

Notice of KEY Executive Decision

Subject Heading:	Experts at Hand – Occupational Therapy Capacity-Building Offer (via Constellia) – Contract Award
Decision Maker:	Tara Geere
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Kevin Gill
ELT Lead:	Tara Geere
Report Author and contact details:	Marcus Bennett, 01708 433465, marcus.bennett@havering.gov.uk
Policy context:	This contract supports delivery of Havering’s SEND Reform Plan, specifically the requirement from the Department for Education (DfE) that we develop an ‘Experts at Hand’ offer, funded through a new £2,347,790 Local Inclusion Partnership Grant (Experts at Hand and Transformation Fund). The Experts at Hand offer is intended to provide specialist input that is primarily preventative and capacity-building, enabling education settings to meet need sustainably by building staff confidence and capability through training, advice, coaching, modelling and consultation. The emphasis is on whole-setting impact and alignment to the graduated approach, strengthening inclusive practice in mainstream settings and reducing escalation to statutory services.
Financial summary:	The estimated contract value is between £500,000 - £650,000. Final value and resourcing model will be confirmed through the Constellia Statement of Work

Key Executive Decision

	process. The contract will be fully funded from the Local Inclusion Partnership Grant (Experts at Hand and Transformation Fund). The spend is time-limited and creates no ongoing financial commitment beyond the term of the grant.
Reason decision is Key	Expenditure or saving (including anticipated income) of £500,000 or more
Date notice given of intended decision:	16 July 2026
Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Committee:	People OSC
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

X People - Supporting our residents to stay safe and well

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

Approval is sought to commission Occupational Therapy Essex via the Council's existing contract with Constellia Limited to deliver an Occupational Therapy Experts at Hand capacity-building offer across Havering education settings at the value of £500,000 - £650,000.

AUTHORITY UNDER WHICH DECISION IS MADE

Part 3.3.3 of the Council's Constitution – Powers of Members of the Senior Leadership Team, Contract Powers, specifically paragraph 4.2, which authorises the award of contracts with a total contract value below £1,000,000. This authority is exercised by the Director of Starting Well as the authorised decision maker for this Key Executive Decision.

STATEMENT OF THE REASONS FOR THE DECISION

The Experts at Hand funding is time-limited (if not spent by end of the financial year 2026-2027, it must be returned to the DfE) and requires rapid mobilisation to achieve intended system benefits. This commission will strengthen inclusive practice by increasing setting capability to identify and meet needs earlier, aligned to the graduated approach, helping reduce escalation to statutory services and high-cost specialist provision. Procurement will be delivered as a direct award via Constellia, Havering's appointed partner for professional services Statements of Work, providing a compliant route for the Council's requirement.

Officers will finalise the specification and Statement(s) of Work through Constellia, ensuring delivery is consistent with DfE grant conditions and is focused on capacity-building activity (training, advice, coaching, modelling and consultation), rather than long-term direct therapy.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

The DfE has informed local authorities that further LIPG funding will be given to LAs in FY27-28, and FY28-29, with estimated values at £4m and £4.1m, respectively. As such, in the next 3-6 months the council SEND Services and Children's Commissioning Service will establish a 2-3 strategy for delivering its Experts at Hand Offer responsibilities. As the funding for FY26-27 was announced in April 2026 with a requirement for it to be spent by 31st March 2027, options that take longer to deliver such as recommissioning of the ICB's contract for SEND therapies with NELFT, and larger scale reorganisation to establish new in-house therapy teams were not feasible for FY26-27, but will be considered for future years. For this year the following options were considered and rejected:

Options considered:

- Do nothing – rejected, as it would not deliver DfE grant conditions and would forgo opportunity to build inclusion capacity, while risking reputational damage of the Council not acting on opportunity to invest in support and services or fail to deliver within timescales.

Key Executive Decision

- Traditional 'direct therapy' commission – rejected, as it would not align to the Experts at Hand emphasis on whole-setting impact and sustainability.
- Open-market tender – not recommended due to timescales and because the requirement will be procured through a compliant Constellia framework route.

PRE-DECISION CONSULTATION

Internal consultation has been undertaken with Procurement (re Constellia route), Finance (re grant funding) and relevant SEND operational leads.

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

Name: Marcus Bennett

Designation: Head of SEND and Alternative Provision Service

Signature:



Date: 27.07.26

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.

Additionally, the Council has the power to procure a contract under Section 111 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 Council has an existing contract with Constellia Limited which was procured through the Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation (ESPO) MSTAR4 framework. The contract enables the Council to commission work to be carried out through work orders as proposed in this report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

The estimated contract value is up to £650,000 and will be met in full from the Local Inclusion Partnership Grant (Experts at Hand and Transformation Fund). There is no call on the Council's Budget or DSG allocation beyond the grant-funded allocation. The grant is provided with strict terms and conditions and may be clawed back if not used correctly. The proposed contract is in line with those conditions. In addition the Council's Local SEND Reform Plan recently submitted to the DFE includes this expenditure which is expected to enable more children to be supported in the mainstream educational settings. The key financial risks therefore relate to ensuring the timeliness, performance and impact of this contract; these will be managed through clear outputs, milestones and reporting requirements within the Statement of Work and through contract management.

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

No additional HR risks or implications arise as delivery will be provided by an external supplier under contract.

EQUALITIES AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

The commission is intended to improve access, inclusion and outcomes for children and young people with SEND by strengthening setting capability and earlier support.

No adverse equalities impacts are anticipated.

Key Executive Decision

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 recommendation to utilize the Council's existing contract with Constellia Limited to commission Occupational Therapy Essex to deliver Expert at Hand capacity-building offer. The Experts at Hand model focuses on improving the early identification of needs amongst children and young people with SEND, while facilitating the provision of cross-professional prevention and support measures on issues such as speech and language, occupational therapy and sensory needs. The aim of this approach is to enable educational settings to provide the best possible support for each child, while preventing further escalation of need. As a result, implementation of the Experts at Hand model should support improved health and wellbeing for children and young people with SEND by enhancing the ability of mainstream educational settings to prevent and address issues impacting on outcomes relating to attainment, mental wellbeing and engagement with education.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

No material environmental or climate change implications are anticipated.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

APPENDICES

None

Key Executive Decision

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 _____