

## Procure a Higher Education Institution Provider for Social Work Apprenticeships

**Forward Plan reference number:** N/A

<b>Report title:</b> Award provider for Social Work Apprenticeships to Anglia Ruskin University	
<b>Report to:</b> Helen Lincoln, Executive Director, Children and Families, and Nick Presmeg, Director, Adult Social care	
<b>Report author:</b> <i>Jan Williams – Team Manager – ESCA Childrens</i>	
<b>Date:</b> <i>3rd July 2020</i>	<b>For:</b> Decision
<b>Enquiries to:</b> <i>Jan Williams, Team Manager ESCA Childrens</i>	
<b>County Divisions affected:</b> All Essex	

### 1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To request permission to award the contract to deliver the Social Work Apprenticeship Degree through the Apprenticeship and Association Training to Anglia Ruskin University

### 2. Recommendations

#### 2.1 Helen Lincoln, Executive Director Childrens Social Care and Education,

To award a contract for 3 years (with the option to extend for a further 2 years) to Anglia Ruskin University to deliver the Social Work Apprenticeship Degree to Childrens Social Care Staff at Essex County .

#### 2.2 Nick Presmeg, Executive Director Adult Social Care

To award a contract for 3 years (with the option to extend for a further 2 years) to Anglia Ruskin University to deliver the Social Work Apprenticeship Degree to Adult Social Care Staff at Essex County

### 3. Summary of issue

- 3.1 Given the nationwide shortage of talent in the social care space and increasing costs to hire and train, it is vital that alternative pipelines are identified to meet the growing demand for social workers in the present and the future. With the creation of the Social Worker degree apprenticeship standard at the end of 2018, the alternative entry point to social work training of the Social Work Apprenticeship was launched.
- 3.2 The apprenticeship levy, introduced in 2017, requires organisations with an annual pay bill of over £3 million, which includes the Council, to pay 0.5% of the total salary cost to HM Revenue and Customs. Generated funds are held in a protected account that can only be accessed through the Digital

Apprenticeship Service and be used to fund apprenticeships at the organisation. This funding is then made available to employers, through which they can pay for training for apprentices. If an employer does not spend their entire levy amount on apprenticeships, then the unspent portion at the end of each financial year will be made available to other employers to spend on apprenticeships.

- 3.3 It is a key corporate priority to ensure every effort is made to utilise the apprenticeship levy generated by the Council . Through the Social Work Degree Apprenticeship Standard, an approved programme has been developed which enables candidates to undertake study for the Social Work Apprenticeship Degree. The Degree is run over a 3 year period by a Higher Education Provider and each candidate will be able to undertake their study whilst working employed as an apprentice by the Council. Candidates will be identified through an expressions of interest process followed by an internal selection process across both functions. The initial cost of the Social Work Apprenticeship Degree is £23,000 per candidate over 3 years and the expected commencement date of the course is January 2021. The contract with the appointed Higher Education Provider will contain the option to extend for a further 2 years, should the Council wish to extend the Degree to further cohorts.
- 3.4 Recruitment and retention is a key strategic driver of the overall workforce strategy. The strategy contains priority areas to maximise the opportunities for Essex to 'grow and develop' its workforce of social workers for both Adults and Children. Maximising the gains through the use of the Apprenticeship Levy and procuring a provider to deliver the Social Work Degree apprenticeship standard is a key component of the workforce strategy. By being proactive in procuring a provider for the Social Work Apprenticeship Degree, the Council is able to have a greater influence on what and how social workers are taught, ensuring that the training given is tailored to the Council's requirements whilst also providing development opportunities for staff across both Adult and Childrens' social care services.
- 3.5 The Council will seek to enlist a cohort of approximately 25 apprentices across both Adults and Children's social care services at a total cost of £575k for the first 3 years and a further £1,150,000 if the contract were extended for two further cohorts. This would be drawn down from the Council's Apprenticeship Levy. The Council will review and evaluate the success of the programme, prior to determining future cohorts and seeking appropriate authority to extend the contract.
- 4 A commissioning framework called the Apprenticeships and Associated Training Framework was established in 2018 by YPO (a procurement service owned by 13 Local Authorities) to enable contracting authorities (including local authorities) access to both regional and National providers of training across a large range of topics and services has been utilised to evaluate and award to the successful provider.

## **4. Options**

### **Option 1 – Award to Anglia Ruskin University (recommend)**

- 4.1 This is the recommended option, as it enables the Council to ensure that it utilises the Apprenticeship Levy which it pays annually to HMRC, and would help ensure that the skill shortage within the Social Care sector is addressed over the next few years. Anglia Ruskin has been selected as the successful bidder following procurement processes.

- 4.2 The Benefits of implementing are:-

- Greater influence on what and how social workers are taught
- The cost of training is covered by the apprenticeship levy
- Training will be tailored to ECC specifications
- Increased diversity in social work talent pool
- Increased engagement from new social workers
- Development opportunities for existing members of staff

### **Option 2 – Do Nothing**

- 4.3 This is not the recommended option because it will result in the Council missing an opportunity to work towards filling a gap with the social care sector, which would see the Council develop its own staff to be able to ensure sufficient future resources.

- 4.4 Implications of not proceeding:

- The social care talent pool continues to remain shallow
- Continued difficulties filling positions
- Increasing recruitment costs

## **5. Next steps**

- 5.1 Following the award of this contract, arrangements will be made to meet with Anglia Ruskin University to progress the programme in accordance with the contract.

## **6. Issues for consideration**

### **6.1 Financial implications**

The levy is currently underspent and month on month will be lost if the Council do not commit the funding for investment in apprenticeship training. The initial contract award will be £575k with the option to extend for two further cohorts at a cost of £1,150,000 which will be recovered through the online digital account held by HMRC. Any associated officer costs incurred as a result of the procurement and mobilisation will be incorporated within the current budgets held by the service areas.

## **6.2 Legal implications**

- 6.2.1 Any procurement undertaking must be carried out in accordance with the Council's own procurement policies and procured in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015. Where frameworks are used to conduct the procurement, additional care must be had to ensure that the frameworks specifications are adhered to during the process. These processes have been followed and award of the contract is now appropriate.

## **7. Equality and Diversity implications**

- 7.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty applies to the Council when it makes decisions. The duty requires us to have regard to the need to:
- (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act. In summary, the Act makes discrimination etc. on the grounds of a protected characteristic unlawful
  - (b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
  - (c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.
- 7.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, gender, and sexual orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).
- 7.3 The equality impact assessment indicates that the proposals in this report will not have a disproportionately adverse impact on any people with a particular characteristic.

## **8. List of appendices**

- 8.1 Appendix 1 – EqiA

## **9. List of Background papers**

### **9.1 None**

<b>I approve the above recommendations set out above for the reasons set out in the report.</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Helen Lincoln, Executive Director, Children and families</b>	<b>7/7/20</b>
<b>I approve the above recommendations set out above for the reasons set out in the report.</b>	
<b>Nick Presmeg, Director, Adult Social Care</b>	<b>7/7/20</b>

### **In consultation with:**

<b>Role</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Executive Director for Corporate and Customer Services (S151 Officer)</b>	<b>6/7/20</b>
<b>Margaret Lee</b>	
<b>Director, Legal and Assurance (Monitoring Officer)</b>	<b>3/7/20</b>
<b>Laura Edwards on behalf of Paul Turner</b>	