

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – RECORD OF OFFICER DECISION

Executive

DECISION TAKEN BY:

Dr Anjan Ghosh, Director of Public Health

DECISION NO:

To be completed by
Democratic Services

For publication

Subject matter:

Children and Young People's Therapeutic Support Service – Approval of Contract Award

Cabinet Member decision to which this action relates:

[25/00011](#)- Public Health Service Transformation Programme – Children & Young People (CYP)
5 to 19 years services recommission

Decision:

As Director of Public Health, I agree to:

- I. **APPROVE** the Contract Award of the Children and Young People's Therapeutic Support Service (CN250246) to Project Salus CIC, following a competitive procurement process conducted under the Provider Selection Regime (PSR), anticipated with effect from 12 September 2025 until 31 March 2031 with option to extend for a further 5 years (until 31 March 2036).

Reason(s) for decision:

The Kent Health Needs Assessment for 5-11 year olds (August 2024) recognised “an amplification of emotional and mental health needs”, reflecting the national picture, and underlined the importance of preventative and early intervention approaches among children and young people.

KCC have invested in supporting children and young people's emotional wellbeing for many years through a variety of internal and externally-commissioned services and resources. Since 2017, this has included Public Health funding for the Children and Young People's Counselling Service, delivered by Kent Community Health Foundation Trust (KCHFT) as part of the Kent School Public Health Service contract.

A Key Decision was taken in March 2025 to approve amendments to the Kent School Public Health Service Specification, including the removal of the Children and Young People's Counselling Service (ending March 2026) and the commissioning of a new Therapeutic Support Service to support children and young people with mild-to-moderate emotional and mental health needs (aged between school entry in Reception up to 19 years old).

This decision is linked to a refreshed, system-wide approach which is underway in Kent to deliver high quality, responsive and better connected emotional wellbeing and mental health support for children and young people. The Therapeutic Support Service is proposed as a key element within this new approach, and is designed to complement services being commissioned by NHS Kent and

Medway which will bring together specialist, education-based and therapeutic support. The new service will be aligned specifically with the Therapeutic Alliance model being procured by NHS Kent and Medway. It will be delivered as part of the Family Hub network, with referrals expected to be taken from November 2025 as part of a phased mobilisation.

The Record of Decision ([25/00011](#)) featured the following delegations:

IV. **DELEGATE** authority to the Director of Public Health, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health to implement the changes to the Kent School Public Health Service and undertake the required activity to establish a new standalone Therapeutic support service.

V. **DELEGATE** authority to the Director of Public Health, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health, to exercise relevant contract extensions and enter into relevant contracts or legal agreements; and

VI. **DELEGATE** authority to the Director of Public Health, to take other necessary actions, including but not limited to allocating resources, expenditure, and entering into contracts and other legal agreements, as required to implement the decision.

This Officer Decision confirms the conclusion of a competitive procurement process, conducted under the Provider Selection Regime, to enact the above Decision and to award the contract for the Children and Young People's Therapeutic Support Service to Project Salus CIC.

Financial Implications:

Funding for these contracts would be funded entirely from the Public Health Grant.

The total maximum value of the contract, including extensions, is **£12,064,736** (based on the tender submitted by the preferred bidder). This equates to an annual value of approximately **£1,066,204**. The annual price is subject to a 2% price increase year-on-year.

Legal implications:

The procurement of this service took place under the PSR, introduced under the Health and Care Act 2022. External legal advice was sought to ensure a compliant process and to support in creating the tender pack. Legal advice was also sought prior to the tender process commencing in relation to understanding potential TUPE implications and KCC's duties.

Prior to the Key Decision being taken in March 2025, advice was also taken from Democratic Services and a [Public Consultation](#) was run (from 25 September 2024 to 12 November 2025), since it was recognised that the proposal to commission a Therapeutic Support Service in place of the Children and Young People's Counselling Service represented a significant change to service delivery. A post-consultation report and You Said, We Did Report was used to inform the development of the specification for the new service and was published alongside the Key Decision papers.

Equality Implications:

An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed and was published as part of the Key Decision and post-Consultation Report. A number of positive impacts were identified, including the opportunity to develop flexible support that is sensitive to children and young people's age, gender and other protected characteristics and supports their emotional wellbeing and mental health. Some

potential negative implications were also identified across a number of protected characteristics, if the service model and interventions were not designed or delivered in an inclusive way.

A number of mitigating actions were therefore set out within the EQIA to inform the development of the Service Specification and wider procurement process. This included placing specific requirements on the provider to ensure a range of flexible and adaptable 1:1 and group-based activities, interventions and delivery methods that would be inclusive and appropriate to children and young people of different ages, sex, disability, gender identity, race, religion and beliefs, as well as pregnancy and maternity (including young parents) and carers. As part of the requirements in the Specification, the provider will develop bespoke support plans with individual children and young people that reflect their needs, goals and preferences, identifying any potential barriers to engagement and working with families to address them.

The provider is also required to carry out bi-annual equity audits as part of contractual obligations.

Data Protection Implications

The contract documentation covers the UK General Data Protection Regulations and there is a Data Protection and Processing Schedule, confirming that KCC will be the Data Controller and the provider will act as a Data Processor under the contract terms. A Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) Screening has been undertaken, and will be developed into a full DPIA in collaboration with the provider during the mobilisation period.

Comments received from any Members or Officers consulted:

The proposed decision was discussed at the Health Reform and Public Health Cabinet Committee on 11 March 2025 and the recommendations were endorsed.

An introductory briefing from Integrated Commissioning was given to new Members on 12 June 2025 which included a concise overview of the proposed changes and commissioning of the new Therapeutic Support Service, as well as a more detailed presentation to Members on Mental Health delivered by Public Health colleagues on 18 July 2025.

The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health commented: “I endorse the decision to award the Children and Young People’s Therapeutic Support Service the identified provider, in order to ensure positive emotional wellbeing remains a priority for people growing up in Kent”.

Any alternatives considered and rejected:

The following alternative options were explored as part of an options appraisal:

Option 1: (No Change / Direct Award under PSR Route C): *Continue to commission the current provider to deliver the CYP Counselling Service through the School Public Health Service with existing KPIs and investment.* The current contract is due to end on 31 March 2026 meaning no action was not an option: a decision was needed regarding whether to discontinue, re-tender, or potentially directly award a contract to the current provider through the Partnership Agreement using PSR Direct Award C. Feedback from children and young people had indicated a need for more responsive and flexible services, with a greater degree of choice and opportunity for peer support. In addition, the current service was experiencing exponential increases in the waiting times, and was not aligned to the new Family Hub model or Therapeutic Alliance model being procured by NHS Kent and Medway from 26/27 onwards. The option to Direct Award was therefore discounted.

Option 2: (Discontinue): End the service to align with end of the KCHFT co-operation agreement on 01 April 2026 without commissioning an alternative offer. This option was discounted due to the potential gap in support for children and young people experiencing mild to moderate emotional wellbeing needs from 01 April 2026, resulting in potential increased pressure on specialist children's mental health services as well as impacts on education (including attendance), Early Help and Integrated Children's Services.

Option 3: Joint Commissioning a new Therapeutic Support offer with NHS Kent and Medway: this option was carefully explored as it did present potential opportunities to add value across the two proposed commissions from both partners, but was ultimately discounted due to differing proposed contract lengths, governance and procurement timelines.

Any conflict of interest declared by any executive member consulted by the decision maker and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer:

None.



signed

1 August 2025

date