

EXECUTIVE DECISION

made by a Cabinet Member



REPORT OF ACTION TAKEN UNDER DELEGATED AUTHORITY BY AN INDIVIDUAL CABINET MEMBER

Executive Decision Reference Number – L30 21/22

Decision	
1	Title of decision: Direct Award for 2 Project Social Work Teams in CYPFS (PRAS and Children's Social Work) for 6 months
2	Decision maker (Cabinet member name and portfolio title): Councillor Nick Kelly, Leader of the Council.
3	Report author and contact details: Jane Anstis, Head of Service for Children, Young People and Families
4	Decision to be taken: To direct award a contract for services to Taylor Davenport for two teams within Children, Young People and Families Service of 1 Team Manager and 7 Social Workers (CSW) and 1 Team Manager and 5 Social Workers (PRAS).
5	<p>Reasons for decision:</p> <p>Children's Social Work have experienced an unprecedented and significant rise in demand for children's social work services during the pandemic and at 31st December 2021 was 27.2% higher than at the beginning of the first lockdown on 23rd March 2020. This indicates a continued rise over the last 6 months (25% in June 2021).</p> <p>Demand has exceeded the capacity to respond and required additional social work resource.</p> <p>All efforts to recruit experienced social workers on a permanent or locum basis have not been able to keep up with the demand and that there is a paucity of experienced social workers regionally.</p> <p>The issue is urgent and needs an urgent solution in order to be able to allocate children's cases to social workers at a level that they can safely respond to and there is not sufficient time to undertake a procurement process.</p> <p>The operational and safeguarding implications of the additional resource not progressing would be serious for children and families in Plymouth. Continued difficulties with recruitment and retention coupled are being exacerbated by staff sickness and self-isolation due to COVID-19.</p> <p>A period of operational stability is needed in order to enable a refreshed and ambitious recruitment and retention approach and strategy to be progressed.</p> <p>Following the Christmas period, demand and pressure has not relented and efforts to pursue all available options for individual agency social worker recruitment have been continual and exhaustive. In parallel, a focus has been maintained on pursuing alternative 'project team' solutions, providing a team of social workers and a team manager but without the additional organisational add-ons of a managed service.</p> <p>A viable solution of this type has now been identified, however due to the current market competition, urgent approvals are needed to secure this.</p> <p>The proposal is as follows;</p>


	<p>Team 1 – Children’s Social Work Service (CSW)</p> <p>Team Manager x 1 6 months</p> <p>Social Workers x 7 6 months</p> <p>Team 2 – Plymouth Referral and Assessment Service (PRAS)</p> <p>Team Manager x 1 3 months</p> <p>Social Workers x 5 3 months</p> <p>The costs for this provision are set out in the part 2 briefing report.</p> <p>Research has been undertaken to consider which agencies could best meet our needs, and given the urgency at this stage Taylor Davenport have been identified as best placed to meet the current need. Due diligence has been undertaken with neighbouring authorities who are currently utilising Taylor Davenport and feedback has been consistently positive, “This is the best project team agency I have experienced – creative, flexible and reliable”. Taylor Davenport have a strong track record of delivery of project teams and currently have Teams or consultancy arrangements in 8 other Authorities.</p>
6	<p>Alternative options considered and rejected:</p> <p>Internal options were explored but have been exhausted including;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permanent recruitment – this is taking too long to resolve the issue. This is ongoing alongside the solution sought but cannot respond in the agile way we need currently. • Locum social workers via Council’s agency work contract suppliers. This has not yielded the experienced social workers we need in the numbers we need currently. We must consider alternative to ensure safe practice and to reduce the risk of losing existing staff who are struggling to manage existing workloads without this solution. • Work attempted with one Council’s agency work contract suppliers to identify a team of social workers. Delivery on this has not materialised. • Increased family support worker provision in the absence of successful qualified social work recruitment • Ongoing and rigorous scrutiny of all possible case closures, thresholds and alternative safe support options for families within the EHATS service • Increase of agency social worker rates and accommodation allowances and persistent direct partnership working with agencies to recruit interim workers – this is continuous but has not yet yielded any new workers joining the service. • Temporary mobilisation of all qualified social workers in the service, regardless of current position. This is once again taking place but is an unsustainable and limited solution for some families only. <p>None of the above options have yielded the staff resources necessary to resolve the (increasing) capacity pressures. A new Recruitment and Retention strategy is being brought forward so that we can recruit permanent staff, and support them effectively and well to retain them and our committed experienced and newly qualified staff. This will include ensuring manageable caseloads in eth medium and longer term.</p>
7	<p>Financial implications and risks:</p> <p>The costs of this provision will be from revenue funding for a period of 6 months. This will be funded through support from the authority’s corporate directorate by the utilisation of residue balance sheet provisions.</p>

8	Is the decision a Key Decision? (please contact Democratic Support for further advice)	Yes	No	Per the Constitution, a key decision is one which:
			x	in the case of capital projects and contract awards, results in a new commitment to spend and/or save in excess of £3million in total
			x	in the case of revenue projects when the decision involves entering into new commitments and/or making new savings in excess of £1 million
		x	is significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards in the area of the local authority.	
	If yes, date of publication of the notice in the Forward Plan of Key Decisions			
9	Please specify how this decision is linked to the Council's corporate plan/Plymouth Plan and/or the policy framework and/or the revenue/capital budget:	This decision aligns with the Corporate Plan priority of Caring for People and Communities in keeping children, young people and adults protected.		
10	Please specify any direct environmental implications of the decision (carbon impact)	There are no environmental impacts of the decision.		

Urgent decisions

11	Is the decision urgent and to be implemented immediately in the interests of the Council or the public?	Yes	x	(If yes, please contact Democratic Support (democraticsupport@plymouth.gov.uk) for advice)
12a	Reason for urgency: As above, the operational and safeguarding implications of continued increases in caseload pressures is serious for children and families in Plymouth. Difficulties with recruitment and retention coupled with increased staff sickness and self-isolation due to Covid -19 and the increase (25%) of children in the service over the past 12 months is creating an unsafe pressure that now needs an urgent response. The award of the contract to Taylor Davenport is intended to mitigate some of this pressure.			
12b	Scrutiny Chair Signature:	Councillor Jemima Laing (approved via email)	Date	31 January 2022
	Scrutiny Committee name:	Education and Children's Social Care		
	Print Name:	Councillor Jemima Laing		

Consultation				
I3a	Are any other Cabinet members' portfolios affected by the decision?	Yes		
		No		(If no go to section I4)
I3b	Which other Cabinet member's portfolio is affected by the decision?	Councillor Dave Downie (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills, Children and Young People)		
I3c	Date Cabinet member consulted	27/01/2022		
I4	Has any Cabinet member declared a conflict of interest in relation to the decision?	Yes		If yes, please discuss with the Monitoring Officer
		No		
I5	Which Corporate Management Team member has been consulted?	Name	Alison Botham	
		Job title	DCS	
		Date consulted	25 January 2022	
Sign-off				
I6	Sign off codes from the relevant departments consulted:	Democratic Support (mandatory)	DS102 21/22	
		Finance (mandatory)	djn.21.22.241	
		Legal (mandatory)	LS/37968/AC/25/1/22	
		Human Resources (if applicable)	AM260122	
		Corporate property (if applicable)	N/A	
		Procurement (if applicable)	PB/CYP/007/ED/0122	
Appendices				
I7	Ref.	Title of appendix		
Confidential/exempt information				
I8a	Do you need to include any confidential/exempt information?	Yes	x	If yes, prepare a second, confidential ('Part II') briefing report and indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box in I8b below. (Keep as much information as possible in the briefing report that will be in the public domain)

		Exemption Paragraph Number						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18b	<p>Confidential/exempt briefing report title:</p> <p>Direct Award for 2 Project Social Work Teams in CYPFS (PRAS and Children's Social Work) for 6 months</p>			x				
Background Papers								
19	<p>Please list all unpublished, background papers relevant to the decision in the table below.</p> <p>Background papers are <u>unpublished</u> works, relied on to a material extent in preparing the report, which disclose facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the work is based. If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</p>							
Title of background paper(s)		Exemption Paragraph Number						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Cabinet Member Signature								
20	<p>I agree the decision and confirm that it is not contrary to the Council's policy and budget framework, Corporate Plan or Budget. In taking this decision I have given due regard to the Council's duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between people who share protected characteristics under the Equalities Act and those who do not. For further details please see the EIA attached.</p>							
Signature				Date of decision	31 January 2022			
Print Name	Councillor Nick Kelly (Leader of the Council)							