

**From:** Richard Smith, Corporate Director of Adult Social Care and Health

**To:** Clair Bell, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health

**Subject:** **Interpreting and Communication Services for People who are D/deaf and Deafblind**

**Non-Key decision** 22/00090

**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Past Pathway of report:** Adult Social Care Governance Directorate  
Management Team - 15 June 2022  
Adult Social Care Cabinet Committee – 28 September 2022

**Future Pathway of report:** None

**Electoral Division:** All

**Summary:** Kent County Council's statutory responsibilities under The Care Act 2014, Equality Act 2010 and the Accessible Information Standard 2016 are partly delivered through an Interpreting and Communication Framework for People who are D/deaf or Deafblind. The framework provides a list of pre-vetted and approved communication professionals that interpreting and translation services can be purchased from as and when required. The framework commenced in June 2019 and will expire in June 2023. New contractual arrangements for purchasing these communication services need to be in place by 17 June 2023 and it is proposed to procure a new framework of qualified providers to meet this requirement.

**Recommendation(s):** The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health is asked to:

- a) **APPROVE** the procurement of Interpreting and Communication Services for People who are D/deaf and Deafblind; and
- b) **DELEGATE** authority to the Corporate Director Adult Social Care and Health to take relevant actions to facilitate the required procurement activity.

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Kent County Council (KCC) has a statutory responsibility under The Care Act 2014 to meet the needs of people assessed as having eligible needs, including people with sensory impairments.
- 1.2 A person's method of communication should not cause for them a barrier which obstructs them from accessing any services that they may need. D/deaf and deafblind people in Kent need to be able to live safely and independently in their

local communities. Public sector agencies must also ensure equality of access to services within their communities and prevent discrimination as detailed in the Equality Act 2010.

- 1.3 One of the key ways that KCC achieves its responsibilities in these areas is through the provision of a British Sign Language interpreting service. This service supports D/deaf people to access services and support, and to be able to express, communicate and advocate for themselves. It can be accessed by any department in KCC and by a number of public sector partners who have signed up to access the service (see paragraph 2.3 for further details).
- 1.4 This report details the current provision of interpreting and communication services for people who are D/deaf or deafblind and recommends the procurement of a new framework of providers to deliver this service going forward.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1 The Kent Deaf Interpreting Service (KDIS) was established in July 2019 in response to the challenges faced by the previous provision of a managed deaf interpreting service by a single provider when this contract came to an end. KDIS sits within the Adult Social Care and Health (ASCH) Sensory Services Team, with members of the Business Support Team using the external framework of communication professionals to book interpreters for requestors (KCC officers and officers from other public sector contract partners).
- 2.2 KDIS provides interpreting, translation and transcription services for professionals who need to communicate with a person who is D/deaf or Deafblind. All KCC departments have access to this service to support the multitude of interactions with residents in need of these types of interpreting, translating and transcription services, although it is used mostly by Social Care Practitioners.
- 2.3 As well as by KCC officers, KDIS is also currently used by a number of public sector contract partners in Kent, namely:
  - Kent Police
  - Kent Fire and Rescue
  - Kent and Medway Partnership Trust (KMPT)
  - National Deaf Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) Kent
  - Dover District Council
- 2.4 The framework model allows for service flexibility. Assignments can be booked more easily at short notice, meaning that urgent scenarios, which are often critical requirements such as child protection cases or police custody requirements, are able to be covered more often.
- 2.5 Recently, the Council's Corporate Management Team agreed to support the development of greater equality for D/deaf and deafblind people in Kent through a number of actions, including agreeing that D/deaf awareness and the

importance of using qualified and registered interpreters is standard practice. Provision of this is included in the budget for all directorates in KCC and/or the commissioning of services, and that corporate funds for video interpreting to be on KCC virtual front door/initial point of contact are made available.

- 2.6 An options appraisal reviewing the most effective way to provide interpreting services in the future has resulted in the recommendation to procure a new framework of external providers that can be used by KDIS to book communication professionals as and when required. The benefits of renewing this kind of contractual arrangement include:
- Business continuity is maintained
  - Benefits of the high quality of the current service are maintained
  - Maintains the current deaf awareness culture of the service
  - Retains consistency for Contract Partners accessing services through KDIS
  - It is manageable within the budget
  - It offers a commercial advantage by giving access to a wide selection of service options and providers in one contract, that providers can join at any time to maintain levels of competition in a limited market
  - An opportunity to create more social value with greater community wealth and using interpreters local to the Kent community
  - Creating a continuous improvement opportunity with long term relationships between providers, people in receipt of the service and other stakeholders.
- 2.7 It is recommended that the new framework to be procured is put in place for a period of four years commencing June 2023 and expiring in June 2027.
- 2.8 Since its set-up in 2019, the operation of the current framework of providers has allowed tenders from potential providers to be submitted for evaluation periodically on a regular basis. This has worked well, with the number of providers on the framework doubling in the three-year period, serving to maintain choice and service availability in a restricted market. Therefore, it is recommended that this approach is maintained as part of the new procurement.

2.9 The draft procurement timetable for the service is:

Market Engagement	September 2022
Initial round ITT published (anticipated)	24 October 2022
Initial round ITT closes (anticipated)	24 November 2022
Contract award governance (Adult Social Care Cabinet Committee)	15 March 2023
Contract start	1 April 2023

### **3. Financial Implications**

3.1 The estimated annual cost of this service to Kent County Council is £20,000 per annum, or £80,000 over the proposed four-year contract period. Other public sector authorities will be able to use the contract, making the total estimated spend via the contract £50,000 per annum and £200,000 over the four-year contract period.

### **4. Legal implications**

4.1 Commissioners will follow the Public Contract Regulations (2015) and Spending the Council's Money guidance in relation to the procurement undertaken.

### **5. Equalities implications**

5.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out (Attached as Appendix A) and has concluded that there should be no negative impact on people with protected characteristics.

### **6. Data Protection Implications**

6.1 It is likely that a Data Protection Impact Assessment will be required, and this will be completed once the service specification is produced.

### **7. Conclusions**

7.1 The current Framework for Interpreting and Communication services is working well to provide a high service quality for people with specialist communication needs, as well as meeting budget requirements.

7.2 It is therefore proposed that KCC commissions a new Interpreting and Communications framework, similar to the current arrangements, ready for the expiry of the current arrangements in June 2023.

7.3 Commissioning these services via a framework of service provision supports the delivery of Making a difference everyday approach by delivering a person-centred approach to accessing communication support for people who need it.

## 8. Recommendations

8.1 Recommendations: The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health is asked to:

- a) **APPROVE** the procurement of Interpreting and Communication Services for People who are D/deaf and Deafblind; and
- b) **DELEGATE** authority to the Corporate Director Adult Social Care and Health to take relevant actions to facilitate the required procurement activity.

## 9. Background Documents

None

## 10. Report Author

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