January 2017		Deadline for submission to LBHF Cabinet	
16 January 2017		LBHF Cabinet	

18 January 2017	Send procurement information to TED		
27 January 2017 (tbc)			Announcement from DfE re. funding
January- May 2017			Step Up national and local advertising
25 January 2017	OJEU notice published		
27 January 2017	Launch Procurement (Issue ITT)		
13 February 2017	Register all evaluators on CapE		
27 February 2016 (tbc)	Receive tenders		

27 February 2017	10 March 2017	Evaluate tenders and moderation meeting		
13 - 16 March 2017		Draft Award Report		
Mid-March 2017				Step Up application form goes live
28 March 2017			LBHF Cabinet Member Sign-off	
07 April 2017	12 April 2017	5 day call-in period following Cabinet approval		
13 April 2017		Issue notification of decision and standstill period & debrief bidders		

14 April 2017	24 April 2017	Observe 10-day EU Standstill period		
25 April 2017		Issue letter of acceptance		
26 April 2017	05 May 2017	Sign contract		
Mid May 2017				Step Up application window closes
08 May 2017	02 June 2017	Development, Mobilisation and Transition		
21 May 2017		Deadline for issuing Contract Award Notice		
May - June 2017				Shortlisting undertaken with HEI

05 June 2017	Contract Commencement		
Mid June - Mid July			Assessment Centres
01 January 2018			Cohort 5 starts