

From: Peter Oakford, Cabinet Member for Specialist Children's Services

Andrew Ireland, Corporate Director, Social Care, Health and Wellbeing

**To: Children's Social Care & Health Cabinet Committee
9th July 2014**

Decision No: 14/00074

**Subject: Independent Adoption & Special Guardianship Order (SGO)
Support Services – Contract Award**

Classification: Unrestricted

**Past Pathway: Procurement Board – October 2013
DMT – April 2014**

Summary: Following an open and competitive tender process, we are now at a stage where a decision can be taken to award the contract for the delivery of Independent Adoption & Special Guardianship Order Support Services.

Recommendations: Members of the Children's Social Care & Health Committee are asked to endorse the proposed decision to be taken by the Cabinet Member for Specialist Children's Services.

The Cabinet Member for Children's Specialist Services will be asked to:

Agree that the contract for the delivery of Independent Adoption & SGO Support services across Kent (excluding Medway) be awarded on the terms and for the duration set out below and in the accompanying recommendation report and exempt appendix.

The Head of Strategic Commissioning - Children's, will on behalf of the Corporate Director of Social Care, Health and Wellbeing, take all such steps as are necessary to implement the decision.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 KCC's Independent Adoption & SGO Support services have been outsourced to an external provider for a number of years. The contract with the existing provider expires on 31st July 2014.
- 1.2 FSC DMT on 16th October 2013 gave authorisation to proceed with procuring a new contract.
- 1.3 The contract will be awarded for a term of 2 years with the option to extend for up to a further 2 years if required. The contract start date is 1st August 2014.
- 1.4 The recommendation is based on the results of the tender evaluation exercise carried out by Strategic Commissioning (Children's) during the period 31st March 2014 to 8th April 2014. The process sought to identify the organisation that has offered the Most Economically Advantageous Tender.
- 1.5 SCHWB DMT and the Corporate Director for Social Care, Health and Wellbeing have been consulted and confirm that the decision to award the contract based on recommendations in the Award Report (exempt Appendix 1) should be taken.

2. Procurement process

- 2.1 Analysis of the market demonstrated that there were a small number of suitable suppliers who are able to provide all the elements of the service. In addition, the procurement route allows for consortium bids and for small and medium sized organisations to tender.
- 2.2 Following the recommendation to Procurement Board in October 2013, it was agreed that a single supplier contract would be the most appropriate outcome. Further it was agreed that this would be delivered by carrying out a competitive procurement process with the open market, thus giving further opportunities to seek savings.
- 2.3 The Children's Commissioning Unit ran the procurement process with Strategic Procurement operating a quality assurance function.
- 2.4 The details of the outcome of the procurement process are given in the exempt Appendix 1.

3. Overview of service model

- 3.1 The Independent Adoption & SGO Support Services are available across the whole of the geographical area covered by Kent County Council. All local authorities are expected to offer these services and they are delivered according to a comprehensive legislative framework. The individual elements of the service are:-
- 3.2 **An independent support service to birth parents**

To provide a support and counselling service to birth parents prior to an adoption taking place, where a child is (or children are) looked after by Kent County Council and for whom adoption has been identified as the plan.

3.3 A service that provides access to birth records and intermediary services adult adoptees

To assist adopted persons either adopted through Kent County Council or who are resident in Kent, and who are aged 18 and over, to obtain information in relation to their adoption and to facilitate contact between such persons and their adult birth relatives

3.4 Intermediary service for birth relatives and access to information

To provide advice and support to birth relatives aged 18 and over, who require intermediary and counselling services and access to non-identifying information regarding their adoption

3.5 Contact services (direct contact and letterbox contact)

To provide a direct and indirect contact service for children under the age of 18 who have been adopted or who are the subject of a Special Guardianship Order and who have agreed contact with their birth relatives

4. Service Transition and Mobilisation

4.1 Service transition and mobilisation planning will be completed prior to the service commencing on 1st August 2014. This will be overseen by the Head of the Adoption Service but will be informed by representatives from the existing service provider and the prospective new provider. However, due to the available dates of the Children's Health and Social Care Cabinet Committee, and to ensure we give all Members the opportunity to be consulted, Strategic Commissioning are currently in negotiations with the existing service provider to extend the current contract until mid-September 2014.

5. Consultation and Communication

5.1 Representatives from a range of stakeholders including the current service provider, childcare teams, Adoption Service, IRO Service and Quality Assurance teams were approached to seek their views on the existing service model and to identify any improvements required, gaps in the existing provision and better ways of working between the Council and any external provider. All results were used to shape the new service.

6. Financial Implications

6.1 The current annual contract value for the Independent Adoption & SGO Support Services was £425,000 per annum. However, a 10% reduction was applied before going out to tender.

7. Equality Impact Assessments

7.1 Following an initial Equality Impact Assessment no negative impacts have been identified.

8. Sustainability Implication

8.1 There are no significant sustainability implications.

9. Conclusion

9.1 Strategic Commissioning has undertaken a robust commissioning and procurement process on behalf of Specialist Children's Services for an Independent Adoption & SGO Support Service. This will offer a range of statutory services for all those living in Kent (excluding Medway), who meet the requirements under the relevant legislation. These services are statutory, and all local authorities are expected to offer these services for birth parents and relatives involved in adoption, adult adoptees and adopted children.

10. Recommendations

10.1 Members of the Children's Social Care & Health Committee are asked to endorse the proposed decision to be taken by the Cabinet Member for Specialist Children's Services.

10.2 The Cabinet Member for Children's Specialist Services will be asked to:

10.3 Agree that the contract for the delivery of Independent Adoption & SGO Support services across Kent (excluding Medway) be awarded on the terms and for the duration set out below and in the accompanying recommendation report and exempt appendix.

10.4 The Head of Strategic Commissioning - Children's, will on behalf of the Corporate Director of Social Care, Health and Wellbeing, take all such steps as are necessary to implement the decision.

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Background Documents:

Appendix 1: Exempt Tender Award & Process Report

Appendix 2: Proposed Record of Decision