

PARENTING SERVICES & TRAVELLER EDUCATION SERVICE

Cabinet Member	Councillor David Simmonds
Cabinet Portfolio	Deputy Leader & Education and Children's Services
Officer Contact	Sam Taylor – Residents Services
Papers with report	None

HEADLINE INFORMATION

Summary	This report seeks to appoint the Bell Farm Christian Centre to provide (1) Pro Parenting and (2) Traveller Education provision within Hillingdon.
Contribution to our plans and strategies	The services meet the requirements set out within the Hillingdon Children and Families Trust Board Plan, and those of the emerging Children's Pathway Plan.
Financial Cost	<p>The total cost of providing the Pro Parenting provision over 3 years is £225,000, for which there is a base budget.</p> <p>The one-off cost of providing the Traveller Education provision for an initial one year period is £35,000 and the cost of which will be met from the 2013/14 Alternative Education Provision budget funded from the Dedicated Schools Grant.</p>
Relevant Policy Overview Committee	Education and Children's Services
Ward(s) affected	All wards

RECOMMENDATION

That the Cabinet agrees:

(1) A 3 year contract with Bell Farm Christian Centre to provide Pro Parenting services until April 2014, following a single tender process.

(2) A 1 year contract (April 2013 to March 2014) with Bell Farm Christian Centre to provide the Traveller Education provision within Hillingdon.

INFORMATION

Reason for Recommendation

The provision of parenting support and traveller education services have been identified as key priorities as part of the Children's Pathway Programme. To date, no robust central commissioning framework has been in place for contract management across education and children's services. This is now being aligned through the children's pathway programme. As such, the tendering of these two services is part of the process to establish effective and value for money provision for children and young people in the Borough.

Specific reasons for the recommendations as they relate to each service are set out below:

(1) The Bell Farm Christian Centre was contracted by the Council (Education and Children's Services) to deliver pro parenting support to families in 2009 for 2 years. Notice was not given to Bell Farm and the service continued. The Council is required to give Bell Farm 3 months' notice to end the provision, and such a decision would result in no parenting provision being provided in Hillingdon. This agreement seeks to put a retrospective contract in place for 2011/12, lasting until March 2014. A review of the Service Level Agreement will be completed by the end of 2012/13, prior to a competitive tendering exercise during 2013/14. This approach will permit both continued service delivery and the establishment of the most effective and best value parenting support provision to be put in place, in line with the children's pathway programme.

(2) A need has been identified to put in place a Traveller Education Service for the Borough. Ofsted has noted that children from Traveller & Gypsy families are the group most at risk of underachievement in the education system. Within the London Borough of Hillingdon, approximately 20% of all children out of school are from a Traveller or Gypsy background. It is requested a single year contract be put into place to meet this need. This is on the basis of a lack of competition in the local market and due to the priority the Council gives to addressing the issue identified. During the year, the impact of engaging with this hard to reach group will be measured and longer term arrangements put in place as necessary.

Alternative options considered / risk management

(1) To activate the three months' notice clause in the Bell Farm Service Level Agreement and to put the service out to competitive tender on an immediate basis.

(2) Not to award the contract for a Traveller Education Service.

Comments of Policy Overview Committee(s)

None at this stage.

Supporting Information

(1) (a) Parenting Provision

The Council commissioned Bell Farm Christian Centre to run the Pro-Parenting provision across Hillingdon in 2009, at a cost of £75,000 per year.

In delivering the parenting service, Bell Farm Christian Centre undertakes outreach work across Hillingdon. In order to maximise the reach and impact of the service, the Centre delivers a suite of programmes and interventions across a range of settings. These include:

- Parenting seminars
- Parenting courses
- Self esteem courses
- Parenting advice clinics
- One-to-one surgeries
- Parent support groups
- Wider parent information and awareness services

Parenting courses are run from a number of school, local authority and other community locations. These include 8 primary schools, 2 secondary schools, 8 children's centres and 2 faith-based organisations.

The courses include the delivery of the internationally recognised Triple P Parenting and Positive Steps programmes. Triple P interventions range from the provision of media messages on positive parenting, through to brief information resources such as tip sheets and videos, and brief targeted interventions (for specific behaviour problems) offered by primary care practitioners at Levels 2 and 3, to more intensive parent training at Level 4 and Level 5 programs targeting broader family issues such as relationship conflict and parental depression, anger and stress. The positive steps programme acts as a preventative intervention meeting the needs of parents who are suffering from low self esteem, to enable them to implement new approaches and strategies in their parenting, which help to avoid future issues in the home environment. The delivery of this type of programme of intervention has been identified as a key priority through the needs analysis of the Children's Pathway Programme.

At present, Bell Farm Christian Centre is the only provider of parenting provision in Hillingdon and has well-established links across the Borough. The Centre has a very good reputation with schools and other local organisations for the delivery of such services.

The reach of the pro parenting service extends to the whole Borough, with courses running in Ruislip, Uxbridge, Yiewsley, West Drayton and Northwood. Attendance at the courses is very good, with 400 parents having participated in the Triple P courses, community parent support groups and self-esteem courses over the April to October 2012 period. The service is on track to significantly exceed the annual target of 495 adult participants specified in the Service Level Agreement.

The Centre also presents the advantage of having a trained parenting practitioner available onsite. Parenting practitioners are qualified to run groups and seminars, and provide one on one advice. Bell Farm employ a number of highly experienced and qualified individuals who facilitate courses to enable Pro-Parenting to offer even more support across the Borough.

(1) (b) Parenting Provision – Next Steps

The management of the Bell Farm contract and all other education and children's services contracts are being aligned and strengthened as a result of the Children's Pathway Programme through the development of a central category management function.

A review of the Service Level Agreement for the Pro Parenting contract will be completed during the current year 2012/13, such that it is tightened and clarified as necessary – in particular with regard to the provision of outcome measures. A review of the service and the achievement of specific outcomes will take place to shape whether a repeat or remodeled service is necessary.

This piece of work will take place in advance of the development of a new specification for the service during 2013/14. Parenting provision will then be competitively tendered and a new service established.

(2) (a) Traveller Education Provision

Ofsted has noted that children from Traveller & Gypsy families are the group most at risk of underachievement in the education system. Within the London Borough of Hillingdon, approximately 20% of all children out of school are from a Traveller or Gypsy background.

No specialist provision currently exists in the Borough to meet the needs of this group in relation to education. The London Borough of Hillingdon is dedicated to promoting access and inclusion in education and, as a consequence, proposes to commission Bell Farm to extend their current service provision on behalf of the Council to also include educational support the Traveller & Gypsy community.

The Traveller Education Provision project has been developed during 2012. It is proposed that it will be delivered from April 2013 to March 2014, to provide a three month lead in time to recruit the coordinator and identify and engage with children participating in the service. This will be a one year service, at a cost of £35k per year. The recommendation to extend the service will be made as a result of a review of its impact during the year. The service will be funded through the Alternative Education Provision budget funded from the Dedicated Schools Grant.

The project funds the provision of a 1.0 FTE post with responsibility to promote full access and integration into education for Traveller and Gypsy children within Hillingdon.

The objectives of the project are to:

- Provide advice and support to schools regarding the inclusion of pupils from Traveller & Gypsy families; and to be willing to challenge schools and academies in terms of Admissions practices if necessary.
- Provide advice and support to parents regarding admission to school and attendance. Advocate for parents with education providers.
- Improve educational attainment and expand opportunities for children from Traveller & Gypsy families.
- Forge and maintain a strong link with the Educational Welfare and Children
- Ensure a clear mechanism is in place for the timely and accurate transfer of information, to include monthly case liaison and referral.

In so doing, the service is intended to enable Traveller and Gypsy children to participate fully in education and to achieve maximum success at school, thereby enhancing their life chances and choices.

The Education Welfare Service will work alongside this post to ensure the work is informed and fulfils the local authority's statutory duties.

Traveller Education Provision – Next Steps

The contract for this provision has been arranged through the Special Educational Needs, Behaviour, Attendance and Pupil Support Service. The Service Manager will meet with Bell Farm on a monthly basis to manage new referrals and track existing cases to ensure an outcome (child back in school or back to the Local Authority for legal remedy).

Financial Implications

The cost of providing an annual pro parenting provision is £75,000, for which there is a base budget.

The cost of providing the Traveller Education provision for an initial one off period in 2013/14 is £35,000, the cost of which will be met from the Alternative Education Provision budget funded from the Dedicated Schools Grant.

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Corporate Finance

The current cost of providing the Pro Parenting service is £75k per annum and the cost of providing Traveller Education is £35k per annum, the provision for expenditure on these items is contained within the 2013/14 General Fund and Schools Budget respectively. The proposed re-tendering process in time for April 2014 should provide a better indication of the current market rates for the future provision of these services.

Legal

The Cabinet has before them Recommendations seeking the following authority:

- (1) A 3 year contract with Bell Farm Christian Centre to provide Pro Parenting services until April 2014, following a single tender process.
- (2) A 1 year contract with Bell Farm Christian Centre to provide the Traveller Education provision within Hillingdon.

With regard to the provision of the Pro-Parenting services, the Council has a general power of competence as set out in Part I Chapter I of the Localism Act 2011, which replace the well-being powers in the Local Government Act 2000. This gives a local authority the power to carry out any lawful activity on behalf of their community and to do anything that individuals generally may do unless specifically prohibited by law, and it extends to providing a benefit for the area of the authority or persons resident or present in the area.

With regard to the Traveller Education provision, local authorities have a duty under the Equality Act 2010 (the Act) to actively seek to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and promote good race relations. The Act does not define race, however case law has established that gypsies and travellers are recognised as having a protected characteristic

under the Act, and case law has also established that the government has a duty to “facilitate the gypsy way of life” for ethnic gypsies and travellers under the Human Rights Act 1998.

Paragraph 4.4 of the Procurement and Contract Standing Orders provides that competitive tenders or quotations will not be required if the Approved Officer is satisfied, and has obtained written agreement from the Head of Procurement and the Cabinet Member for Co-ordination and Central Services, or the Leader of the Council, that, amongst other things, it is not reasonably practicable or prudent in meeting the Council’s objectives to obtain competitive tenders or quotations, or that there would be no effective or genuine competition, as indicated in the body of the report.

In accordance with the Procurement and Contract Standing Orders, Standing Order no. 6, paragraph 6.2 (d) provides that in the case of a tender which exceeds £250,000 for which budgetary provision exists, the Cabinet shall be authorised to accept the most satisfactory tender. However, the Cabinet, as the parent decision-making body, can take this decision on behalf of the Cabinet Members.

Procurement support the case as outlined above noting the lack of competition and limited timescales to further engage with the market. Following completion and assessment of existing provision and dependent upon funding, Procurement will work with the service team to consider all future delivery options in order to maximise competition.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

NIL