

Notice of KEY Executive Decision

Subject Heading:	Children's Emergency Duty Team (EDT) Contract
Decision Maker:	Tara Geere – Director of Starting Well - Statutory Director of Children's Services
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Oscar Ford – Cabinet Member for Children and Young People.
ELT Lead:	Tara Geere – Director of Starting Well - Statutory Director of Children's Services
Report Author and contact details:	Lee Clegg Senior Commissioner 01708 431251 Lee.clegg@havering.gov.uk
Policy context:	This decision enables the Council to meet its statutory duties, providing emergency out-of-hours social work services for children and young people in Havering, while supporting objectives to safeguard vulnerable children and deliver cost-effective services.
Financial summary:	<p>The EDT contract's "pay-as-you-go" model has reduced Havering's costs each year, with 2024/25 costs at £230,909. Despite rising partnership costs, Havering's share is falling due to improvements to case management, making this the most financially sustainable option compared to alternatives.</p> <p>The total contract value is projected to be £692,727, equating to £230,909 per annum.</p>

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Reason decision is Key	(a) Expenditure or saving (including anticipated income) of £500,000 or more
Date notice given of intended decision:	11 November 2025
Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Committee:	People Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Is it an urgent decision?	No
Is this decision exempt from being called-in?	No

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

People - Supporting our residents to stay safe and well **X**

Place - A great place to live, work and enjoy

Resources - Enabling a resident-focused and resilient Council

Part A – Report seeking decision

DETAIL OF THE DECISION REQUESTED AND RECOMMENDED ACTION

Decision

This decision paper is seeking approval from the Director of Starting Well to enter into a contract for the continued participation of Havering Council in the four-borough Children's EDT partnership. The contract is in partnership with the children's social care departments within Redbridge, Waltham Forest, and Barking & Dagenham councils, in accordance with the service specification delivered by Redbridge London Borough Council for the period 01 April 2026 to 31 March 2029, at an estimated value of £692,727. This arrangement will ensure ongoing statutory compliance, maintain seamless service provision, and deliver further opportunities for service development and efficient cost control.

AUTHORITY UNDER WHICH DECISION IS MADE

This decision is taken under the London Borough of Havering's Constitution:

Scheme 3.3.3

Powers common to all Strategic Directors

Part 3 of the Council's 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

4.2 To award all contracts with a total contract value of below £1,000,000 other than contracts covered by Contract Procedure Rule 16.3. This delegation shall include the ability to extend or vary a contract up to and including a value of £1,000,000 (provided that the extension is in line with the existing contractual provisions.)

As delegated to Tara Geere by way of sub-delegation from the Strategic Director of People effective from 1 April 2024.

STATEMENT UNDER WHICH DECISION IS MADE

The Children's EDT Local Authorities Partnership was established in 2014 as a collaborative initiative among four boroughs. The partnership enables the partnership boroughs to contribute resources towards Redbridge LA for the delivery of EDT services. The partnership will be Sole for discharging the four partner LA's statutory duties for EDT in accordance with the Children Act. Since the inception of the inter-agency agreement, the partnership has been subject to ongoing regular reviews and has consistently demonstrated cost-effectiveness.

The contract operates under the provisions of the inter-agency agreement, with the most recent three-year term set to conclude on 31 March 2026.

The service includes the provision of Approved Mental Health Professionals (AMHPs), thereby fulfilling the statutory responsibilities set out under both the Children Act and the Mental Health Act for the four participating London boroughs:

- London Borough of Havering
- London Borough of Barking & Dagenham
- London Borough of Waltham Forest
- London Borough of Redbridge

Service Aims

The four Boroughs Children's EDT is dedicated to safeguarding children by responding to urgent situations that occur outside regular business hours and necessitate immediate social work involvement. Such circumstances may involve referrals that, while not classified as emergencies, require timely attention to prevent any risk to the child's welfare or safety due to delayed interventions.

Service Objectives

- To meet statutory obligations by delivering an emergency out-of-hours social work service for children on behalf of the four Local Authorities.

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- To promptly identify, assess, prioritise, and manage emergencies involving children.
- To collaborate with relevant professionals, including law enforcement, care providers, and Out-of-Hour's emergency services, as appropriate.
- To ensure that all children and their carer's are treated with professionalism, dignity, and respect.

Performance

Children known to Havering Local Authority 2024-25 v 2023-24

Over 98% of referrals to EDT relate to children already engaged with Havering's children's social care, demonstrating that the EDT primarily supports ongoing case management rather than new case intake.

The proportion of referrals for children previously identified by children's social care compared to those not previously known has remained stable on an annual basis.

Most referrals continue to pertain to children already familiar to Children's Social Care when comparing Q4 2024 to Q4 2025. There has been a reduction of 168 (3.7%) in referrals for children that are already known to the service, and a decrease of 38 (46.9%) in referrals for those not previously known.

The recommended option for the Council is to remain in the four-borough partnership with an enhanced specification including increased data and benchmarking with no additional cost (Option 3 as further detailed below). This option offers a balanced solution by preserving the benefits of an established, cost-effective partnership while enabling service improvements and greater accountability. This reduces risks, supports financial sustainability, and aligns with strategic goals and stakeholder feedback.

The "pay-as-you-go" cost model implemented by Redbridge enables Havering to build upon its 22% reduction whilst retaining the partnerships continuity, resilience, and statutory compliance to safeguarding vulnerable children during emergencies. The partnership has been proven to be more cost-effective than seeking a new provider or integrating with adult services, which would raise costs and risks.

In contrast, the alternative options considered would either increase expenditure, cause service disruption, or present heightened risks to service delivery.

Options Appraisal

Option 1: Continue with Current Arrangement (Redbridge-led Partnership) with limited data requirements under the specification

Pros:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Established and cost-effective model.• Proven delivery with existing infrastructure.• Year on year reductions to use demonstrated.
Cons:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Limited flexibility for service development.• Variability in quality and responsiveness.

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Option 2: Commission Adult's EDT Provider for Children's EDT

Pros:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Opportunity to integrate with Havering's Adult EDT.• Adult EDT providers have a strong record of accomplishment in adult services.
Cons:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Higher estimated costs.• Requires internal alignment and detailed cost-benefit analysis.

Option 3: Remain in Four-Borough Partnership with Enhanced Specification including increased data and benchmarking with no additional cost

Pros:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Builds on existing partnerships with improved data, KPIs and service quality.• Potential to reduce Havering's usage through targeted in-house interventions.
Cons:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does not support integration with Adult EDT.• Limitations to renegotiations of specifications and inter-agency agreements.

Option 4: Go out to tender for a new provider

Pros:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensures value for money by comparing multiple bids.• Opportunity to design a bespoke service specification aligned with Havering's specific needs and Ofsted recommendations.• May attract providers offering innovative models, including digital triage, integrated mental health support and flexible staffing.
Cons:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Less cost-effective solution.• Potential disruption during provider handover.• Limited number of specialist providers in the market.• Underperformance and public confidence.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

- **Option 1:** Retain the current partnership arrangement – rejected as unable to further enhance and strengthen accountability.
- **Option 2:** Commission Adult Provider for Children's EDT – rejected due to higher costs and lack of integration benefits.
- **Option 4:** Go out to tender for a new provider – rejected due to market limitations, higher costs, and risk of service disruption.

PRE-DECISION CONSULTATION

Consultation has taken place with partner boroughs, senior leadership, and relevant stakeholders. Feedback supports the recommended approach.

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

Name: Lee Clegg

Designation: Senior Commissioner for Starting Well

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Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'K. Kelly', is written over a light blue rectangular background.

Date: 20 November 2025

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 recommendation sought within this report is in accordance with this power.

Furthermore, the Council also has the power to enter into the contract under s111 of the Local Government Act 1972, which permits the Council to do anything which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of its functions.

The proposed arrangement is between contracting authorities and falls within the category of exempted contracts under Schedule 2 of the Procurement Act 2023 relating to horizontal arrangements. Such contracts are excluded from the scope of competitive procurement where the cooperation is:

- (i) aimed at achieving common objectives in connection with the exercise of public functions.
- (ii) is governed solely by public interest considerations; and
- (iii) no more than 20% of the activities are intended to be carried out other than for those public functions.

Officers are satisfied that the proposed partnership has been structured to meet these statutory conditions and therefore does not require a competitive procurement procedure under the Procurement Act 2023.

In light of the above, the Council may enter the contract.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

- The partnership model is cost-effective, with a “pay-as-you-go” approach and year-on-year reductions in Havering’s costs.
- Financial risks are minimised compared to alternative options, which would increase expenditure and operational risk.

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

- No direct HR implications for Havering staff, as service is delivered by Redbridge LA.
- Partnership model ensures continuity and stability for service users and staff.

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EQUALITIES AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

- Overall, the decision to continue within the EDT partnership is likely to have a positive equalities and social inclusion impact, as it maintains a critical lifeline for safeguarding vulnerable children and young people.
- The main risks relate to service variability, accessibility, and the ability to meet diverse needs, all of which can be mitigated through strengthened commissioning, monitoring, and partnership governance.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Havering Council is committed to protecting and promoting the health and wellbeing of residents. There are no direct health and wellbeing implications arising from the recommended decision regarding the future commissioning arrangements for the provision of the children's EDT Contract. Effective provision of out of hours duty social care supports efforts to protect the health and wellbeing of vulnerable children and young people, by ensuring that they can be provided with timely social work support in the event of urgent need.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

No significant environmental or climate change implications identified.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Children's Act 1989
Ofsted - The multi-agency response to children and families who need help
HM Government - Working together to safeguard children 2023: Statutory Guidance

APPENDICES

Appendix A - EDT Review & Options Appraisal Report

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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

Delete as applicable

Proposal NOT agreed because

Details of decision maker

Signed

Name:

Cabinet Portfolio held:

CMT Member title:

Head of Service title

Other manager title:

Date:

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 _____