

ECC to take responsibility as lead partner to administer DfE grant and contract for Step Up to Social Work Programme 2021/23

Report title: Decision for Essex CC to take responsibility for administering the DfE grant and contract for a further cohort of the Step Up to Social Work Programme- Regional Lead Authority for Step Up to Social Work	
Report to: Helen Lincoln, Executive Director of Children and Families and Education	
Report author: Jan Williams – jan.williams@essex.gov.uk	
Date: 28/09/20	For: Decision
Enquiries to: <i>Jan Williams, Team manager ESCA</i>	
County Divisions affected: All Essex	

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report is to request permission for Essex County Council (ECC) to continue as Lead Authority for the Eastern Region Step up to Social Work programme for a further cohort of graduates (Cohort 7) running from January 2022 - March 2023 including preparation and application to DfE in November 2020.
- 1.2 To extend the contract with Anglia Ruskin University for a further 24 months under the terms of the contract.
- 1.3 To include Southend Borough Council as a partner in the agreement

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To agree to ECC continuing to act as Lead Authority for Eastern Region Step up to Social Work Programme for a further cohort of Graduates
- 2.2 Subject to the successful application to the Department for Education, extend the current contract with Anglia Ruskin University (ARU), the Higher Education Institution (HEI) Provider, to deliver the Step up to Social Work programme
- 2.3 To agree to admit Southend-on-Sea Borough Council as a Partner to the Eastern Region Step up to Social Work Programme.
- 2.4 To enter into a Partnership Agreement with the following Authorities to continue the Eastern Region Step up to Social Work Programme for the 14 months to 31st March 2023:
 - (a) Norfolk County Council;
 - (b) Peterborough City Council;
 - (c) Suffolk County Council;
 - (d) Cambridgeshire County Council; and

(e) Thurrock Council.

- 2.5 For ECC to support 9 trainees through the Step Up to Social Work programme with the remaining number to be supported by the other authorities named above. The bid will be for a total of 40 trainees across the eastern region.

3. Summary of issue

- 3.1 There is a nationwide shortage of talent in the social care and there are 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 future.
- 3.2 The Department of Education (DfE) currently funds a fast track graduate training scheme for social work recruitment called 'Step Up to Social Work'. This programme provides a 14 month programme which is designed and delivered by consortiums of local authorities who procure and work in partnership with a selected Higher Education Institution.
- 3.3 The Eastern Region local authorities of Essex County Council , Norfolk County Council, Suffolk County Council, Peterborough City Council, Cambridgeshire County Council, Southend-one-Sea Borough Council and Thurrock Council intend to bid to deliver cohort 7 of the Step Up to Social Work programme from January 2022. The Eastern Region authorities were previously successful in the bid for cohort 6 which commenced in January 2020 and continues to support 40 candidates through the programme within the region.
- 3.4 ECC became the Lead Authority in May 2019 have managed this programme since that time. The existing contract with Anglia Ruskin University was novated from Cambridgeshire County Council to ECC in April 2019 as part of the transfer of responsibilities for Lead Authority. ECC is proposing to continue with the role of Lead Authority for the purposes of Cohort 7.
- 3.5 ECC is intending to directly support 9 students through this programme with the remaining places allocated to other authorities in the Eastern Region. Anglia Ruskin University was awarded the HEI provider contract by Cambridgeshire County Council, which contains the option to extend for further 24 months.
- 3.6 The costs of the programme including funds to support administration and project oversight are fully met by DfE through a grant paid to ECC as the Lead Authority. ECC is therefore responsible for monitoring and administering to both the students, HEI and partner local authorities. Existing recruitment for wider projects within ESCA will create the capacity to support this project so no additional ECC resources will be required outside of support services such as legal advice for contracts etc.

4. Options

4.1 Option 1 - Refuse to take on lead authority responsibility.

No other local authority in the region currently has capacity to lead this project and as such could result in the Eastern region bid being withdrawn. This could result in:-

- The social care talent pool continues to remain shallow
- Continued difficulties filling positions
- Increasing recruitment costs
- Reputational damage to ECC for not supporting this given we are the largest beneficiary of the programme.

4.2 Option 2 - Adopt lead authority responsibility and to extend the current contract for a period of up to twenty-four (24) months. This will result in;

- Ensuring the programme is able to run in the region
- The cost of the programme including administering the lead role is covered by DfE
- Increased diversity in social work talent pool
- Development opportunities for existing members of staff

5. Next steps

5.1 A decision is required at member level for ECC to accept the risks of becoming the regional lead for this project. Following this decision, legal services will be required to develop and administer contracts to all partners (drafts already available).

ESCA will allocate project support under the management of Jan Williams to arrange continuation of the project in liaison with DfE, regional partner local authorities and ARU.

6. Issues for consideration

6.1 Financial implications

6.1.1 The Step Up to Social Work programme, which is funded by the Department for Education is now inviting bids from local authorities for their 7th cohort of devliery. The programme provides an accelerated entry route into social work for high-achieving graduates and career changers and is delivered through the development of a bespoke work-based 14 month postgraduate diploma programme to 31st March 2023. The programme is led by groups of local authorities working in regional partnerships and contracting with Higher Education Institutions (HEI).

6.1.2 Based on the funding analysis provided by the DfE the bid of **£1,382m** will fund 40 trainees in full for the eastern Region, with no other match funding required. It should be noted, as grant recipient, Essex County Council is fully responsible for all of the contracts and the no further funding will be available from the DfE. Therefore, should costs exceed the grant funding allocated, Essex will have the responsibility of recovering these from other members of the Eastern Region.

6.1.3 As the lead authority Essex will be submitting the Eastern Regional bid to DfE to participate in the seventh cohort which will be for 40 trainees, of which Essex will support 9. The funding bid in total is **£1.382m** calculated as per the DfE criteria and will be for the 14 months to 31st March 2023, analysed as follows, by financial year:

	Per trainee£	Total trainees	2021/22 £	2022/23 £	Total £
Bursary	19,833	40	113,331	679,989	793,320
Supervision and Support	1,750	40	10,000	60,000	70,000
Procurement ARU	11,667	40	66,669	400,011	466,680
Administration of Partnership	-	-	5,429	32,571	38,000
Additional funding based on cohort size	-	40	571	3,429	4,000
Delivery arrangements with HEI	-	-	1,429	8,571	10,000
Total			197,429	1,184,571	1,382,000

6.1.4 Regular update are required to be provided to the DfE on the performance of the grant as is an annual statement of grant usage. Also, lead authority, Essex County Council administrative costs are funded by the DfE element of the grant, Administration and Partnership.

6.2 Legal implications

6.2.1 If the bid for funding from the DfE is successful, ECC will need to enter into a new Partnership Agreement with the Eastern Region Partners for the purposes of Cohort 7. This should be in substantially the same form as the agreement signed in relation to Cohort 6.

6.2.2 ECC did not award the contract to ARU to appoint them as HEI partner, this was awarded by Cambridgeshire County Council and then novated to ECC in May 2019, when ECC took over responsibility as Lead Authority.

6.2.3 ELS is advised that this contract contains provisions to extend the contract for a period of 24 months, and therefore is permissible by the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

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).

8. List of appendices

None

9. List of Background papers

9.1 None

I approve the above recommendations set out above for the reasons set out in the report. Helen Lincoln, Executive Director, Childrens Social Care 	Date 5.10.20
---	---

In consultation with:

Role	Date
------	------

Cllr Louise McKinley – Lead Member Childrens Social Care	5/10/20
Executive Director for Corporate and Customer Services (S151 Officer)	1/10/20
Andrew Page	
Essex Legal Services	28/9/20