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| Meeting of: | CABINET |
| Date of Meeting: | 23 JULY 2024 |
| Report Title: | CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER SPECIALIST SUPPORT SERVICE |
| Report Owner / Corporate Director: | CORPORATE DIRECTOR SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING |
| Responsible Officer: | Pete Tyson – Group Manager, Commissioning |
| Policy Framework and Procedure Rules: | There is no effect upon the policy framework or procedure rules |
| Executive Summary: | This report seeks authorisation for Bridgend County Borough Council to enter into a Regional Collaboration Agreement within Cwm Taf Morgannwg region and requests approval to be part of the re-commissioning of a Children Looked After Specialist Support Service (previously known as Multi Agency Permanence Support Service – MAPSS). The service provides a specialist therapy-led provision to care experienced children, including children who have a plan for adoption pre and post support, providing support to children who display complex emotional and behavioural needs to support placement stability and achieve positive outcomes. |

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval:

- for a waiver under Contract Procedure Rule 3.2.12 for Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council (RCTCBC) to procure the Children Looked After Specialist Support Service (CLASS), including entering into a contract on behalf of the Council and note that approval to award any contract will be sought via the Council's Scheme of Delegation following the conclusion of the procurement and evaluation process;
- for BCBC to enter into a regional collaboration agreement with Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council and Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council for the provision of CLASS;

- to delegate authority to the Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing, in consultation with the Chief Officer - Finance, Housing and Change and Section 151 Officer, and Chief Officer - Legal, HR and Regulatory Services, HR and Corporate Policy, to agree the terms of the regional collaboration agreement and any ancillary agreements and to arrange execution of those agreements on behalf of the Council
- to delegate authority to the Head of Children's Social Care to represent and make decisions for BCBC as part of the Regional Project Board.

2. Background

- 2.1 Evidence demonstrates that a significantly higher proportion of care experienced children suffer emotional, behavioural and mental health difficulties and have shown poorer mental health than children in the general population. Care experienced children and young people are presenting with increasingly complex and challenging emotional and behavioural needs, which in many cases can lead to them experiencing multiple foster and/or residential care placement breakdowns.
- 2.2 To support stability and meet the needs of care experienced children, a regional bid was submitted to the Regional Integration Fund (RIF) to develop a Multi Agency Permanence Support Service (MAPSS). A procurement exercise was led by Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council (RCTBC) and supported by Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) and Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council.
- 2.3 A 3-year contract was awarded to a specialist provider commencing on 3rd January 2022. The service undertakes a robust assessment to identify a child's therapeutic needs and support them and their wider network to stabilise complex emotional and behavioural needs, in order to promote placement stability, improve self-management and coping strategies and providing a suite of therapies to prevent placement or adoption breakdown. In addition to the direct support with care experienced children the service has provided consultations to foster carers and residential staff on how to provide trauma informed care and delivered a range of workshops/training to carers and professionals on pertinent topics to upskill and develop the workforce.
- 2.4 The contract has supported a total of 157 children and their families in Bridgend. This includes children in foster, residential, adoptive and special guardianship placements all of which have differing needs. The most reported presenting difficulties were with anxiety, aggression, school difficulties and defiance.
- 2.5 Feedback from families and professionals is positive. Young people have commented that they have felt it has benefitted them. Parents and carers have reported the service has supported their children to make positive change with several commenting that their children have made considerable progress with the interventions provided. Carers have reported enjoying the

training and now have the knowledge and skills to implement strategies provided.

- 2.6 Historically, Bridgend had been one of the highest-ranking local authorities in Wales for the average number of annual placement moves per child. In March 2023 10.8% (43 children) experienced 3 or more placements in the previous 12 months. However, more recent data (March 2024) has evidenced a notable reduction from 10.8% to 6.2% of children, which highlights the success of a combination of approaches which include MAPSS intervention.

3. Current situation / proposal

- 3.1 This service was originally known as a Multi Agency Permanence Support Service (MAPSS) but due to the service not operating on a multi-agency basis the name has since been reviewed and amended to Children Looked After Specialist Support Service (CLASS).

- 3.2 The existing contract is due to expire on 2nd January 2025 with no option to extend further. The collaboration agreement between the region will also cease when the contract expires.

- 3.3 The impact of the contract ceasing would lead to increased stability issues and escalation of needs, which could result in a greater amount of high cost out of county residential placements being made. A typical residential placement cost is £5,631 per week and therefore the service is key in terms of tertiary prevention for those children at the edge of residential.

- 3.4 The Council's Contract Procedure Rules (CPRs) advise that a waiver from the requirement for the Council to go out to tender is required:

"Where goods, services and works are procured by another public body on behalf of the Council" CPR 3.2.12

Approval must be obtained from Cabinet, if the value of the contract is over £100,000 (CPR 3.2(a)).

Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council will act as lead authority for procurement of the service. Approval to award a contract will be sought under the Council's scheme of delegation once the procurement process had been completed. The value of the contract for the region means that it will be above the threshold of £663,540 including VAT for Light Touch Services and will therefore need to be procured in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

- 3.4 The term of the new contract will be fixed term for two years and three months (3rd January 2025 to 31st March 2027) with an option to extend on an annual basis for a further four years, subject to approval and available funding.

- 3.5 Robust performance measures shall be included in the tender documents to assess the short, medium and long term outcomes in order to demonstrate achievement and value for money.
- 3.6 The collaboration agreement between the region will be reviewed and where necessary updated, working with colleagues in legal services to ensure as a region we collaborate effectively and offer support to the Service Provider in such a way that they may deliver the Service fully in accordance with the particulars of the Service Specification. RCTCBC will enter into a contract with the successful provider and will make contract payments on behalf of BCBC. The collaboration agreement and the Regional Project Board will ensure that appropriate finance and governance arrangements are in place between the authorities for the service.

4. Equality implications (including Socio-economic Duty and Welsh Language)

- 4.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken by Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council acting as lead authority for the procurement and there is no negative impact on those with one or more of the protected characteristics, on socio-economic disadvantage or the use of the Welsh language. It is therefore not necessary to carry out a full EIA on this policy or proposal.
- 4.2 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. An initial Equality Impact Assessment screening has been undertaken and there are no direct equality implications as a consequence of this report.

5. Well-being of Future Generations implications and connection to Corporate Well-being Objectives

- 5.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 provides the basis for driving a different kind of public service in Wales, with five ways of working to guide how the Authority should work to deliver wellbeing outcomes for people. The following is a summary to show how the five ways of working to achieve the well-being goals have been considered in this report.

Long Term. Social Services is demand led and the Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014 (SSWBA) focusses on sustainable prevention and wellbeing outcomes for the future. There is a requirement to meet the needs of people in the longer term and, because of rising demographics and increasing complexity, the remodelling and transformation of services

continues to be a priority. The Children Looked After Specialist Support Service (CLASS) promotes secure attachment as a means of helping children and young people and their carers maintain placements (living and educational) so that they can feel safe enough to develop supportive attachments/relationships, and opportunities for positive growth and resilience in the future.

Prevention. Children Looked After Specialist Support Service (CLASS) will facilitate and support developing a shared understanding of the child's needs and their carer's difficulties, to determine how best to intervene and respond to achieve positive outcomes and avoid the needs of young people escalating further.

Integration. The Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014 (SSWBA) requires local authorities to work with partners, this contract involves a strong focus on integration, to ensure care and support for children and young people is seeming less and where necessary the provider is actively working within a multi-agency platform, enabling children and people to remain linked to their communities.

Collaboration. The strategic planning and local delivery of integrated support and services are developed and agreed on a regional basis in order to provide the best possible intervention to people. Collaborating will help inform and support the regions vision in supporting children, and young people and families to have a full range of integrated services for children, young people and families with complex needs.

Involvement. The key stakeholders are the people who use social care. There is considerable engagement including surveys, stakeholder meetings, feedback forms and the complaints process. The provision of accessible information and advice helps to ensure that the voice of adults, children and young people is heard.

6. Climate Change Implications

- 6.1 There are no specific climate change implications arising directly from this report.

7. Safeguarding and Corporate Parent Implications

- 7.1 The Children Looked After Specialist Support Service (CLASS) service supports care experienced children and young people with complex and challenging presentations by supporting positive attachments and de-escalating behaviours, minimising the risks to themselves and others.
- 7.2 The service is aligned to the local authority's Corporate Parent Strategy and the national Corporate Parenting Charter – A Promise for Wales. The service is aimed specifically at those children and young people that the region has corporate parenting responsibility for, providing them with access to the right support in accordance with their needs. The service aims to improve

emotional mental health and wellbeing and supports stability within placements enabling care-experienced children and young people to have the same life chances as every other young person in Wales.

- 7.3 The voice of the child and young people is paramount and will be central to the service and reflected through assessment, intervention and the review process. The tender documents ensure that the provider must have mechanisms in place for the child's voice to be heard, providing opportunities to feedback regarding the quality of support.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 For the first year of the service (January 2025 to December 2025) Regional Integrated Funding (RIF) of £594,492 (90% of the annual contract value) has already been secured. An additional funding application for the remaining 10% (£66,054) has been made to the Regional Children and Young Person's Board, and this will be considered on 30th July 2024. Noting that RIF funding for the remaining 10% is yet to be confirmed, the annual contract value (for the region) in Year 1 will be £594,492 as a minimum, or £660,546 as a maximum, pending the decision on the funding application.
- 8.2 For the second year of the service (January 2026 to December 2026) local authorities will be required to contribute 10% match funding in line with the RIF financial model. BCBC will need to contribute proportionately towards the 10% along with RCT and Merthyr. This equates to £20,000 for BCBC and should the workforce grant be available from January 2026 it will be used to support this contribution. If the Workforce Grant is not available core budget will be utilized.
- 8.3 The annual budget for the Children Looked After Specialist Support Service (CLASS) across the region is estimated within the region of £594,492 (worst case) - £660,546 (best case) if the additional 10% is secured via the Regional Children and Young Person's Board or from local authority contributions, over the life time of the contract (2 years, 3 months) the contract the value will total a minimum of £1,337,607 or a maximum of £1,486,230.
- 8.4 If the Regional Integration Fund is reduced or ceased post 2026/27, appropriate provisions will be written into the contract with the service provider to end the arrangement, or to allow amendments to reduce provision/funding, leaving minimal financial risk to the local authority.

9. Recommendations

- 9.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:
- Approves BCBC entering into a regional collaboration agreement with Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council and Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council for the provision of CLASS;
 - Delegates authority to the Corporate Director Social Services and Wellbeing in consultation with the Chief Officer - Finance, Housing and Change and

Section 151 Officer and Chief Officer - Legal and Regulatory Services, HR and Corporate Policy, to agree the terms of the regional collaboration agreement and any ancillary agreements and to arrange execution of those agreements on behalf of the Council.

- Approves a waiver under Contract Procedure Rule 3.2.12 for Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council (RCTCBC) to procure the Children Looked After Specialist Support service (CLASS) including entering into a contract on behalf of the Council and note that approval to award any contract will be sought via the Council's Scheme of Delegation following the conclusion of the procurement and evaluation process; and
- Delegates authority to the Head of Children's Social Care to represent and make decisions for BCBC as part of the Regional Project Board.

Background documents:

None