



Report for:	Cabinet Member Signing - 8 April 2014	Item number	
Title:	Approval to Sign up to Enfield's Independent Fostering Agencies Selected List Agreement		
Report Authorised by :	Zina Etheridge – Deputy Chief Executive		
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Ward(s) affected: All	Report for Key Decision		

1. Describe the issue under consideration

- 1.1 This report advises Cabinet Member of the outcome of joint procurement exercise led by London Borough of Enfield on behalf of East London Solutions (ELS) and North London Strategic Alliance (NLSA) and seeks Cabinet Member's approval to sign up to the Select List of Independent Fostering Agencies resulting from this procurement.

2. Cabinet Member Introduction

I am happy to sign this agreement to enter into a selected list for Independent Fostering Agencies. Our Sufficiency Strategy for Looked After Children identifies the use of Independent Fostering Agencies as one way in which we can discharge our duties towards looked after children and this agreement will help Haringey to work more effectively with these agencies and other boroughs across North London and to deliver greater value for money.

3. Recommendations



Haringey Council

- 3.1 Cabinet Member to agree to Haringey Council signing up to the Independent Fostering Agency Select List Agreement procured by Enfield Council. The Select List Agreement (ie approved list) has been set up so that it is accessible to members of both the ELS (East London Solutions) and the NLSA (North London Strategic Alliance) Children's Efficiency Programme. Haringey Council is a member of the NLSA Children's Efficiency Programme.
- 3.2 Subject to agreement being granted, Haringey will sign the access agreement with Enfield Council.

4. Alternative options considered

- 4.1 Alternative options would be to continue with the Pan London framework. This is not recommended as the framework is not currently meeting the complex needs of the Local Authorities that are taking part in the procurement.
- 4.2 In order to maximise the Council's available resources, carrying out a procurement process for Haringey only services was not recommended because it will require intensive resources (time, money and people) for undertaking the tendering exercise and monitoring of the Independent Fostering Agencies.
- 4.3 The outcome of the joint procurement will be to maximise choice while controlling cost and maintaining a high standard of quality, including a better ability to meet out of borough placements.

5. Background Information

- 5.1 The Council has a duty under the 'The Children Act 1989' to provide care for Looked After Children. As Corporate Parents, it is the responsibility of the Local Authority to ensure that the young people that are in care receive good quality care to enable them to be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and achieve economic wellbeing.
- 5.2 Foster care offers children and young people an opportunity to be looked after in a home environment with trained carers. Placements can be short term or long term depending on the needs of the child and the availability of the carer. Foster carers are supported by Supervising Social Workers and the Independent Foster Agency who work alongside the London Borough of Haringey and the child's allocated social worker. The consistency of full time foster carers most closely resembles a nuclear family, allowing Looked After Children the opportunity to thrive in their environment and reach their potential.



- 5.3 To meet the diverse needs of young people coming into care the Local Authority needs to ensure that there is a regular supply of foster carers, primarily via a combination of its own in-house foster care service and foster carers supplied through a number of independent foster care agencies sourced Independent Fostering Agencies on Haringey's Framework Agreement or from the Pan London Framework. While the framework has its benefits, costs from these agencies can be high and the 4-yearly renewal process does not lend itself easily to price negotiations during the four year period.
- 5.4 The Pan London Framework focuses on generic need for all participating London Boroughs and not specific local needs of young people living within Haringey. In view of the challenges and weaknesses of the current framework, specifically our inability to meet the diverse and changing needs of the Young People in Haringey who are coming into care, Haringey participated in a full market analysis throughout North and East London, as a member Authority of the NLSA Children's Efficiency Programme. In addition to this Haringey took part in market engagement activities to stimulate more local interest and answer questions from potential new providers as well as current providers. Collaborating with Authorities who have similar requirements to our own has allowed us to shape the service, pinpointing specific needs and addressing weaknesses within the service such as a shortage of specialist placements. ELS and NLSA partners have agreed that by collaborating we can further drive down the costs of Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs) and improve the quality of foster care. All agencies participating will be required to achieve as a minimum an OFSTED rating of good or outstanding.
- 5.5 The procurement will increase the number of experienced carers that are able to support young people with high demands, such as parent and baby placements, young people with disabilities, those with emotional, behavioural and social disorders and those on remand.
- 5.6 The tender attracted 100 initial expressions of interest and resulted in 55 completed bids from 55 organisations. Quality evaluations have been undertaken by a panel of representatives from each authority and financial evaluations carried out by lead members of NLSA and ELS. The results of these evaluations are attached in Appendix A
- 5.7 The Select List Agreement is a one year agreement and consists of Independent Fostering Agencies who have been pre-vetted as part of the procurement exercise.
- 5.8 The Select List will be renewed on an annual basis in order to increase competition and provide more frequent opportunities for new fostering agencies to join the list. This is of benefit as it will allow any unsuccessful tenderers and any new entrants to the market to tender for the service the following year which will not only increase the options for the authority but



also help develop the fostering market thus increasing competition. It will also allow agencies that may have recently dropped their Ofsted rating to enter the Select List once their score has improved, allowing the Council access to greater choice of fostering provision. Where fostering agencies are rated by Ofsted as inadequate or requires improvement in-year, this rating will be notified to all participating authorities and an embargo proposed for new placements. It will be for each authority to determine whether to continue an existing placement, depending on the needs of the child.

- 5.9 A responsibility of the contract monitorings will be shared between all participating authorities. Each authority will be responsible for managing the relationship and ensuring quality of service of the providers allocated.
- 5.10 The NLSA Senior Category Manager will also have an overview of all monitoring activity via the Enfield microsite (used to share monitoring data between participating authorities) and will raise with boroughs any issues of non-compliance with their obligations under the terms of the Access Agreement.
- 5.11 Although the Council is not renewing its membership of the wider NLSA with effect from 1st April 2014, this would not affect the Council's participation in the NLSA Children's Efficiency Programme and access to The Select List Agreement.

6 Comments of the Chief Financial Officer and Financial Implications

- 6.1 There are no additional costs associated with this joint procurement exercise with the North London Strategic Alliance.
- 6.2 There is a challenging savings target of £2.25 million against the Children's external placement budget for the financial year 2014/15. Working with partner agencies to increase competitiveness and improve the management of the market will make a positive contribution to this target.

7 Assistant Director Corporate Governance and Legal Implications

- 7.1 The Assistant Director Corporate Governance notes the contents of the report.
- 7.2 London Borough of Enfield has carried out a procurement exercise on behalf of members of the North London Strategic Alliance and East London Solutions to appoint providers to a Select List of independent fostering agencies. This is a pre-qualified list of approved suppliers. Haringey Council is a member of the North London Strategic Alliance Children's Efficiencies Programme.
- 7.3 Haringey Council will not be contracting directly with the organisations on the



Select List as London Borough of Enfield will be contracting on behalf of the Council. Haringey will enter into an Agreement with London Borough of Enfield setting out the obligations between the two Councils in respect of the contracting arrangements. Children and Young People's Service Directorate are advised to contact Corporate Legal Service on the form of the Agreement.

- 7.4 The Cabinet Member has power to approve the recommendations under CSO 16.03 (Approval of Key Decision).
- 7.5 The Assistant Director Corporate Governance confirms that there are no legal reasons preventing the Cabinet Member from approving the recommendations in this report.

8. Equalities and Community Cohesion Comments

- 8.1 A full EIA was carried out by London Borough of Enfield on behalf of all participating authorities and is included as an appendix B.
- 8.2 Equalities principles were incorporated within the procurement process.

9. Head of Procurement Comments

- 9.1 The recommendation is compliant with the Procurement Code of Practice.
- 9.2 A competitive tendering process was undertaken and Central Procurement were involved in all aspects of this procurement. The aggregation of the three boroughs requirements and the competitive process undertaken supports a Value for Money outcome.
- 9.3 Responsibility for the contract monitoring will be shared between all participating authorities. Each authority will be responsible for managing the relationship and ensuring quality of service of the providers allocated.
- 9.4 The NLSA Senior Category Manager will also have an overview of all monitoring activity via the Enfield microsite (used to share monitoring data between participating authorities) and will raise with boroughs any issues of non-compliance with their obligations under the terms of the Access Agreement. These arrangements will mitigate the risk of service failure and identify any areas for improvements at an early stage.

10. Policy Implications

- 10.1 Sustainability (including climate change, health, crime and disorder)



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- 10.1.1 Environmental and climate change - improving provision across the regions should result in more local placement availability, reducing fostering related travel requirements.
- 10.1.2 Social (including health, crime and disorder) – The contract should have a positive long term social impact as an increase in fostering options will mean more likelihood of meeting matching criteria, which in turn reduces the likelihood of placement breakdown and offers greater stability for the care recipient as they could remain in the same school amongst familiar faces to reduce the feeling of upheaval. Greater access to a wider range of care will also allow targeted support for young people with health issues and increased early intervention for those involved in gangs and crime.
- 10.1.3 Economic – The annual refresh of the select list gives fostering agencies the opportunity to apply for a place on the select list every year, giving the agencies the opportunity to seek feedback, develop their provision and re-submit their bid each year, thus keeping prices competitive and standards high.
- 10.1.4 Equality - The tender encourages the fostering agencies to develop and improve their foster carer recruitment strategy, thus improving the number of fostering options within groups that have previously been lacking and increasing the likelihood of achieving an appropriate match.

11. Reasons for Decision

- 11.1 Haringey Council currently procures its foster requirements through its Framework Agreement and Pan London Care Services Framework Agreement. The aim of this procurement is to put in place a more flexible delivery model that takes account of the views of all stakeholders and lessons learned from previous fostering related procurements (including the Pan London Framework Agreement).
- 11.2 Participation in the Select List Agreement will encourage providers to recruit carers in areas with the highest demand both geographically and in terms of service requirement. Management information will be collected to feedback to providers exactly the number of referrals, the service type required and the geographical areas of highest demand.
- 11.3 Collaborative working to monitor providers will result in more efficient use of staff resources. In 2012/13 Haringey have used approximately 40 separate Independent Fostering Agencies and will therefore have had responsibility for managing the relationship and ensuring quality of service. Under the Select List Agreement it is anticipated that haringey will be responsible for between 5-8 providers.



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- 11.4 The new Select List will increase supply in traditionally hard to place categories, enabling us to better match foster carers to the needs of our children and young people, improve quality and reduce the cost of placing young people in care.

12. Use of Appendices

- 12.1 Appendix A Organisations to be appointed to the select list agreement
- 12.2 Appendix B Equality Impact Assessment

13. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

- 13.1 None

COUNCILLOR ANN WATERS

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