

Notice of Non-key Executive Decision

Subject Heading:	Permission to procure Havering's All Age Autism Service
Decision Maker:	Barbara Nicholls, Strategic Director of People
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Gillian Ford, Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Care Services
ELT Lead:	Barbara Nicholls, Strategic Director of People
Report Author and contact details:	Sophie Barron, Senior Commissioner – Living Well T: 01708 431082 E: Sophie.Barron@havering.gov.uk
Policy context:	<p>The Adult Social Care and Support Planning Policy states that Havering's vision is:</p> <p>'Supporting excellent outcomes for the people of Havering by helping communities to help themselves and targeting resources and interventions to encourage independence'</p> <p>It is also Havering's aim to deliver integrated services and work in partnership to achieve improved outcomes and value for money services for residents.</p>
Financial summary:	<p>The proposed contract will have a service model that will support both adults and children with autism. The service will operate out of community centres in both the North and South of the borough to reduce fixed accommodation expenses.</p> <p>The proposed total cost for the 3 years + 2 years' extension contract will be</p>

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	<p>£350,000. This is broken down into annual costs as per below:</p> <p>Year 1: £70,000 Year 2: £70,000 Year 3: £70,000 Year 4: £70,000 Year 5: £70,000</p>
Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Sub Committee:	People's Overview and Scrutiny Sub Committee
Is this decision exempt from being called-in?	The decision will be exempt from call in as it is a Non key Decision

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The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

People - Things that matter for residents x

Place - A great place to live, work and enjoy

Resources - A well run Council that delivers for People and Place.

Part A – Report seeking decision

DETAIL OF THE DECISION REQUESTED AND RECOMMENDED ACTION

For the reasons stated in this report, the Strategic Director of People is recommended to authorise the procurement of a contract for Havering's All Age Autism Service for a period of 3 years with a 2-year extension at the estimated cost of £350,000.

AUTHORITY UNDER WHICH DECISION IS MADE

The Havering Constitution:

Scheme 3.3.3

Powers common to all Strategic Directors

1. General

1.1 To take any steps, and take any decisions, necessary for the proper management and administration of their allocated directorate, in accordance with applicable Council policies and procedures.

4. Contracts

4.1 To approve commencement of a tendering process for all contracts below a total contract value £1,000,000.

STATEMENT OF THE REASONS FOR THE DECISION

Background

Havering currently commissions the Sycamore Trust to deliver a preventative offer for Adults with Autism and related conditions at a cost of £80,000.00 per annum with the current contract ending on the 31st July 2024. The current provider has delivered this service since 2018. In 2021, a procurement exercise was completed, but the procurement cycle failed because no suitable bids were received. As a result, an extension was awarded to the Sycamore Trust as an interim measure from 1st February 2021 and again in December 2023 to ensure continuity of service for users of the service.

Summary

Throughout 2023, various options have been explored to secure additional investment to expand the adult service to an all-age offering to deliver on our 'All Age Autism Strategy', agreed upon by Cabinet in August 2022. Unfortunately, despite exploring various funding streams, it has not been possible with the current budget pressures impacting Havering and our Health

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partners, to secure any additional funding. By reconfiguring the service, the impact of the £80,000 Council funding can be maximised.

With the launch of the all-age strategy and the development and expansion of North East London NHS Foundation Trust (NELFT's) Autism Diagnostic pathways earlier in 2023, the current service specification is no longer fit for purpose. In addition, there have been some service delivery-related issues with the commissioned provider, i.e. low numbers of new referrals when compared to the numbers coming through the new NELFT diagnostic pathways; and a considerable spend on rental costs. The service currently only supports 3.1% of Havering's predicted adult autism community, which supports the requirement for a review of the current autism service.

The Council is also aware that there is increased demand for support for parents of children with autism due to a large demographic shift of children with additional needs moving into the borough, as detailed in the 2021 School Census. This has also been an increase in requests for peer support for those over 30, which is not delivered within the current contract.

Although it is now understood that Sycamore Trust delivers an all age offer from the hub by utilising funding from other sources, there is currently no peer support and social inclusion offer for Havering Children with Autism other than signposting and advice and a Parent Support Group.

Mapping of Services

Before approaching the autistic community for further feedback on what support they think is missing, research was undertaken to see what current services are available for this cohort.

The findings show that while there are services that welcome those with autism, they are either not dedicated autism support offers, are only available if the person has additional needs such as Learning Disabilities, or serve a specific need such as mental health and employment. There also seems to be more peer support and activity-based services for those 18 and above.

In addition, many national organisations share free online resources for those with autism including information and advice. Many of these organisations provide this support through operating web chat/phone lines and Facebook groups.

Autism Surveys

To help understand what the current gaps are in Havering, a survey was designed in collaboration with people with autism and their parents and carers to gather feedback. Two surveys, one for those with autism and one for parents and carers were published in February for 4 weeks, resulting in a combined 149 responses.

The main focus of both surveys was to establish the top 3 priorities to help us design a service that meets the current and future needs of our autistic community. A report detailing the full findings from these surveys are attached as Appendix A.

Proposed service design

The findings and feedback from the surveys have been used to design a new All Age Autism service specification. The service will be community based, providing information and advice, peer support and activity groups to meet the needs of local people of all ages on the Autistic Spectrum. The new annual contract value has been increased to £70,000 due to a redistribution of funds related to previous accommodation costs of approximately £20,000. The service will also include supporting individuals and their families through the diagnosis process in the form of pre diagnostic support.

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The service will be framed around 4 keys areas:

1. Partnership Working

The provider will work with various services and organisations across health, social care, and education and employment settings. This will include working with GP's and NELFT's diagnostic pathways to improve support to those going through the diagnosis process. It will also require working closely with children's and adult's social care, mental health providers and the DWP to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for the autistic community.

2. Raising Awareness

The provider will support Havering's All Age Autism Strategy with its vision of making the borough Autism friendly. This will include working with local businesses to highlight areas that may not encourage people with autism to access their premises as well as maximising employment opportunities. To support this, the provider will facilitate a training programme for volunteers with lived experience to deliver autism awareness sessions to organisations across the borough with a particular focus on education and employment settings. The provider will also be encouraged to work with other agencies to raise awareness through fundraising and events.

3. Peer Support

The provider will facilitate weekly face to face peer support groups for adults and activity groups for children in community buildings in the North and South of the borough. It is envisaged that these groups will take place on an alternate basis to manage demand across the borough and be held at accessible times such as after school or in the evenings. The groups focus will be to increase life skills to enable service users to access the community and help maximise their independence. In addition, the provider will facilitate a monthly parents and carers support group, a pre-diagnosis group, and an Autism Steering Group to feed into the Havering Autism Partnership Board.

4. Information and Advice

The provider will provide dedicated prearranged 1:2:1 sessions for those individuals not in education, employment or training to achieve economic outcomes through information and signposting to relevant support. The provider will also facilitate an online Facebook group to advertise their services and provide an online space for the autistic community to come together and share advice and resources.

Proposed procurement

As it is a standard contract it will be an open route to the market to provide an opportunity to more bidders, encouraging competition which is needed as the specialist market in Havering is poor. There will be three qualifying questions in place which providers will have to pass before being able to access the method statement questions to support their bid. The recommended award criteria will be as standard, 25% quality, 70% price and 5% social value.

It is recommended that permission is granted to procure Havering's All Age Autism Service based on the above proposal to enable Havering to meet the current and future needs of its autistic community.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

Option 1 - To extend the current contract with the Sycamore Trust

This option has been considered and rejected as the current contract only targets adults with Autism. The current service is also being operated out of a rented unit in the Liberty Shopping

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centre using a significant portion of the providers annual funding which is not providing value for money.

Option 2 – Let the contract lapse

Another option would be to let the contract lapse at its current end date of July 31st 2024. As identified in the mapping exercise that was conducted, there are not many services available in the community for our autistic residents, especially for children. In addition, as highlighted in an in the Equalities Impact Assessment under Appendix B, this decision would create a gap in service provision which may result in an increase for demand in statutory services therefore this option has been rejected.

PRE-DECISION CONSULTATION

A survey was co-designed with residents on the autistic spectrum as well as the stakeholders of the Autism Partnership Board for feedback. The surveys were published on Citizens Space on 15th February 2024 for one month and resulted in a combined 149 responses. The survey outcomes were analysed and fed into the service specification, which was shared with the Autism Partnership Board for final comment.

A Procurement Intention Notice (PIN) was circulated to the Market to gauge interest in Havering's All Age Autism Service on the 26th March 2024. This has resulted in 5 providers expressing interest in providing the service.

NAME AND JOB TITLE OF STAFF MEMBER ADVISING THE DECISION-MAKER

Name: Sophie Barron

Designation: Senior Commissioner – Living Well

Signature:



Date:07/05/2024

Part B - Assessment of implications and risks

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

The Council has a general power of competence under Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 to do anything an individual may generally do, subject to any statutory limitations. The Council has the power under this section to agree to the proposals in the recommendations.

Further, the Council has the power to commence a procurement process for these services under Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972, which allows the Council to do anything which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of its functions.

The value of the proposed procurement is £350,000 over 5 years (3+2). The value of the proposed procurement is below the threshold for Light Touch Services (as listed in Schedule 3 of the Public Contract Regulations 2015).

The proposed open tender is compliant with the requirements of both the PCR and the Council's Contract Procedure Rules for contracts of this nature.

For the reasons set out above, the Council may commence the procurement process.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

This decision paper is seeking approval to procure Havering's All Age Autism Service. An open tender procurement will be undertaken to appoint a provider to deliver Havering's All Age Autism Service contract.

The proposed total cost for the 3 years + 2 years' extension contract will be £350,000. This is broken down into annual costs as per below:

Year 1: £70,000

Year 2: £70,000

Year 3: £70,000

Year 4: £70,000

Year 5: £70,000

Total: £350,000

The annual cost of the current contract is £80,000 per annum and this is fully funded from the Better Care Fund. Therefore, there is sufficient funding available to fund the proposal and this would result in an annual saving of £10,000 per annum and £50,000 over the life of the contract.

This saving is not a general fund saving as this contract is fully funded from the Better Care Fund. A review of the Better Care Fund and a reallocation of expenditure will be undertaken following approval at Health and Wellbeing Board level which may result in the £10,000 saving per annum attributed to the general fund.

HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS (AND ACCOMMODATION IMPLICATIONS WHERE RELEVANT)

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The recommendations made in this report do not give rise to any identifiable Human Resources implications or risks.

EQUALITIES AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Havering has a diverse community made up of many different groups and individuals. The Council values diversity and believes it essential to understand and include the different contributions, perspectives and experience that people from different backgrounds bring.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have due regard to:

- I. the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- II. the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share protected characteristics and those who do not, and;
- III. Foster good relations between those who have protected characteristics and those who do not.

Note: 'protected characteristics' are: age, gender, race and disability, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnerships, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity and gender reassignment.

The Council demonstrates its commitment to the Equality Act in its decision-making processes, the provision, procurement and commissioning of its services, and employment practices concerning its workforce. In addition, the Council is also committed to improving the quality of life and wellbeing of all Havering residents in respect of socio-economics and health determinants.

Equalities Health Impact Assessment is attached as Appendix B.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

The recommendations made in this report do not give rise to any identifiable environmental implications or risks.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

APPENDICES

Appendix A	Combined Autism Service Survey Results	Open
Appendix B	Equalities Health Impact Assessment	Open

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Part C – Record of decision

I have made this executive decision in accordance with authority delegated to me by the Leader of the Council and in compliance with the requirements of the Constitution.

Decision

Proposal agreed

Details of decision maker

Signed 

Name: Barbara Nicholls

Cabinet Portfolio held:
CMT Member title: Strategic Director of People
Head of Service title
Other manager title:

Date: 3rd May, 2024

Lodging this notice

The signed decision notice must be delivered to Committee Services, in the Town Hall.

For use by Committee Administration

This notice was lodged with me on _____

Signed _____