



SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL Cabinet Report

Report of: Interim Executive Director, CYPF

Date: 27 February 2013

Subject: Vocational Skills Programme 14 – 16 (including alternative provision) for the academic years 2013-16 inclusive.

Author of Report: Nick Duggan, Assistant Director, 14 – 19 Commissioning

Summary: Lifelong Learning, Skills & Communities seeks permission to continue commissioning the Vocational Skills Programme (VSP) for learners at Key Stage 4 for the academic years 2013-14, 2014-15 and 2015-16. The VSP is organised by the service on behalf of schools and academies and makes available off-site provision at college or with other providers for learners of all abilities, including those 14-16 year olds at risk of disengagement.

Demand for the programme is entirely led by schools, academies and the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) on whose behalf Lifelong Learning Skills & Communities procures, contract manages and quality assures a diverse range of provision and nationally recognised qualifications from a network of suitably experienced and accredited training providers from across the city. The programme will be fully funded by schools, academies and the PRU on a “per student per day” rate.

Reasons for Recommendations:

Lifelong Learning, Skills and Communities leads an extensive, established provider network drawn from the public, private and voluntary and community sectors which has successfully engaged an average of more than 2,000 Key Stage 4 learners per annum in off-site, vocationally -related studies. This

includes substantial numbers of those 14-16 year olds at risk of disengagement from learning. In the last six years, those learners choosing the programme have achieved a total of 9,179 GCSE-equivalent qualifications. As such the VSP has contributed to the attainment of these young people, the performance of their schools and the skills needs of the local economy. The programme is entirely demand led and does not incur a cost to the Council. The VSP is probably the largest Key Stage 4 vocational learning programme in the UK and has attracted national recognition as an exemplar of good practice.

The reason for seeking to re-procure the programme is the expiry of the existing three-year framework arrangement. The service is seeking through a framework agreement to procure by open and competitive tender, in accordance with Council Standing Orders and EU regulations a new VSP 14-16 programme for the academic years 2013-14, 2014-15 and 2015-16 which seeks to build on the good practice developed under existing arrangements.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is asked to:

- approve the undertaking of a procurement exercise in accordance with Council Standing Orders and EU regulations for the 14-16 Vocational Skills Programme for the period 2013-16 inclusive
- delegate powers to the Director of Lifelong Learning, Skills and Communities to proceed to contract after the procurement exercise has been completed without further recourse to Cabinet.

Background Papers:

Category of Report: OPEN

If Closed add – ‘Not for publication because it contains exempt information under Paragraph... of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).’

* Delete as appropriate

Statutory and Council Policy Checklist

Financial Implications
YES Cleared by: Tricia Phillipson
Legal Implications
YES Cleared by: Nadine Wynter
Equality of Opportunity Implications
YES Cleared by: Bashir Khan
Tackling Health Inequalities Implications
NO
Human rights Implications
NO:
Environmental and Sustainability implications
NO
Economic impact
YES
Community safety implications
NO
Human resources implications
NO
Property implications
NO
Area(s) affected
Relevant Cabinet Portfolio Leader
Cllr Jackie Drayton
Relevant Scrutiny Committee if decision called in
CYPF
Is the item a matter which is reserved for approval by the City Council?
YES
Press release
NO

1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.1 Lifelong Learning, Skills and Communities is seeking to continue commissioning the delivery of the VSP for Key Stage 4 learners for the academic years 2013-14, 2014-15 and 2015-16. The programme organises off-site provision for learners of all abilities, including those at risk of disengagement from education. The programme contributes to the City Council's strategic objective of building a strong and competitive economy through developing a highly skilled workforce.
- 1.2 Demand for the programme is entirely led by schools, academies and the Pupil Referral Unit, on whose behalf the service procures, contract manages and quality assures learning provision delivered by a network of suitably experienced and qualified training providers drawn from the public, private and third sectors across the city.
- 1.3 The source of the funding for the programme will be the city's schools, which will pay for the provision and the associated management and quality assurance of the programme by CYPF staff on a 'per student per day' rate. Similarly, providers will be reimbursed on a 'per student per day' rate. Payment will take place in arrears on the basis of actual attendance by learners.
- 1.4 The reason for seeking to re-procure the programme is the expiry of the existing framework arrangement.

2.0 WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR SHEFFIELD PEOPLE

- 2.1 The VSP provides Key Stage 4 learners from participating schools, academies and the PRU with an opportunity to explore vocationally-focused provision at a time that is critical in helping them to determine their post-16 choices and subsequent career paths. It contributes directly to them being able to make an informed transition to sustainable education, employment or training opportunities which will help secure both their long term economic well-being and that of the city as a whole. This programme is a keystone of the city's Raising of the Participation Age Strategy (RPA) and will be connected to the City Deal and the 4,000 apprenticeship opportunities that this will generate in the city-region in the next three years.
- 2.2 The VSP is designed to complement and enhance the existing Key Stage 4 curriculum and, in addition, is designed to meet the learning needs of those at risk of disengagement by providing opportunities and qualifications that are both relevant and

motivating to this cohort. Moreover, the VSP provides all learners with the opportunity to secure vocational qualifications which will both contribute directly to their ability to progress to worthwhile, sustainable careers and generate additional, nationally recognised qualifications which contribute to the performance of schools and academies.

3.0 OUTCOME AND SUSTAINABILITY

- 3.1 The learning outcomes for young people are vocational qualifications which carry currency with colleges, training providers and employers, increased personal confidence, resilience and readiness to undertake further post-16 education or work with training.
- 3.2 Colleges and other training organisations benefit by building progression pathways from the VSP into their post-16 provision and by enrolling school leavers onto their courses who are better prepared and motivated to succeed.
- 3.3 Employers benefit from having ready access to a potential workforce that is better prepared and equipped with the skills and experience to enter the world of work.
- 3.4 The programme includes a focus on supporting vulnerable young people e.g. Looked After Children, those with learning difficulties or disabilities, young carers, teen parents, children not on school roll and young offenders through the transition phase between secondary education and post -16 learning.
- 3.5 The programme supports an extensive network of voluntary and community sector training organisations and over recent years has significantly developed the capacity of these organisations to deliver education and training.
- 3.6 The programme also seeks to reduce the number of 14-16 year olds who are at risk of becoming disengaged from the education system and as such plays an important part in the city's strategy to reduce the number of 16-18 year olds not in education, employment or training (NEET). This becomes even more important with the new statutory responsibility conferred on the local authority under the Raising of the Age of Participation legislation to support all post-16 young people to remain in education or work with training.
- 3.7 The VSP has therefore a strategic fit with other programmes which are managed by Lifelong Learning, Skills and Communities on behalf of the City Council, specifically the ESF-funded NEETS programme known as Future:proof, the City Council's 100 Apprenticeship initiative, the pledge to create additional

apprenticeships in the city-region as part of the recently announced City Deal and the work undertaken with the Cutlers Company, the Hospital Trust and selected schools and academies to create a *Made in Sheffield* curriculum that is better aligned to the needs of employers and the local economy.

- 3.8 The sustainability of the VSP is assured whilst ever there is a demand from participating schools, academies and the PRU. Regular liaison and consultation with these stakeholders and young people seeks to ensure the relevance and therefore the attractiveness of the offer. The VSP is designed to expand or contract on the basis of the level of demand emanating from these institutions.

4.0 MAIN BODY OF THE REPORT

- 4.1 As stated above, the Vocational Skills Programme (VSP) for the academic years 2012-13, 2014-15 and 2015-16 builds on the experience of Lifelong Learning, Skills and Communities in delivering the current Vocational Skills Programme since the academic year 2004-05.
- 4.2 The VSP is probably the largest Key Stage 4 vocational learning programme in the UK and has attracted national recognition as an exemplar of good practice. Lifelong Learning, Skills and Communities leads an extensive, established provider network drawn from the public, private and voluntary and community sectors which has successfully engaged an average of more than 2,000 Key Stage 4 learners per annum in off-site, vocationally - related studies. This includes substantial numbers of those 14-16 year olds at risk of disengagement from learning. The programme is planned in partnership with schools, academies and the PRU, procured in accordance with Sheffield City Council Contract Standing Orders and quality assured using OFSTED standards by the 14-19 team in Lifelong Learning, Skills and Communities. The service also involves the provision of an Extended Curriculum Team that acts as a single point of contact for learning institutions in placing those young people at risk of disengagement in suitable alternative provision.
- 4.3 The VSP model has been held up as a national exemplar of good practice in supplying 14-19 vocational learning and has also been the subject of European Social Fund best practice visits.
- 4.4 Providers have been brought onto the commissioning framework through standard City Council procurement processes and are contract managed robustly to ensure the delivery of contractual targets, obligations and levels of quality.

- 4.5 A new procurement process will seek to continue and build upon this model for the academic years 2013-14, 2014-15 and 2015-16 in order to ensure that the provider network which is established continues to have the necessary skills, expertise and geographical coverage.

Financial Implications

- 4.6 The financial risks attached to the VSP programme 2013 - 16 are primarily associated with a lack of demand from participating schools and academies. This is predicated on the basis that the programme will be funded entirely by fees received from institutions based on a 'per student per day rate'. Therefore, whilst a lack of demand may impact on the delivery of the programme, it will not pose a risk to the Council. This will be ensured by contracts with providers which are framed so that all payments are made retrospectively on the basis of the actual number of learner days delivered in a given claim period. Minimum levels of business will not be guaranteed. Robust financial monitoring processes which meet the audit requirements of the Sheffield City Council will continue to be applied to the programmes by the Grants Administration Unit within Lifelong Learning, Skills and Communities. Officers within this Unit have significant knowledge and expertise as a result of several years experience in administering programmes of this nature.
- 4.7 Current gross spend is £2m per annum, mainly paid out to third parties, but this also includes recharges from other training units to cover the VSP delivery. This is funded mainly through charges for services and a small contribution from the VSP reserve. The VSP reserve is available to smooth the transition to a fully traded service to be achieved by August 2015.

Legal Implications

- 4.8 There are no legal implications attached to the programme beyond the need to ensure compliance with Council Standing Orders and EU regulations when undertaking procurement and any subsequent contracting. Any contingent risk will be mitigated by using the services of a Procurement Professional, taking advice from Commercial Services and consulting the Council's Legal Service.

HR Implications

- 4.9 There are no HR implications attached to the VSP. Existing staff are in place to discharge the Council's responsibilities in terms of procuring, contract managing and quality assuring the delivery of the programme. These staff have the skills and experience necessary to do so as a result of carrying out these roles in relation to the current VSP framework.

5.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

5.1 The VSP could be terminated at the end of the 2012/13 academic year and schools, academies and the PRU required to organise their own off-site provision. The result would almost certainly be a return to the fragmented and unsatisfactory arrangements that existed before the city's schools asked the local authority to organise a structured, high quality and cost-effective VSP on their behalf. The benefits of a centrally procured, managed and quality assured network of training providers would be lost. Schools would have to duplicate these functions on an individual basis, with a consequent wastage of resource across the city. Not having the necessary expertise and experience in place would lead to potentially variable quality of health and safety, safeguarding and delivery arrangements thereby increasingly placing individual learners at risk. This option was rejected for these reasons.

6.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 The continuance of the VSP preserves an essential part of the city's offer to Key Stage 4 learners, providing an introduction to vocational and employability skills which will be of great value in informing their post-16 choices and encouraging successful progression.
- 6.2 The VSP actively seeks to re-engage those learners at Key Stage 4 who are at risk of disengaging from learning and contributes therefore to the city's strategy for driving down 16-18 NEETs and in meeting the local authority's new statutory obligations associated with the RPA legislation.
- 6.3 The VSP offers an important opportunity for school-age young people to prepare for adult life and work by equipping them with the necessary skills, experience of the workplace and the vocational qualifications. It also helps furnish the workforce of the future with the attributes and competencies that will be needed for a strong and healthy local economy.
- 6.4 The VSP is connected strategically and contributes significantly to a range of important skills and employment initiatives in the city, as organised by the City Council and its partners including Future:proof, the 100 Apprenticeship initiative; the City Deal and the *Made in Sheffield* curriculum.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is asked to:

- approve the undertaking of a procurement exercise in accordance with Council Standing Orders and EU regulations for the 14-16 Vocational Skills Programme for

the period 2013-16 inclusive

- delegate powers to the Director of Lifelong Learning, Skills and Communities to proceed to contract after the procurement exercise has been completed without further recourse to Cabinet.

Sheffield City Council Equality Impact Assessment



[Guidance for completing this form is available on the intranet](#)

Help is also available by selecting the grey area and pressing the F1 key

Name of policy/project/decision: Vocational Skills Programme

Status of policy/project/decision: New

Name of person(s) writing EIA: Gerard Higgins

Date: 25.7.12

Service: Lifelong Learning, Skills & Communities

Portfolio: Children, Young People and Families

What are the brief aims of the policy/project/decision?

Lifelong Learning, Skills & Communities, CYPF, seeks to continue the delivery of the Vocational Skills Programme (VSP) for learners at Key Stage 4 for the academic years 2013-14, 2014-15 and 2015-16. The programme which has been in existence for eight years is aimed at providing off-site provision for learners of all abilities, including those who are not actively engaged in education and those who are in danger of becoming so and progressing to become NEET post 16.

The reason for seeking to re-procure the programme is the expiry of the existing framework arrangement.

Are there any potential Council staffing implications, include workforce diversity?

There are no potential staffing implications for the Council. This represents the re-procurement of an existing programme. Those officers currently employed in procuring, contract managing and quality assuring the existing programme will continue to fulfil these functions in respect of the re-procured programme.

Under the [Public Sector Equality Duty](#), we have to pay due regard to: “Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.” [More information is available on the council website](#)

Areas of possible impact	Impact	Impact level	Explanation and evidence (Details of data, reports, feedback or consultations. This should be proportionate to the impact.)
Age	Neutral	Low	The Vocational Skills Programme is aimed at learners aged at KS4 and therefore will not impact directly on the older population.
Disability	Positive	Medium	The programme will involve a focus on supporting vulnerable young people e.g. Looked After Children, those with learning difficulties or disabilities, young carers, teen parents, children not on school roll and young offenders through the transition phase between secondary education and post 16 learning.
Pregnancy/maternity	Positive	Medium	Teen parents are one of the groups of vulnerable

Areas of possible impact	Impact	Impact level	Explanation and evidence (Details of data, reports, feedback or consultations. This should be proportionate to the impact.)
			young people that the VSP seeks to target.
Race	Positive	Medium	The Vocational Skills Programme is a fully inclusive initiative in which schools from across the city participate, including those from areas where the population includes higher concentrations of people from a BME background.
Religion/belief	Neutral	Low	The Vocational Skills Programme is a fully inclusive initiative in which schools from across the city participate, including those from areas where the population includes higher concentrations of people from a BME background and those whose ethos is based around a particular denomination.
Sex	Positive	High	The Vocational Skills Programme seeks to challenge gender stereotyping in terms of encouraging young people to undertake experience and qualifications in occupations which traditionally have been the preserve of the opposite sex.
Sexual orientation	Neutral	Low	The Vocational Skills Programme is a fully inclusive initiative.
Transgender	Neutral	Low	The Vocational Skills Programme is a fully inclusive initiative.
Carers	Positive	Medium	Young carers are one of the vulnerable groups of young people which the VSP seeks to target.
Voluntary, community & faith sector	Positive	High	Many of the providers of the Vocational Skills Programme have traditionally been organisations based within the VCF.
Financial inclusion, poverty, social justice:	Positive	High	The programme will involve a focus on supporting vulnerable young people, including those at risk of exclusion on the grounds of poverty and seeks to maximise the opportunity for young people to achieve long-term economic well being through the acquisition of vocational and employability skills.
Cohesion:	Positive	High	The VSP will contribute to the encouragement of social cohesion through opening the opportunity to gain vocational and employability and thereby secure long term economic self-sufficiency to all young people

Areas of possible impact	Impact	Impact level	Explanation and evidence (Details of data, reports, feedback or consultations. This should be proportionate to the impact.)
			irrespective of gender, ability, race, religious faith, sexual orientation and level of economic and social deprivation.
Other/additional:	-Select-	-Select-	

Overall summary of possible impact (to be used on EMT, cabinet reports etc): High

If you have identified significant change, med or high negative outcomes or for example the impact is on specialist provision relating to the groups above, or there is cumulative impact you **must** complete the action plan.

Review date: July 2016 **Q Tier Ref**

Reference number:

Entered on Qtier: No

Action plan needed: Yes

Approved (Lead Manager): Nick Duggan **Date:** 25.7.12

Approved (EIA Lead person for Portfolio): **Date:**

Does the proposal/ decision impact on or relate to specialist provision: yes

Risk rating: -Select-

Action plan

Area of impact	Action and mitigation	Lead, timescale and how it will be monitored/reviewed
Disability	At the end of the programme	July 2016
Sex	At the end of the programme	July 2016
Carers	At the end of the programme	July 2016
VCF	At the end of the programme	July 2016
Financial Inc	At the end of the programme	July 2016
Cohesion	At the end of the programme	July 2016
-Select-		
-Select-		
-Select-		
-Select-		
-Select-		

Area of impact	Action and mitigation	Lead, timescale and how it will be monitored/reviewed
-Select-		

Approved (Lead Manager): Nick Duggan Date: 25.7.12

Approved (EIA Lead Officer for Portfolio): Basahir Khan Date: 25/7/12

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