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To: Cabinet - 17 September 2007

Subject: CONTRACT FOR THE CONNEXIONS SERVICE'S PREFERRED SUPPLIER

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: The purpose of this paper is to report on progress of the transition of Connexions funding and associated responsibility to the Local Authority and the next steps in contracting the preferred supplier. The Connexions Board will need to agree in principle the draft contract, specification and funding by the end of September in order to achieve continuity of service and meet the nationally required date. A paper on these topics will be made available to Kent Children's Trust at its next meeting in October.

Background

1. On 16 July 2007 Cabinet agreed that:-
 - (a) a tendering process could not be completed in time to achieve national deadlines;
 - (b) existing provision should be sustained in the short term in the interest of achieving key objectives and targets;
 - (c) Connexions Kent & Medway Partnership will become the preferred supplier with an offer of a two-year contract from April 2008. This offer to allow change in the first year within existing staffing as may be agreed and with further planned graduated change in line with KCC's overall policy objectives within the second year.
 - (d) The Strategic Group should plan for market testing of services in the medium and long term to ensure close alignment with KCC priorities, the Integrated Youth Services Strategy and the Children and Young People's Plan.

Indicative Funding

2. (1) The Connexions grant for Kent in 2006-07 was £11,490,806. The illustrative Connexions grant for 2008-09 sees an increase to £11,743,353 without damping and £11,774,635 with damping.

(2) The actual allocation will be announced in early December 2007. The new formula is based on resident population; student population; young people in secure

homes, training centres and young offender institutions; non-education achievement (Key Stages 2, 3 and 4); NEET population and multi-deprivation indices.

(3) Connexions Kent and Medway has applied for registration as a registered charity. It is anticipated that the process will take approximately eight weeks. This status would enable the Partnership to seek funding for the delivery of additional services for Kent, e.g. European Union Funding, as well as to seek other contracts.

Contract and Service Specification

3. (1) A contract and specification have been drafted subject to legal approval for later agreement by the Connexions Board. The contract (Appendix 1) is based on a standard Department for Children, Schools and Families' contract for Connexions services. Work by the Strategic Group to identify the resources required for KCC to monitor the contract's outcomes and quality of services is well advanced.

(2) The service specification (Appendix 2) is currently being finalised. The national specification for 2006-07 allows relatively little leeway in changing the offer to young people. Any changes anticipated in 2008-09 will focus predominantly on aspects related to developing Integrated Youth Support Services and local Children's Trust arrangements and delivering better outcomes. The contract and service specification will allow for more flexibility in service delivery in 2009-10.

(3) Services required from the new contract are still under discussion between agencies but are likely to include:-

- (a) the provision of information, advice, guidance and support to young people aged 13-19 (up to 25 for young people with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities (LDD) primarily focusing on education, employment and training matters;
- (b) providing support to young people to enter and remain in education, employment and training (EET), including acting as the lead agency for the achievement of the Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET) LAA/PSA target, and placing specific emphasis on supporting vulnerable groups of young people and/or groups who face particular barriers to entering and remaining in EET.
- (c) The provision of associated services to other stakeholders, for example, support to schools and parents'
- (d) The provision of supporting services and functions, for example, staff training and development.

Recommendation

4. The Cabinet is requested TO AGREE:

- (a) and note the progress made towards the transition of Connexions funding and responsibilities;
- (b) note the process for the development of the contract and service specification and the identification of key outcomes;
- (c) note the broad schedule of Connexions funding at 2.(1) in line with 2006-07 figures and priorities for additional funding;
- (d) note that work is proceeding to identify the resources required to monitor the contract and service specification;
- (e) delegate the final sign off for the contract and its specification to a senior officer in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Educational Achievement.

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Background Documents:

Report to Cabinet on *Connexions Transition* – 16 July 2007