

Delay

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR ADULT CARE AND HEALTH SERVICES

LEAD COUNCILLOR:	COUNCILLORS TERRY AND HOSKIN		
DATE:			
TITLE:	EXTENSION OF THE 0-19 (25) PUBLIC HEALTH NURSING SERVICE AND STOP SMOKING SERVICE CONTRACTS		
SERVICE:	PUBLIC HEALTH & WELLBEING	WARDS:	BOROUGHWIDE
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report sets out the decision to delay the procurement of the Berkshire West 0-19 (25) public health nursing service for 12 months and extend the current contract to 31st March 2022 and to delay the procurement of the Berkshire West Stop Smoking Service for up to 12 months and to extend the current contract to 31st March 2022.
- 1.2 To inform Councillors of the reasons for delaying the re-procurement of the Berkshire West Joint 0-19 (25) Public Health Nursing Service and the Berkshire West Joint Stop Smoking Service that had recently commenced. Both procurements were due to deliver new Berkshire West joint contracts from 1st April 2021.
- 1.3 To inform Councillors of plans to extend the existing 0-19 (25) Public Health Nursing Service and the existing Stop Smoking Service with the current provider in both contracts until the procurement exercise can be conducted to ensure a continued service during the period of deferment.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 It is the decision of the Director of Adult Social Care & Health, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Health, Wellbeing & Sport and the Lead Councillor for Children to delay the procurement of the Berkshire West 0-19 (25) public health nursing service for 12 months and extend the current contract to 31st March 2022, to allow bids for the new contract to be advertised in April/May 2021 and enable the new contract to be in place for April 2022.
- 2.2 It is the decision of the Director of Adult Social Care & Health, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Health, Wellbeing & Sport, to delay the procurement of the Berkshire West Stop Smoking Service for up to 12 months and to extend the current contract to 31st March 2022.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

0-19 (25) Public Health Nursing Service

- 3.1 The 0-19 (25) service provides the Public Health nursing service to all residents in Reading aged 0-19 (and up to 25 for those with Special Educational Needs). This comprises of the health visiting and school nursing service. These services provide statutory elements such as the 5 mandated checks in infancy and the National Childhood Measurement Programme. It also provides wider non-mandated services such as well baby clinics, breast feeding support and health promotion in schools.
- 3.2 The 0-19 (25) public health nursing service contract is currently due to expire on 30 September 2020. A new Berkshire West joint contract was due to be procured from 1 April 2021 with in interim contract established to bridge the 6 months of Oct 20- Mar 21. Lead Members have previously been briefed on these plans.
- 3.3 The unprecedented Covid-19 emergency has directly impacted on commissioner resources needed to undertake a competitive tendering process within the usual timescales. Potential providers are also affected by key members of staff being unavailable, due to illness or redeployment into other roles.
- 3.4 In light of the impact of Covid-19, commissioners sought advice from the procurement lead and now intend to seek an extension of the existing contract. To ensure continuity of this key service and in discussion with the provider, commissioners intend to issue an interim contract with the current provider for a period of 18 months (Oct 20- Mar 22 with a value £4.26m).

Smoking Cessation Service

- 3.5 Whilst the proportion of the population who smoke has fallen, tobacco smoking still remains the leading cause of premature death in the UK. Smoking accounts for approximately half of the difference in life expectancy between the lowest and highest income groups, and harm from smoking is concentrated in our most disadvantaged communities (Public Health England, 2019). Smoking prevalence is highest in routine and manual workers, where here in Reading, 1 in 4 people (28.3% in 2018) in routine and manual occupations are a smoker, compared to 1 in 10 in managerial and professional occupations. Stop smoking services can contribute to reducing these health inequalities (NCSCT, 2013).
- 3.6 The current stop smoking service contract, was due to end on the 31st March 2021. Hence a re procurement process was underway, to ensure a new contract was in place for the 1st April 2021. This new contract is intended to be co-commissioned across Berkshire West with Reading contributing the same annual value.
- 3.7 As mentioned above, the unprecedented Covid-19 emergency has negatively impacted multiple factors across the system. This process requires significant consultation with colleagues in the NHS, many of whom are on the front line of this respiratory disease, but also colleagues across the council and voluntary sector who are also focused on front line operation. Commissioners resources needed to lead an efficient and competitive tendering process within the usual timescales has been impacted. Lastly, there is also a question about the resilience of potential providers following the aftermath of this disease to engage in a procurement process. Thus, more time is required to better assess the resilience of the workforce need to pursue this activity.
- 3.8 In light of the impact of Covid-19, commissioners sought advice from the procurement lead for Reading Borough Council and have jointly agreed to delay the tender process. With the option to review the current landscape every 3 months in view of whether

proceeding would be possible. To ensure continuity of this key service and in discussion with the provider, commissioners propose to issue an extension to the current contract for a period of a maximum 12 months. If on review in July/ August 2020 it is deemed possible to initiate a smoking contract by 1st October 2021, then the contract would only be extended by 6 months.

4. THE PROPOSAL

4.1 Current Position:

Two Berkshire West procurements have been commenced due to deliver new contracts for April 2021

4.2 Options Proposed

Delay the procurement of the 0-19 (25) public health nursing service for 12 months, and Stop smoking service up to 12 months, with a new joint Berkshire West contract to start on 1 April 2022 for both contracts

4.3 Other Options Considered

4.3.1 Continue with procurement of new contracts at this time.

This option has been explored with partners in the three local authorities and where appropriate, potential providers. There is consensus that going ahead with a procurement exercise at this time would not guarantee a fair procurement process and would particularly disadvantage any potential NHS provider whose staff are subject to redeployment, in addition to loss of capacity due to self-isolation or illness. The impact of this public health emergency on providers' resilience and ability to engage in a competitive process at this time, risks excluding the best provider for the contract which ranges from 5 years to 10 years in duration. This in turn would negatively impact the health and wellbeing of our residents across Reading Borough Council.

4.3.2 Defer procurement for a shorter period of time (for example 3 months)

This option has been explored and discounted for 0-19s contract, due to the uncertain duration of the Covid-19 emergency and the disruption caused, as well as the fact that the service is performing well, as measured by national metrics and delivering essential services to children, young people and families.

For the smoking contract, which relies less on NHS colleagues for delivery of the contract, there is a desire to continue this process as soon as practically possible to do without compromising the procurement process. As we do not have not timescales on how long this hiatus period will last, a three-month review clause has been agreed to review the landscape and decided whether a six month or 12 month delay is required. Thus, a maximum of 12 months has been requested.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

5.1 These contracts support the third or Reading Borough Council's Strategic aims. By delaying the procurements proposed, the sixth strategic aim is supported because it will ensure the council enters into contracts which are fit for purpose.

3. To protect and enhance the lives of vulnerable adults and children
6. Ensuring the Council is fit for the future

6. ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The delay of the procurement of both of these contracts will not have a notable impact on the environment or climate change. More broadly, a successful smoking cessation service will reduce the involvement of the tobacco industry in the local economy which has benefits in reduced reliance on their global supply chains.

7. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 7.1 The planned delay of the procurement does not require consultation with the public as the services for residents will continue to be delivered without interruption due to extending existing contracts.

8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 This is not required for the planned delay of the procurements as services currently in existence will continue to be offered to all residents. Full health needs assessments are being undertaken for the procurements which will highlight an issues of equality and allow services to be specified accordingly.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The authority to enter Reading Borough Council into a contract for the 0-19 service and the smoking cessation service is delegated within the Council's constitution to the Director of Children's Services and the Director of Adult Care and Health Services respectively.
- 9.2 To ensure a continued service for Reading residents, Reading Borough Council will need to enter into directly awarded interim contracts with both of the current providers to cover the period of time between current contract end date and the point when procurements can secure new contracts for Reading (April 2022). Direct award of such interim contracts sits outside of usual procurement law, but cabinet office advice at this time is that due to the Coronavirus pandemic it is permissible to undertake these direct awards.
- 9.3 It is planned that the Director of Children's Services and the Director of Adult Care and Health Services will use their delegation to enter Reading Borough Council into these contracts

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The current value of the 0-19 contract is £2.84m per annum. The Medium Term Financial Plan did not identify a saving against this contract associated with the re-procurement on a Berks West footprint in April 21. It is planned that the interim contract to ensure continuity of the service up to April 22 will be of the same financial value and therefore a delay of 12 months has a neutral financial impact
- 10.2 The current value of the smoking cessation contract is £100k per annum. The Medium Term Financial Plan did not identify a saving against this contract associated with the re-procurement on a Berks West footprint in April 21. It is planned that the interim contract to ensure continuity of the service up to April 22 will be of the same financial value and therefore a delay of 12 months has a neutral financial impact

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 Nil