

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

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

Decision No: 14/00074

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

Classification: Unrestricted

**Past Pathway: Children's Social Care & Health Cabinet Committee
9th July 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: The Cabinet Member for Children's Specialist Services is asked to AGREE that:

- 1) The contract for the delivery of Independent Adoption & SGO Support services across Kent (excluding Medway) be awarded to Barnardos.
- 2) The Corporate Director of Social Care, Health and Wellbeing, or other nominated officer will 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 31 July 2014.
- 1.2 FSC DMT on 16 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 1 August 2014.
- 1.4 The recommendation is based on the results of the tender evaluation exercise carried out by Strategic Commissioning (Children's) from 31 March to 8 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 for 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 1 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. Use of Urgency Procedure

- 9.1 When the report on this matter was being prepared for the 9 July 2014 Children's Social Care & Health Cabinet Committee it was thought that the existing provider would be able to continue to provide the service pending the mobilisation of the new contract. It has now been confirmed that this is not possible and so it has become

desirable to use the Urgency Procedure. This will ensure that mobilisation can be commenced immediately, will ensure as smooth a move as possible to the new contract and that there is no gap in provision.

10. Cabinet Committee input

10.1 The 09 July 2014 Children's Social Care & Health Cabinet Committee considered the recommendation report and proposed decision. In response to questions raised and comments made the Committee received the following further information from officers:

1. It was explained that, since drafting the report, it had become clear that the current provider was unable to continue to deliver the service up to the planned start of the new contract. The Committee was asked for its support for the proposed decision to award the new contract to be taken as a matter of urgency, to avoid there being a gap in provision.
2. It was explained that as part of the screening process, all potential bidders had been asked about how they would deliver an expanding service at a lower price than was being paid currently. All had confirmed that they would be able to deliver the required service at the lower price, and accepted that robust monitoring by the County Council would form part of the contract conditions.
3. In response to a member query, officers confirmed that assessment of health issues relating to a child being placed for adoption was a key part of the established adoption process. Officers undertook to provide more detail outside the meeting about how adopters, and indeed the child being adopted, would be made aware of any hereditary health issue of which the birth family became aware after adoption.

10.2 The Committee then resolved that:

- a) The decision proposed to be taken by the Cabinet Member for Specialist Children's Services, to agree that the contract for the delivery of Independent Adoption and Special Guardianship Order support services across Kent be awarded, on the terms and for the duration set out in the report, be endorsed; and
- b) The taking of this decision as a matter of urgency be supported, to avoid there being a gap in provision before the start of the new contract.

11. Conclusion

11.1 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.

12. Recommendations

12.1 The Cabinet Member for Children's Specialist Services is asked to AGREE that:

- 1) The contract for the delivery of Independent Adoption & SGO Support services across Kent (excluding Medway) be awarded to Barnardos.
- 2) The Corporate Director of Social Care, Health and Wellbeing, or other nominated officer will take all such steps as are necessary to implement the decision.

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Background Documents:

Appendix 1: Exempt Tender Award & Process Report