

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET

18 DECEMBER 2018

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR – SOCIAL SERVICES & WELLBEING

ADVOCACY – CHILDREN’S SERVICES

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 Approval is sought to enter into an Inter-Authority Agreement (IAA) with Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council (RCT) and Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council (Merthyr) to manage and oversee the commission of a Cwm Taf regional service for an Independent Professional Advocacy (IPA) and Independent Visiting (IV) service for eligible Children and Young People (CYP).

2.0 Connection to Corporate Plan

2.1 This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate priorities:-

- **Helping people to be more self-reliant** – taking early steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming vulnerable or dependent on the Council and its services.
- **Smarter use of resources** – ensuring that all its resources (financial, physical, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the development of resources throughout the community that can help deliver the Council’s priorities.

3.0 Background

3.1 BCBC holds a statutory duty to provide an IPA service for eligible CYP, notably Looked After Children, Children in Need and those in Child Protection. The Welsh Government has established a ‘National Approach’ to Children’s Advocacy based on regional commissioning, the provision of an Active Offer of advocacy for eligible CYP, and an option to include a complimentary IV service.

3.2 The ‘National Approach’ for advocacy for CYP is prescribed by Welsh Government, including a contributory grant towards its delivery in each region. The current Bridgend service was commissioned as a Western Bay regional service from 1st August 2017 with the procurement being led by Swansea Council, who remain the lead contracting Authority. The existing provider in Bridgend (Tros Gynnal Plant) secured the Western Bay contract which has been extended to 31st March 2019.

3.3 The Western Bay contract was supported by an IAA between BCBC, Neath Port Talbot and Swansea Councils.

4.0 Current Situation

4.1 To remain compliant with the Welsh Government’s National Approach, the CYP Advocacy service requires regional commissioning.

- 4.2 On 14th June 2018 the Welsh Government announced that the health board boundary for Bridgend would change from Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board to Cwm Taf University Health Board. As a result of this Bridgend will be required to position itself within the Cwm Taf region from April 2019.
- 4.3 Cwm Taf, as a region that includes RCT and Merthyr councils, is currently receiving a service from National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) as their provider. They are re-tendering for this service to start from April 2019.
- 4.4 Discussions are underway with commissioning colleagues in both Western Bay and Cwm Taf regions to manage the current service and to ensure that Bridgend continues to receive an effective advocacy service for young people.
- 4.5 The change to regional partnership working from Western Bay to Cwm Taf requires a change of the regional areas prescribed by Welsh Government within the guidance for the National Approach. The Welsh Government has confirmed that this will take place and that the current grant provision for Bridgend will be available via Cwm Taf from April 2019.
- 4.6 The proposal is for a regional IAA and joint procurement of services starting from 1st April 2019. RCT will act as Lead Authority for the regional procurement exercise, with BCBC officers participating in the tender process and evaluation panel. A two year contract is proposed, with an option to extend for up to two more years.
- 4.7 BCBC Legal and Procurement Officers have advised on the need for an IAA which outlines the roles and responsibilities of all three commissioning Authorities entering into a regional contract. BCBC Legal Officers have contributed to the drafting of the proposed IAA.

5.0 Effect upon Policy Framework and Procedure Rules

- 5.1 There is no impact on the policy framework and procedure rules.

6.0 Equality Impact Assessment

- 6.1 The Children and Young People Advocacy service is prescribed by Welsh Government through a National Approach targeted at specific client groups.

7.0 Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 Implications

- 7.1 The commissioned advocacy service aims to assist eligible children and young people to have greater voice, choice and control in their lives. The wellbeing goals of a healthier Wales, a more equal Wales, and a Wales of cohesive communities are therefore supported through these services.
- 7.2 The commissioning of the advocacy service supports the five ways of working under the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, as follows:

Long Term – statutory IPA ensures that young people are better supported to have voice, choice and control in maintaining their independence and wellbeing in the longer-term.

Prevention – the IPA service aims for early-intervention to prevent unnecessary escalation of needs. By identifying and addressing issues via advocacy, earlier resolution can be achieved.

Integration – the service works across sectors taking in referrals from statutory services, health and social care agencies, and the advocacy itself is delivered by third sector providers within the advocacy sector in Bridgend.

Collaboration – The National Approach service model is predicated on close collaboration between the service provider and with social services teams in each of the three commissioning Authorities.

Involvement – Young People (via Voices from Care) are proposed to be involved in the procurement exercise. The IPA service itself responds directly to the issues and concerns of the young people who use the service.

8.0 Financial Implications

- 8.1 The budget for this service is calculated based on the National Approach guidance from Welsh Government and on service data submitted over the past 18 months, and indicatively will be in the order of £75,000 per annum for Bridgend which is in line with current and historic costs. The contributory funding of £24,984 from Welsh Government has been confirmed to continue, delivered via RCT CBC as the lead contracting authority for this service in Cwm Taf.

9.0 Recommendation

- 9.1 Cabinet is asked to approve the proposal to enter into an Inter-Authority Agreement with RCT and Merthyr, and to note that approval to award the regional Independent Professional Advocacy and Independent Visiting service contract will be sought via Delegated Powers (under BCBC's Scheme of Delegation) once the procurement and evaluation process has been undertaken.

Susan Cooper

Corporate Director – Social Services and Wellbeing
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10. Contact Officer

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11. Background documents

None