



# Cabinet

21 MARCH 2011

**CABINET MEMBER  
FOR CHILDREN'S  
SERVICES**

*Councillor Helen  
Binmore*

**CONNEXIONS SERVICE ARRANGEMENTS**

Connexions is a statutory service that provides information, advice and guidance about career and education opportunities for all young people aged 13 to 19 years. Approval is sought to enter into a one year contract to provide a transitional service that will meet the statutory requirements and deliver savings of 32%.

**Wards:  
All**

A separate report on the exempt part of the agenda provides exempt information about the options for and costs of continuing to provide the Connexions service and recommending the preferred option, the supplier of the service and the total cost.

**CONTRIBUTORS**

CHS  
DFCS  
ADLDS

**Recommendations:**

- 1. That authority be delegated to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services in conjunction with the Director of Children's Services to finalise the terms of the contract for the Connexions Service.**
- 2. That the Council's Contracts Standing Orders be waived in accordance with section 1 of this report.**

**HAS A EIA BEEN  
COMPLETED?  
YES**

**HAS THE REPORT  
CONTENT BEEN RISK  
ASSESSED?**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Connexions is a statutory service that provides information, advice and guidance about career and education opportunities for all young people aged 13 to 19 years.
- 1.2 The current contract for the universal service expires on the 31 March 2011. The uncertainty about the future funding and policy direction for this provision in the later half of 2010 meant that it was not possible to invite tenders for the service. Approval is therefore sought to provide a transitional service that will meet the minimum statutory requirements and deliver savings of 32%.
- 1.3 This course of action requires the granting of a waiver to the Council's Contract Standing Orders which requires a minimum of five (5) tenders to be sought for new contracts valued in excess of £100,000. Paragraph 3.3 of the Standing Orders provides for a waiver to be approved where circumstances are genuinely exceptional. Whilst normal procurement practice would be to tender a new contract in advance of the expiry date of the current one, this is outweighed by the uncertain circumstances and the need to maintain a statutory service.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham currently commissions CfBT Advice and Guidance Limited ("CfBT") to provide universal Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) services to all 13-19 year olds (or up to 24 if young people have learning difficulty or disability) learning and living in the borough. This includes careers advice, job/training placement service which is school and community based, tracking of all young people, services for young people who are not in education training or employment (NEET) and management of the Connexions One Stop Shop on King Street, W6. This contract has an annual value of £880,860 and expires on March 31<sup>st</sup> 2011. The service has been successful in reducing the proportion of local young people who are NEET each year. The current figure is 5.6% or 165 young people against a target of 6.5%.
- 2.2 In 2010 officers were working with other local authorities to scope a joint tendering process to achieve a 25% saving on cost through a new contract. During this period however, there were national policy announcements indicating that the Government intended to remove the duty on local authorities to provide universal provision and to replace the Connexions service with an All-age Careers Service phased in from September 2011.
- 2.3 This comprehensive service has yet to be identified, the local authority retains statutory responsibility. Connexions and funding has been included in the Early Intervention grant.
- 2.4 A decision was taken to suspend the planned tendering process until there was clarity about funding and timescales for the new arrangements.

Discussions began with the existing provider around the possibility of a short term contract to provide a transitional service to ensure that between April 2011 and March 2012 statutory responsibilities are fulfilled.

### **3. NEW STATUTORY ARRANGEMENTS**

- 3.1 The Education Bill, published on 26 January, will when in force change the duties on schools and local authorities. Community schools will have a duty to secure independent careers advice and guidance for all pupils in full time education, removing the duty and funding from local authorities.
- 3.2 Local authorities will continue to have a duty to ensure support is provided to the most vulnerable groups and to support them into education, employment or training. Local authorities will also continue to be responsible for maintaining accurate data on young people, using the Connexions Client Information Service (CCIS) database.
- 3.3 Local authorities retain current duties until such a time as responsibilities transfer in accordance with the change in legislation. It is anticipated that the proposed changes will begin to be phased in from September 2011 with information provided through a website but it is unlikely that the face to face all-age service and statutory responsibility for schools will be fully operational until April 2012.
- 3.4 We have confirmed with other authorities that most are in the process of putting in place similar transitional provision, either through a short term contract or by bringing the service in-house. We are aware that some authorities have been considering removing all of the funding as part of their savings. The legal advice is that authorities must meet their duties as failure to do so will leave the Authority vulnerable to legal challenge.
- 3.5 In light of this information officers have identified the core elements of a transitional service that will meet the requirements of the statutory duty and the options for delivery between April 2011 and March 2012.

### **4. CORE ELEMENTS OF TRANSITIONAL SERVICE**

- 4.1 Services to young people:
  - Providing generic careers information, advice and guidance on making learning and career choices to individuals and groups in schools with a focus on year 11 transition;
  - Contributing to the Year 9 review of all young people with a statement of education need and learning difficulty in schools;

- Supporting young people with learning difficulties and disabilities including the completion of Section 139A assessment and reports for leavers with statements (and school action plus);
- Ensuring all parents and carers of young people requiring a Section 139A assessment receive appropriate information and advice linking into home/work agreements with the Connexions service for out of area young people;
- Providing access to support and resources, materials and referral to learning and employment opportunities to all young people 13-19, including access to jobs and apprenticeships;
- Identifying annually the intended destination for all students in Year 11 in December and provide additional support for those at risk of not making a successful transition; and
- Ensuring Y11 and Y12 leavers have an offer of learning through the September Guarantee.

#### 4.2 Data and tracking:

- Tracking and recording the status of all young people 13-19, in line with national Connexions MI/CCIS requirements;
- Identifying what each student in his or her final year is planning to do at the end of the academic year. Tracking all students with no known intended destination over the summer and provide additional support to those who may not engage in further education, employment or training, ensuring they are aware of the availability of adult guidance service from their 20<sup>th</sup> birthday;
- Identifying those young people who are at risk of becoming NEET at the end of year 11 and 12 at the beginning of the Spring term and put in place arrangements to follow up this group during the period between May and September in order to ensure that they enter education, training or employment; and
- Tracking the current status of all 16-19 year olds using national Connexions management information guidelines and currency rules, drawing on information from other Connexions service delivery organisations in H&F as appropriate.

4.3 In order to maintain the core elements of the service, the intensive service for those not in education training or employment which is currently provided in-house will continue to be delivered directly through the Locality Teams. There is also a need to continue to provide the universal service to schools and in the local community. However the current model for delivering this will be revised to achieve a saving on cost. Maintaining the current level of delivery through the summer term, will ensure an appropriate level of service to ensure that all Year 11 and 12 leavers have an offer of continued learning

and make a successful transition to further education or employment. Elements of the service will then be reduced for the period between September and March 2012 in line with the levels of need and the introduction of the first phase of the new 'all age service' and savings of £288K will be made. The level of service for young people with SEN will be maintained at the same level across the year.

## **5. OPTIONS FOR SECURING THE SERVICE**

- 5.1 Three options were considered for maintaining the service, as set out in the separate report on the exempt part of the Cabinet agenda.

## **6. RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 6.1. Provision of this service is not included on the departmental or corporate risk registers.

## **7. COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND CORPORATE SERVICES**

- 7.1. Due to the uncertain funding arrangements for 2011-12 and the future nature for the service, the Council was unable to procure the provision of this service through normal means. Given the size of the proposed contract, a waiver from Council's Contracts Standing Orders is requested.
- 7.2 Other comments are in the separate report on the exempt part of the agenda.

## **8. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 An EIA has been completed (available on request)

## **9. COMMENTS OF THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (LEGAL AND DEMOCRATIC SERVICES)**

- 9.1 The services described in this report are classified as Part B services under the Public Contracts Regulations 2006. They are therefore not subject to the full regime of the procurement rules set out by these Regulations. However, in the procurement of these services the Council is still bound by the EU Treaty principles of transparency, non-discrimination and proportionality. It is also good practice to comply with the procurement rules set out in the Regulations in respect of all procurements carried out by the Council.

- 9.2 Failure to comply with EU procurement rules can put the Council at risk of challenge being brought by contractors who consider they have been denied the opportunity to tender for a contract.
- 9.3 The current contract for the Connexions service expires on 31 March 2011. Under EU procurement rules and principles, save in exceptional and limited circumstances, the award of a new contract should be carried out following a competitive procurement process.
- 9.4 Other comments are in the separate report on the exempt part of the agenda.

## **10. COMMENTS OF THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR PROCUREMENT**

- 10.1 The proposed contract is not subject to the full provisions of the Public Contracts Regulations as it is defined as an Annex IB Service (the only requirement is to send to the publications office of the Official Journal of the European Union a contract award notice setting out details of the contract award).
- 10.2 Other comments are in the separate report on the exempt part of the agenda.

### **LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2000** **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Description of Background Papers</b>	<b>Name/Ext of holder of file/copy</b>	<b>Department/ Location</b>
1.	Project file	Jo Kendall x6217	CHS/HTHX
2.			
<b>CONTACT OFFICER:</b>		<b>NAME: Jo Kendall</b> <b>EXT. 6217</b>	