



FOR PUBLICATION

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET

17 November 2022

Report of the Executive Director of Children's Services

Procurement of a creative mentoring programme
(Cabinet Member for Education)

1. Divisions Affected

1.1 County wide

2. Key Decision

2.1 This is a key decision because it is likely to result in the Council incurring expenditure over £500,000. Whilst the anticipated expenditure is likely to be significant, consideration should be given to the fact that this is diverted expenditure from current non contracted spend.

3. Purpose

3.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval to undertake a procurement exercise of a block contract for a Creative Mentoring Programme which would incorporate the recruitment, training, and supervision of creative mentors.

a) Cabinet is asked to consider the approval for the procurement of a block contract to support an innovative regional approach for the commissioning of creative mentors.

b) Approve the diversion of the current maximum spend of £200,000 per annum to a 3-year, block contract commitment of a maximum of

£600,000. The funding of which to remain from unallocated Pupil Premium Plus.

c) Approve the permission to delegate the award of the contract to Executive Director of Children's Services.

4. Information and Analysis

- 4.1 Research has identified a greater prevalence of negative long-term outcomes for people with experience of the care system; this extends to educational attainment, mental and physical health, engagement with the criminal justice system and homelessness. (House of Commons Education Committee 2016, Hughes et al 2017). There is an acknowledged need for innovative approaches to working with children in care to empower their opportunities to engage with education and learning.
- 4.2 Derbyshire County Council has invested in creative approaches to supporting learning and achievement for children in care since 2007. In 2016 Derbyshire County Council's Virtual School was awarded a grant by The Mighty Creatives to establish a Creative Mentoring Programme, with the aim of generating a replicable model of intervention for other Virtual Schools in the region. In 2019 The Mighty Creatives were awarded further funding from 'What Works in Social Care' to develop a delivery infrastructure and expand the Creative Mentoring Programme to Virtual Schools across the East Midlands.
- 4.3 Creative mentoring is a one-to-one therapeutic intervention, utilising principles of unconditional positive regard, congruence, empathy and affective attunement. The therapeutic relationship is enacted through a creative process which follows principles of play, purpose, interest, and passion. The approach holds an explicit commitment to 'Social Pedagogy', promoting young people's social functioning, inclusion, participation, social identity, and social competence. (Kelly 2016)
- 4.4 Creative mentoring is available for children in care and care leavers, ranging from early years, primary, secondary and post 16 education stages. It is suitable for children and young people in education and those who are at risk of exclusion, or who are not in education or training. For those young people who are not attending education, creative mentoring is a means with which to fund opportunities for learning outside of school and support towards engagement back into formal or vocational education.
- 4.5 In 2021 Derby University undertook a review into the impact of the Derbyshire Virtual School's Creative Mentoring Programme. The review

concluded that creative mentoring led to positive experiences for young people whilst participating in the programme and for most it also produced positive outcomes, including gaining qualifications, making friends, gaining apprenticeships, and going to university; with data from several different sources supporting this. (Nunn 2021)

- 4.6 The current creative mentoring provision is funded via unallocated Pupil Premium Plus. There is no separate budget for the service and referrals are only made upon realisation of an underspend and targeted specifically for young people who are not in full time education or training. As a result, there have been variances in spend over the last three years. (see table below)

Academic Year	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
	£	£	£
Service Delivery	191,087	164,391	162,600
DCC Management	10,000	10,000	10,000
Ed Psychology	10,000	10,000	10,000
Total Costs	211,087	184,391	182,600

- 4.7 Since the regional expansion of the Creative Mentoring Programme in 2019, The East Midlands Virtual Schools Network has provided oversight of a network of creative mentors across Virtual Schools partners. Mentors and their supervision are commissioned centrally, and training and support is provided by regional Virtual Schools Educational Psychology Services. The programme is funded by individual Virtual Schools with the inclusion of some grant and match funding from the charitable sector. Whilst the intention of the grant provided to Derbyshire County Council 2016 was to implement a regional model, due to the current commissioning arrangements the Council is not yet a full partner within this arrangement.
- 4.8 By collaborating in a regional approach, opportunities for young people would be enhanced, particularly for those who are living outside of the Derbyshire boundary. It would reduce geographical disparity and ensure young people are able to access creative mentors across the Midlands regions. Young People would be able to access a mentor during times of transition and support provided to engage with their new education provision.
- 4.9 Additionally, the collaboration would remove the reliance upon Derbyshire County Council Educational Psychology service to provide supervision and support. This is a significant strain on a service which

has current capacity issues in meeting its statutory demands. A further benefit to a regional approach is the ability to access funds from a range of charitable sources. This is particularly valuable for young people in post 16 education where there is currently no secure and on-going Pupil Premium Plus funding for creative interventions. The regional collaboration also works with partners to track funding needs for vulnerable cohorts thus enhancing the opportunity for further targeted intervention.

- 4.10 The proposal is therefore to undertake a procurement exercise for a creative mentoring programme which meets the requirements of the regional approach. The funding will remain from the unused Pupil Premium Plus and targeted only to children and young people who are not receiving additional creative support from schools.

5. Alternative Options Considered

Option 1: Do Nothing

- The current commissioning model used by Derbyshire County Council is an Any Qualified Provider (AQP) Invitation to Quote. This allows only for the commissioning of single mentors and does not allow the flexibility to commission a block or regional provider.
- This model creates geographic limitations of support for children and young people with little opportunity to commission mentors across the region.
- This model is onerous and time consuming for officers of Derbyshire County Council, particularly in the due diligence and ongoing contract support for single mentors.

Option 2: Derbyshire County Council in house Mentoring (internal service)

- This option would require the recruitment of specialist creative mentors on a relief or flexible contract basis.
- Derbyshire County Council does not have capacity within the Virtual School or Educational Psychology Service to offer ongoing training and supervision for mentors.
- This model would also create geographic limitations of support for children and young people and would continue to isolate Derbyshire County Council from the regional approach.

6. Implications

- 6.1 Appendix 1 sets out the relevant implications considered in the preparation of the report.

7. Background Papers

7.1 None

8. Appendices

8.1 Appendix 1- Implications.

9. Recommendation(s)

9.1 That Cabinet:

- a) Approve a procurement solution of a block contract for a Creative Mentoring Programme which would incorporate the recruitment, training, and supervision of creative mentors.
- b) Approve the diversion of the current maximum spend of £200,000 per annum to a 3-year, block contract commitment of a maximum of £600,000. The funding of which to remain from unallocated Pupil Premium Plus.
- c) Approve the permission to delegate the award of the contract to Executive Director of Children's Services.

10. Reasons for Recommendation(s)

10.1 A procurement solution of a block contract would realise the benefits of a regional approach, it would also reduce the administrative burden of the AQP upon Derbyshire County Council Officers.

10.2 A 3-year contracting arrangement would provide a sustainable model for Derbyshire County Council's Virtual School and for children and young people accessing creative mentors. It would allow for an arrangement with a provider who would manage the ongoing recruitment, training, and supervision of mentors. There would be increased efficiency in reporting outcomes by a provider and the opportunity for Derbyshire County Council to access grant and match funding from the charitable sector. The financial envelope would be a maximum budget, with the provider only charging for services as delivered. The expenditure would not be higher than any unallocated Pupil Premium Plus allocation and would be targeted to children and young people who are not accessing creative support through existing education services.

11. Is it necessary to waive the call-in period?

11.1 No

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Implications

a) Financial

There will be a committed spend of up to £600,000 over a 3-year period. This is diverted from current non contracted spend from unallocated Pupil Premium Plus.

b) Legal

As this procurement solution would result in a full open tender, Legal Services will be consulted in the preparation of a contract. The tender process will be undertaken in accordance with the full Public Contract Regulations 2015 and the County Council's Financial Regulations.

c) Human Resources

There is no internal recruitment or TUPE considerations required for this proposal.

d) Equalities Impact

N/A