

Agenda Item IMD7

TITLE	Berkshire Emergency Duty Service (EDS) contract with Bracknell Forest Council
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	UllaKarin Clark and John Kaiser on 21 July 2020
WARD	None specific
DIRECTOR	Director of Children's Services - Carol Cammiss

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

To continue to provide an emergency social work service outside normal office hours on behalf of Wokingham Borough Council. The aims of the service are:

- to respond to emergencies where immediate social care intervention is required to safeguard a vulnerable adult or child
- to respond to all statutory referrals to the unitary authorities
- to offer single point of access
- to undertake initial screening for those individuals who find themselves in need of emergency accommodation
- crisis intervention where there is significant welfare concerns that cannot wait until the next working day

RECOMMENDATION

That the Executive Member of Children's Services, jointly with the Executive Member for Finance and Housing, consider the paper and approve the new contract for the Emergency Duty Service to commence 1st August 2020 as an Independent Executive Member Decision at the value of £216,450 for 2020-21 (future annual values to be confirmed each year).

SUMMARY OF REPORT

Bracknell Forest Council (BCF) currently provide an Emergency Duty Service on behalf of the Berkshire Unitary Authorities. BCF issued all Berkshire LAs with a new contract for the Emergency Duty Service with a requested start date of 6th June 2020 and ending June 2027. This has now moved to the 1st August 2020.

The contract award requires Executive approval due to the total value exceeding £500k. However, the timescales for approval of the contract are unachievable and have been further constrained by the impact on services and working arrangements due to the current global crisis (COVID-19). Approval is being sought by an Independent Executive Member Decision. An explanation of the exceptional circumstances are included in the Background information section of the report.

The current contract expired in 2015 and the Council has agreed annual extensions each year since. The proposed contract is intended to realign service delivery to need within each Unitary Authority. Details of the new contract are included in the Analysis of Issues section of the report.

Background

The Emergency Duty Service (EDS) is responsible for all social services emergencies and statutory duties that arise outside normal office hours. The service is hosted and managed within the People's Directory of Bracknell Forest Council, and is responsible for all client groups of the 6 Local Authorities of Berkshire.

In the areas of Bracknell, Wokingham and Reading the Emergency Duty Service (EDS) also provides an Intermediate Care Service including arranging temporary homecare or domiciliary care to avoid placement in nursing homes or residential care.

Bracknell have provided WBC with a proposed new contract and has requested that the contract commences on in August 2020.

Explanation of exceptional circumstances

This decision is requested to be considered as an Individual Executive Member Decision.

The originally requested start date of the contract (6th June 2020) only allowed two weeks of review by the People Commissioning Service before the date of the first approval meeting for the Executive deadlines. The contract, although funded by Children's Services, is also providing a service to Adult Services and Housing Services. The two week turnaround was not achievable to allow for the level of consideration and consultation that is required for a contract affecting multiple services that will be in place for seven years.

The contract needed to be reviewed by Legal Services, who offer a standard four week turnaround.

In addition to the explanation detailed above, Shute End offices were closed due to Covid-19 days after the contract was issued. The management and leadership meetings where the contract was due to be discussed were cancelled, meaning the initial approval and consultation requirements were not met. The People Commissioning Service were required to pause business as usual tasks to prioritise supporting providers delivering services to our most vulnerable residents. This remained the main priority for the service for a number of weeks.

Legal Services were also not able to meet the four week turnaround due to Covid-19 related work taking priority.

The original timescales were very restrictive and were further impacted by the worldwide crisis.

This is a joint contract across Berkshire and the timescales for approving the contract have not been met by the other Local Authorities (excluding Bracknell).

Bracknell Forest Council advised on 4th June 2020 that they were moving the requested start date to 1st August 2020.

Analysis of Issues

The following information outlines the specifics of the new contract with further details about the service and the current contract. Wokingham Borough Council have been working with Bracknell Forest Council to address any concerns we had with the new contract and details of the actions taken and reasons for our approach in seeking approval for the new contract are included below.

Contract Issued: 18th March 2020

Contract period: 1st August 2020 (adjusted from 6th June 2020) to 5th June 2027 – annual extensions possible, as agreed with the host authority

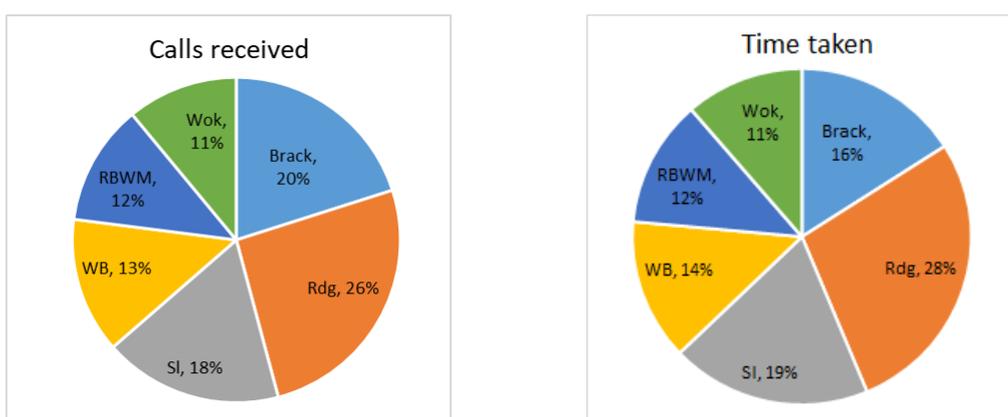
Replacing contract: June 2012 to February 2015 – annual extensions have been granted each year since, ending December 2020

Proposed annual cost for Wokingham Borough:

Equal Shared Cost 20/21	£67,850
Projected Variable Cost 20/21	£148,600
Projected Total Service cost 20/21	£216,450 (Note: 2019-20 £254k)

The contract is currently paid by the Children’s Services budget. The projected cost, under the proposed contract, for 2020-21 is less than the current contract costs for 2019-20 by c.£37.55K.

The current contract (ending Dec-20) has been extended each year without reviewing the terms and conditions or service specification. This means we have not been able to ensure we are achieving value for money and the service are working to an outdated agreement. The projected variable cost is based on the actual usage of the service and Wokingham Borough are one of the smaller users of the service, as shown below:



11% of all calls received by EDS are managed on behalf of Wokingham Borough Council. This compares to 26% in Reading and 13% in West Berkshire.

EDS send monthly statistics detailing the time spent and number of calls for each service, broken down by the call type (Adults Social Care & Mental Health, Children’s Social Care & Mental Health, and Homelessness). The majority of calls relate to Children’s Services, followed by Adult Services and Adult Mental Health Services.

Over the last two years EDS have been working to develop the new contract and have held workshops where LAs were asked to propose solutions to problems faced by the service including:

- Approaches to ensuring placements (for both children and adults) are available for emergency use out of hours and this information is communicated regularly to the service.
- Lack of consistent approaches for sharing information with the service, including on-call rotas, out of hours IT support, information relating to cases that may arise in the evenings.
- Concerns they are treated as an out of hours service, which is expected to pick up all work that runs over from the day, rather than an emergency service, which should only be picking up work that occurs out of hours and cannot safely wait until the next working day.

Representatives from multiple services across Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) attended the workshops and contributed to these discussions.

In addition to the concerns EDS raised at their workshops, WBC have also held concerns about the contract and/or service in the past, as detailed below:

Issues with existing contract and/or service:	Addressed in new contract?
Limited opportunities to review the work of the service or to have two way discussions to understand/question/challenge the work they undertake.	Yes – Quarterly contract monitoring meetings and Project Board meetings are detailed in the new contract and monthly key performance indicators.
Regular financial information is not being shared and we are often unsure of the projected final year costs.	Yes – states that spend will be shared quarterly and year end forecasts will be shared in quarter three.
The service appear to not use the case level information provided to them and have made incorrect decisions in the past for this reason.	Yes – they have been working with leads for our social care IT system to agree a new regular extract and the contract states they should use the information we make available to make decisions on our behalf.

Although our previous concerns have been addressed by the proposals, whilst the service have been developing the new contract, we have not received detailed financial and performance information or had regular monitoring meetings with the service to ensure we are in a position to agree to a seven year contract.

Action taken:

Due to the limited timescales, the Corporate Leadership Team have given approval to sign the contract to be sought via an Independent Executive Member Decision with a number of conditions. This will allow Wokingham Borough Council to commence with the new contract but with measures in place to ensure we have full oversight of the activities of the service over the next year. This will put us in a better position to make an informed decision about whether we will continue with the service.

The following conditions were proposed to EDS on 14th May 2020 with a response received 21st May 2020:

Condition	Response
A break clause is included	12 months' notice included.
No variations take place without our approval.	Agreed.
Monthly contract monitoring meetings are agreed, initially for the first year then timescales to be reviewed (EDS have proposed quarterly meetings).	Agreed.
They agree to use our contract management system Atamis for reporting their KPIs.	Not agreed. EDS wish to minimise the number of different IT systems they use and to reduce the number of processes for sharing information with all LAs. WBC will continue to pursue this with the service over the course of the contract.
Minor edits requested by our legal services are made.	Agreed.

Alternative Options considered

- EDS is a shared service with the other Berkshire Authorities delivering statutory services out of hours. Leaving the shared arrangement would result in the need to undertake a full retender of the contract, which would be time consuming, and may not result in us achieving another suitable arrangement.
- WBC are a low user of the service and the cost of delivering an in-house service would be significant across Children's Services and Adult Services and would therefore not be feasible.
- We have discussed an alternative option with Hampshire and Optalis and neither model met our needs, nor was it cost effective.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	£216,450 (£37,550)	N/A	N/A
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	To be provided by December 2020 based on current years activity	N/A	N/A
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	To be provided by December 2021 based on 2021 activity	N/A	N/A
Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision			
None			
Cross-Council Implications			
The service provides the social care and housing out of hours services.			
Reasons for considering the report in Part 2			
None			
List of Background Papers			
None			
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