

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET

8 MARCH 2022

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR EDUCATION AND FAMILY SUPPORT

FAMILY GROUP CONFERENCE SERVICE

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is in relation to the delivery of the Family Group Conference (FGC) Service and to seek approval from Cabinet to suspend the Council's contract procedure rules (CPRs) to enter into a contract with TGP Cymru for 6 months to deliver the FGC service.

2. Connection to corporate well-being objectives/other corporate priorities

- 2.1 This report assists in the achievement of the following corporate well-being objectives under the **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**:
- **Supporting a successful sustainable economy** – taking steps to make the county borough a great place to do business, for people to live, work, study and visit, and to ensure that our schools are focussed on raising the skills, qualifications and ambitions for all people in the county borough.
 - **Helping people and communities to be more healthy and resilient** - taking steps to reduce or prevent people from becoming vulnerable or dependent on the Council and its services. Supporting individuals and communities to build resilience, and enable them to develop solutions to have active, healthy and independent lives.
 - **Smarter use of resources** – ensure that all resources (financial, physical, ecological, human and technological) are used as effectively and efficiently as possible and support the creation of resources throughout the community that can help to deliver the Council's well-being objectives.

3. Background

- 3.1 FGC is an approach to working with children and families which enables parents, carers and wider family support networks manage the risks related to the care of their children. It is an approach that has been identified by Welsh Government as an essential area of practice for local authorities to use, to prevent children becoming looked after or to return children home to their families.
- 3.2 Since 2019, Bridgend County Borough Council has been working in partnership with the sole provider of this service in the region, TGP Cymru. Funding has been provided through Welsh Government grants or slippage within existing service budgets. The Council waived the CPRs at this time and direct awarded to TGP Cymru via delegated powers.

- 3.3 TGP Cymru is a Wales-based charity that works with children, young people and families. TGP Cymru is working with 15 other local authorities on this and other agendas such as advocacy. TGP Cymru has a history of achieving positive outcomes for families by providing good quality family group conferencing services to local authorities across Wales and has been doing so since 2000. The model includes all elements of the traditional family group conferencing model and an ethos and value base for working with people, rather than doing things to them or for them. The support is underpinned by the principles of non-judgement, openness, transparency, mutual respect and inclusion.
- 3.4 Welsh Government provided specific funding in relation to the delivery of FGCs across Wales for 2020-2021. Funding for 2021-22 has been provided from under spends in existing budgets within the Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate. The current service arrangement is due to expire on 31 March 2022.

4. Current situation/proposal

- 4.1 The existing contract in relation to the Family Group Conferencing service with TGP Cymru ends on 31 March 2022, with no option to extend. The Council is required under its CPRs and the Public Contract Regulations 2015 to conduct a tender for the provision of this service via a competitive procurement exercise. However, if a procurement exercise were to be run, it will not be concluded by the contract expiry date of 31 March 2022.
- 4.2 With the increase in demand for FGCs in Bridgend, (100 referrals in 2021 compared with just 27 in 2020) cessation of the service would pose a risk to the ongoing delivery of essential services to children and young people and their families. Maintaining this provision via TGP Cymru for a six-month period would ensure continuity of support for families already engaged with the service and continuity for children's social care staff who have attended awareness raising sessions, training and joint working with TGP Cymru. These relationships have been built and enhanced over the past two years and have led to positive working relationships being established.
- 4.3 Positive outcomes have been generated for families engaged with TGP Cymru. Feedback from families who have been involved with the service has been positive.
- 4.4 It is therefore proposed that the Council's CPRs be suspended and a contract be entered into for a six-month period in order for continued support to be provided via TGP Cymru. The value of this contract for a six-month period would equate to £70k. During this period, a commissioning exercise will be undertaken to appoint a provider via a competitive procurement process and in accordance with the Council's CPRs.
- 4.5 The CPRs ensure that procurement exercises are lawful and carried out in compliance with the Public Contract Regulations 2015 to satisfy principles of transparency, non-discrimination and equal treatment. Cabinet should be aware, that by not complying with the CPRs the Council is exposed to the risk of potential challenge from other providers of such services, as we are entering into a contract without any competition which breaches the requirements of procurement legislation.

Effect upon policy framework and procedure rules

5.1 This report seeks the suspension of the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.

6. Equality Act 2010 implications

6.1 The protected characteristics identified within the Equality Act, Socio-economic Duty and the impact on the use of the Welsh language have been considered in the preparation of this report. As a public body in Wales, the Council must consider the impact of strategic decisions, such as the development or the review of policies, strategies, services and functions. It is considered that there will be no significant or unacceptable equality impacts as a result of this report.

7. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 implications

7.1 A summary of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 assessment is listed below:

Long-term	Children and families are enabled to take control and responsibility for the care and protection without intervention from the local authority. Children remain in the care of the families and are supported by their carers to reach their full potential.
Prevention	The focus of the service is to prevent children becoming looked after by the local authority and to remain in the care of their immediate or wider family where it is safe to do so.
Integration	The service is a multi-agency partnership where integration is key to good service delivery arrangements.
Collaboration	Collaboration is a key approach of the service and involved children, young people, parents, carers, wider family members and professionals to ensure the safety of children and families.
Involvement	Participation and engagement arrangements will be strengthened as part of this working arrangement.

8. Financial implications

8.1 An earmarked reserve of £70k will be utilised to support the 6 month contract with TGP Cymru.

8.2 The Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate and the Education and Family Support Directorate will seek to identify future funding opportunities to support the service beyond the six-month period, by when, the outcome of the procurement exercise will be known.

9. Recommendations

9.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:

- suspends the relevant parts of the Council's CPRs in respect of the requirements relating to the procurement of the contract for the provisions of the FGC Service; and
- delegates authority to the Group Manager (Family Support) in consultation with the Chief Officer – Finance, Performance and Change and Section 151 Officer and Chief Officer – Legal and Regulatory Services, HR and Corporate Policy to enter into a contract for the provision of the FGC service with TGP Cymru from 1 April 2022 until 30 September 2022.

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18 February 2022

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Background documents: None