**Early Market Engagement - Advice, Advocacy & Welfare Benefits Services**

**Introduction**

Shropshire Council would like to take the opportunity to engage with potential providers and/or partners in the future commissioning of Advice, Advocacy & Welfare Benefits (AAWB) services.

Please note that the purpose of this process is for the council to discuss with the market and inform our current understanding of key issues and themes relating to the provision of these services and also to discuss what the market has to offer to assist the Council to deliver the services from 1st October 2024.

Please note that this is not the commencement of any formal procurement process and the Council is not committed to carrying out such a process.

For the avoidance of doubt no information provided in response to this process will be used by the Council in assessing providers during any subsequent procurement process.

This early market engagement exercise is intended to allow providers to outline their views and to provide information to the Council decision making process.

The Council will consider the information received as a result of this exercise to help inform the Council’s options appraisal and subsequent Council decision making process.

**Background**

In respect of services covering advice, advocacy and welfare benefits the Council currently commissions:

* an **integrated Advice, Advocacy and Welfare Benefits service for adults** which incorporates:
  + advocacy under the Care Act 2014
  + a range of advice and advocacy on issues including care, healthcare, safeguarding, benefits, housing, money issues, consumer issues
  + welfare benefits support
* an **independent advocacy service** **to children who are Looked After.** The main purpose is to empower and enable young people to have a voice by providing information, advice, support and advocacy. This duty relates to the Adoption and Children Act 2002 and Children Act 1989.
* an **independent visiting service to children who are Looked After.** The Independent Visitor will make regular visits to the child and maintain other contact, by telephone and letter as appropriate. The main purpose of the visits and contacts is to befriend the child and give advice and assistance as appropriate. This duty relates to the Children Act 1989 and supplemental care planning statutory instruments.
* an **Independent Mental Capacity Advocacy (IMCA)** service as defined in the Mental Capacity Act 2005
* an **Independent Mental Health Advocacy (IMHA)** service as defined in the Mental Health Act 1983 (amended in 2007)

The Council is developing an approach to how these elements are to be commissioned in future and is considering how best to shape any future procurement in terms of:

* commissioning separately for children’s and adults’ services or developing an all-age approach
* integrating the commissioning of advocacy (as opposed to separate contracting)
* achieving the right balance of advice, welfare benefits support and advocacy to meet current and future demand

The Council is keen to engage with the market to understand the opportunities available to shape our approach to commissioning the above.

**Outline Timescale**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **PROJECT STAGE** | **PURPOSE** | **SCHEDULED START** |
| Early Market Engagement | ***This is NOT a call for competition***.  This is intended to allow interested parties with relevant experience to outline their views and provide information with no commitment to themselves or the Council | 15th August 2023 |
| Responses Due By | The closing date and time for responses is 5.00pm on 4th September 2023 | 4th September 2023 |
| Target date for issue of tender | Placing of tender notice | TBC |
| Target closing date of tender | Closing date for receipt of tenders | TBC |
| Contract Start |  | 1st October 2024 |

**General Information**

Completed questionnaires (see Appendix 1) should be returned to Lisa Middleton [lisa.middleton@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:lisa.middleton@shropshire.gov.uk) by 5.00pm on 4th September 2023.

**If you have any questions about this early market engagement, such questions should be submitted to the Council through an email to Lisa Middleton** [**lisa.middleton@shropshire.gov.uk**](mailto:lisa.middleton@shropshire.gov.uk)

We intend to invite all potential providers who express an interest in getting involved in this early market engagement exercise to meet with us to discuss their response. This could either be in person or via Teams and it is anticipated to take about an hour.

***We encourage your participation in this early market engagement exercise, but must emphasise that your involvement in this exercise will not carry any commercial advantage in any ensuing procurement process***

***No information provided in response to this early market engagement exercise will be used in any evaluation of any subsequent response to a procurement exercise***

**Appendix 1 – Questionnaire**

***Please complete the following questionnaire (questions 1 – 7) fully, highlighting any information that you consider to be commercially sensitive***\*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Name of your organisation** |  |
| **Contact name, email and telephone number** |  |
| **Do you currently (or have you previously) delivered any element of the services in scope Y/N?** |  |
| **If Yes please give a brief description** |  |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Question 1** | **Would you be interested in bidding for these arrangements?**   * 1. **If Yes, why?**   2. **If No, why not?** | |
| ***Response to Question 1*** | | |
| **Question 2** | | **Thinking about the range of service provision set out above how would you advise we shape any future procurement? Please share your ideas for how this provision could be delivered differently.** |
| ***Response to Question 2*** | | |
| **Question 3** | **EITHER:**  **If you ARE currently delivering any element of the services above, please tell us briefly about:**   * **what works well** * **what you learnt from the experience** * **where do / did you deliver the service?**   **OR:**  **If you are not currently delivering any element of the services above, please tell us briefly about:**   * **any relevant experience your organisation has** * **what worked well** * **what you learnt from the experience** * **where do / did you deliver the service** | |
| ***Response to Question 3*** | | |
| **Question 4** | **Thinking about your experience in delivering this type of service (or part thereof) are there any emerging needs, themes, gaps in provision or priority areas of work that you would like commissioners to take into account when specifying the new service? If so please set these out here.** | |
| ***Response to Question 4*** | | |
| **Question 5** | **What Social Value opportunities do you feel may be available through this contract? (see link –** [**Shropshire Council Social Value**](https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/social-value/commissioning-social-value-faqs/) | |
| ***Response to Question 5*** | | |
| **Question 6** | **We are keen to understand how best to ensure there is sufficient capacity to meet need and demand and to secure the financial sustainability of these services in a challenging financial climate for publicly funded services. Please tell us how you would envisage this happening (You may want to reference length of contract, price inflation, frequency of contract reviews and external funding opportunities to complement contract funding)** | |
| ***Response to Question 6*** | | |
| **Question 7** | **Is there anything you would like to add that you would like the council to take in consideration?** | |
| ***Response to Question 7*** | | |