

Finance and Resources Committee

10am, Thursday, 17 March 2016

Direct Award of Pre and Post Adoption Support Services to Scottish Adoption

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| Item number | 7.26 |
| Report number | |
| Executive/routine | |
| Wards | All |

Executive Summary

This report is to request approval for a continuation of one year for the purchase of pre and post adoption support services from Scottish Adoption. Users of these services are identified by the Council as eligible as requiring these services. A previous contract for the purchase of such services from this agency has been in place for a three year period which ends on 31 March 2016. These services relate to the provision of

Adult Adoption Counselling;

Information exchange between birth parents and adopted children;

Counselling Support to parents relinquishing their;

Provision of supervised contact between adopted children and their birth families.

The continuation of the provision of services from Scottish Adoption will enable the Council to plan to absorb aspects of this work within existing provision and to plan a new tendering process for the remaining components.

Links

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| Coalition pledges | P1 |
| Council priorities | CO1-CO6 |
| Single Outcome Agreement | SO2, SO3 |

Finance and Resources Committee

Direct Award of Pre and Post Adoption Support Services to Scottish Adoption

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 It is recommended that the Finance and Resources Committee approve the extension of the contract with Scottish Adoption at a cost of £71,920 for the period 1 April 2016 - 31 March 2017.

2. Background

- 2.1 A contract with Scottish Adoption for the provision of services was implemented on 1 April 2013. This contract was to provide services that could not be met by existing provision.
- 2.2 The existing contract provides for adult adoption counselling, information exchanges, counselling and support for parents relinquishing their babies and supervised contact between birth parents and adopted children.
- 2.3 The provisions of this contract contribute to the City of Edinburgh Council discharging its obligations under the [Adoption and Children \(Scotland\) Act 2007](#).
- 2.4 Throughout the existence of the contract with Scottish Adoption service provision exceeded the terms of the contract. The contract stipulated adult adoption counselling for 160 adopted people and birth relatives; 200 information exchanges; support for six parents relinquishing their babies and six supervised contact arrangements.
- 2.5 These services come with the following costs within the terms of the contract:
 - 2.5.1 Adoption counselling £242 per case
 - 2.5.2 Information exchange £103 per exchange
 - 2.5.3 Parents relinquishing their babies £1175 per case
 - 2.5.4 Supervised contacts £800 per case
- 2.6 Actual service usage for 2015/16 is projected as 160 adopted people and birth relatives; 383 Information exchanges; support for one parent relinquishing their baby and three supervised contact arrangements.

3. Main report

- 3.1 The [Adoption and Children \(Scotland\) Act 2007](#) places duties on local authorities to provide services to those affected by adoption.
- 3.2 Provision of resources within Family Based Care, Children's Services, Communities and Families, at this point in time, meant there was no capacity to deliver the contracted service. This led to the existing contract with Scottish Adoption.
- 3.3 Adult adoption counselling is targeted at those adults who are in some way affected by adoption. This may include adults who themselves have been adopted; or who have relatives who were adopted or are affected by adoption in some other way. This provision is provided to all those living within the City of Edinburgh Council boundary area and those adopted by the Church of Scotland/Episcopal Church (of which CEC funds 50%). The purchased service provides a records search, tracing, counselling and reunion services. [Guidance on Looked After Children \(Scotland\) Regulations 2009](#) and the [Adoption and Children \(Scotland\) Act 2007](#) identifies the need for support plans for those seeking such a service and the provision in the contract satisfies this expectation on the Council.
- 3.4 Information exchanges are an exchange of information between birth family members and an adopted child. Practice in this area has evolved over the years and this has become an expectation for the majority of adoptions. Increasingly, these are a condition of the Adoption Order issued by the Sheriff Court.
- 3.5 This normalisation of information exchanges has led to an underestimation of the numbers of exchanges involved in the arrangements with Scottish Adoption. In response to this the Council has implemented a plan to oversee eligible information exchanges between birth family members and adopted children with effect 1 April 2015. This will stem the increase in demand for this service with Scottish Adoption.
- 3.6 Should the Council agree to the one year extension the Family Based Care Managers will explore options in relation to transferring the remaining information exchange arrangements, held by Scottish Adoption, to Children's Services within the Council.
- 3.7 The existing contract has a provision for counselling and support for six parents relinquishing their babies per annum. In the life time of the contract there have been a total (to date) of seven such cases. It is proposed that this element of any renewed contract shall be discontinued. In the event of a future identified need of counselling and support for parents relinquishing their babies, it is proposed that this is managed and responded to on a case by case basis. A spot purchase arrangement may be required for such examples.

- 3.8 The fourth element of the contract is the provision of supervised contact arrangements for adopted children and their birth families. The contract allows for six per annum. There are three such arrangements in place. It is proposed that they continue for the extended contract and that options for their future management are explored during this period.

4. Measures of success

- 4.1 The service needs of those meeting the criteria for the services identified in this contract are continued.
- 4.2 Plans to identify which aspects of the contract are to be integrated into current service provision and which are identified for retendering are outlined and implemented from 1 April 2017.
- 4.3 Monthly monitoring of service usage within the extended contract will be introduced.

5. Financial impact

- 5.1 The contract has been in place since April 2013. The annual cost is £71,920.
- 5.2 The extended contract will remain at this rate for one year.
- 5.3 During this period, the Council will explore options in maintaining its responsibilities under the statute and regulations referred to above whilst seeking to outline and implement proposals targeted at reducing the costs of this contract.
- 5.4 A tendering process is proposed for those aspects of the contract which existing Council services are unable to absorb.

6. Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact

- 6.1 Should the current service provisions cease on 31 March 2016 those using the existing agreed services will have to cease doing so. There is no capacity within existing Council services to transfer all the work undertaken by Scottish Adoption in terms of this contract over to Children's Services.
- 6.2 This will put the Council in breach of any Adoption Order issued by a Sheriff Court which has an attached information exchange as a condition.
- 6.3 Continuing the contract as proposed contributes to the Council meeting its obligations under the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007 and the [Guidance on Looked After children \(Scotland\) Regulations 2009](#).
- 6.4 Termination of service provision may expose the Council to substantial reputational risk over the provision of services for those affected by Adoption.

7. Equalities impact

- 7.1 This extension will ensure continued provision of a service and prevent the risk of unlawful discrimination that may arise in such circumstances.
- 7.2 No negative impacts arise from the extension of this contract

8. Sustainability impact

- 8.1 The impacts of this report have been considered in relation to the three elements of the [Climate Change \(Scotland\) Act 2009](#) Public Bodies Duties. There are no adverse environmental outcomes arising from this report.

9. Consultation and engagement

- 9.1 Throughout the term of the existing contract there has been an annual review which monitored contract use.
- 9.2 It is proposed that these be increased to quarterly for the period of the extension.
- 9.3 The provider will be submitting monthly returns indicating demand for the service will enable closer monitoring and efficient reaction to unpredicted changes in demand.

10. Background reading/external references

[Children \(Scotland\) Act 1995](#)

[Adoption and Children \(Scotland\) Act 2007](#)

[Guidance on Looked After children \(Scotland\) Regulations 2009](#)

[Annual Review of Services for Looked After and Accommodated Children- Report to Education, Children and Families Committee 8 December 2015](#)

[Implementation of Children and Young People \(Scotland\) Act 2014 – Education, Children and Families Committee 6 October 2015](#)

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11. Links

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| Coalition pledges | P1 – Increase support for vulnerable children, including help for families so that fewer go into care |
| Council priorities | CO1 – Our children have the best start in life, are able to make and sustain relationships and are ready to succeed CO2 – Our children and young people are successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens making a positive contribution to their communities CO6 – Our children and young people’s outcomes are not undermined by poverty and inequality |
| Single Outcome Agreement | SO2 - Edinburgh's citizens experience improved health and wellbeing, with reduced inequalities in health SO3 – Edinburgh's children and young people enjoy their childhood and fulfil their potential |
| Appendices | None |