



Report to Policy Committee

Author/Lead Officer of Report: Dorothy Smith

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Report of: *Andrew Jones, Interim Director of Children's Services*

Report to: *Strategy & Resources Committee*

Date of Decision: *24 January 2023*

Subject: *Step up to Social Work Post Graduate degree fast track programme Cohort 8*

Has an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) been undertaken?	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
If YES, what EIA reference number has it been given? CYP/DS/BK/151122				
Has appropriate consultation taken place?	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
Has a Climate Impact Assessment (CIA) been undertaken?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If YES, give details as to whether the exemption applies to the full report / part of the report and/or appendices and complete below:-				

Purpose of Report:

The Step Up to Social Work programme is a Department for Education (DfE) wholly funded initiative to promote people to change or start their careers in Children and Families social work by funding a 14 month Post graduate degree in social work. Sheffield City Council is the lead authority for the Yorkshire and Humberside Regional Partnership (the Partnership) which consists of 9 local authorities. This programme originally started in 2010 and Sheffield City Council acts as a lead authority for the Partnership and administers the external funding on its behalf. It is proposed that the Council accepts the £1.9m grant funding from the DfE, becomes the accountable body for such funding and enters into a funding agreement with DfE, for the Step Up to Social Work programme. It is also proposed that the Council commission for a further two year period of the Step Up to Social Work programme as set out in this report, in particular that the Council will act as commissioner for the Partnership and that provision will be externally provided, and note that will be by Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU)

Recommendations:

That the Strategy & Resources Committee:

- 1) Approves the Council becoming the Accountable Body in respect of the grant on behalf of the Yorkshire and Humberside Step up to Social Work Regional Partnership, provided that the funding agreement is not materially different to the DfE's grant funding agreement: terms and conditions, set out on its website
- 2) Approves the commission for a further two-year period of the Step Up to Social Work programme as set out in this report, in particular that the Council will act as commissioner for the Partnership and that provision will be externally provided, and note that will be by Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU).
- 3) Delegates authority to the Director of Children's services in consultation with the Director of Finance and Commercial Services and the Director of Legal Services to take any steps where no existing authority exists to achieve the aims and objectives as outlined and detailed within this report.

Background Papers:

Lead Officer to complete:-		
1	I have consulted the relevant departments in respect of any relevant implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist, and comments have been incorporated / additional forms completed / EIA completed, where required.	Finance: <i>Sonya Oates</i>
		Legal: <i>Richard Marik</i>
		Equalities & Consultation: <i>Bashir khan</i>
		Climate: <i>not applicable</i>
	<i>Legal, financial/commercial and equalities implications must be included within the report and the name of the officer consulted must be included above.</i>	
2	SLB member who approved submission:	<i>Andrew Jones</i>
3	Committee Chair consulted:	<i>Cllr Bryan Lodge</i>
4	I confirm that all necessary approval has been obtained in respect of the implications indicated on the Statutory and Council Policy Checklist and that the report has been approved for submission to the Committee by the SLB member indicated at 2. In addition, any additional forms have been completed and signed off as required at 1.	

Lead Officer Name: <i>Dorothy Smith</i>	Job Title: <i>Senior Manager QAIS and Lead Coordinator for Step up to Social Work Regional Partnership</i>
Date: 13/01/23	

1. PROPOSAL

- 1.1 It is proposed that the Council accepts the £1.9m grant funding from the DfE, becomes the accountable body for such funding and enters into a funding agreement with DfE, for the *Step Up to Social Work* programme.
- 1.2 Approval is sought to be Accountable Body prior to the receipt of the final grant agreement from DfE because it has to be signed by external finance and the Assistant Director of Quality Assurance and Involvement service within 10 days of receipt of the grant agreement.
- 1.3 It is also proposed that the council approves the commission for a further two-year period (with a value of £508,750) of the *Step Up to Social Work* programme as set out in this report, in particular that the Council will act as commissioner for the Partnership and that provision will be externally provided, and note that will be by Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU).

Background

- 1.4 The Yorkshire and Humberside Step up to Social Work Regional Partnership (“Partnership”) have successfully bid for 55 students for the *Step Up to Social Work* Programme and will receive £1.9m of grant funding from the DfE.
- 1.5 The *Step Up to Social Work* programme provides an accelerated entry route into social work for high-achieving graduates and career changers. *Step Up to Social Work* is delivered through the development of a bespoke work-based 14-month postgraduate diploma programme, led by groups of local authorities working in regional partnerships and contracting with Higher Education Institutes (HEIs). Award of the diploma enables candidates to apply for registration as a qualified social worker.
- 1.6 The DfE devised the step up to Social Work to encourage people into the social work profession in a bid to address the national shortage of social workers. By providing a bursary and targeting individuals with a degree, it gave candidates the opportunity to re-train in social work for a shorter period, whilst receiving a bursary to do so.
- 1.7 The step up to social work programme runs every other year and each year the programme runs is called a “cohort”. Each partnership can place a “bid” to the DfE for a number of students. The DfE is allocating the grants (detailed below) countrywide. The regional partnership has engaged in this programme since 2010 which was “cohort 2”. There have been 6 previous funding agreements for this programme and this will be the seventh. The regional Partnership have successfully bid for 55 students and will receive £1.9m of grant funding from the DfE.
- 1.8 Sheffield City Council has been the lead authority for the Partnership

since 2010. When each step up to social work programme runs the Partnership can place a bid for a number of students who will undertake their practice placements within one of the Partnership authorities who are referred to as hosts. Within this cohort the regional Partnership have successfully bid for 55 students and will receive £1.9m of grant funding from the DfE.

- 1.9 The Partnership consists of 9 local authorities: Sheffield City Council, Barnsley MBC, City of Doncaster Council, East Riding of Yorkshire County Council, Hull City Council, North Lincolnshire Council, North East Lincolnshire Council, Rotherham MBC, City of York Council.
- 1.10 Sheffield City Council is the accountable body in respect of the grant and on behalf of the Partnership.
- 1.11 Step Up to Social Work is funded via section 14(1) of the Education Act 2002 and section 67(4)(b) of the Care Standards Act 2000. Funding payments will be made on a monthly basis, in arrears, and will be made to the lead local authority within each partnership. The DfE will not issue contracts for this work.

Proposal – grant

- 1.12 It is therefore proposed that the Council accepts the £1.9m grant funding and enter a grant agreement with DfE and be the Accountable Body for the funding for the Step Up to Social Work Programme.
- 1.13 The Council is yet to receive the grant agreement with DfE (which is due in January 2023), however it is expected that the terms and conditions of the grant agreement will mirror the DfE's terms and conditions for any discretionary grants that it awards to external organisations for Cohort 7 as set out on [Step up to social work - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)
- 1.14 The approval to act as Accountable Body is therefore conditional upon such terms and conditions being materially the same as the DfE's terms and conditions for discretionary grants. Should the grant agreement proposed by the DfE be materially different from the DfE's terms and conditions for discretionary grants on its website, further approval to act as Accountable body shall be sought.

Proposal - Higher Education Institution provider

- 1.15 Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) were awarded a 2-year service contract to deliver the service and be the Higher Education Institution provider for Cohort 7 by the Partnership in January 2021. MMU deliver a 14 month post graduate diploma in social work degree programme and teach students on a virtual platform with 12 face-to-face teaching days in Sheffield. The Partnership authorities work with MMU and provide practice placements during the programme which validate the degree programme and lead to the student gaining a social work

qualification.

- 1.16 This contract expires on 31 March 2023 and its provisions (which were approved by ICM on 19th October 2020 (Report: Step up to Social Work Programme Cohort 7)) allow for an extension of 2 years,.
- 1.17 The Council will exercise its right under the contract to extend the contract by 2 years to allow MMU to continue delivering the service for Cohort 8. The value of this extension is £508,750 (the original contract value being £508,750).

Funding

- 1.18 *Step Up to Social Work* will run as part of the Programme Grant Agreement between DfE and local authorities, and funding will be distributed monthly. DfE funding will be allocated through the lead local authority of each regional partnership. The funding is paid to the Council as the lead member of the partnership. Each authority within the partnership has an existing agreement on funding in place. Each quarter, the Council pays each of the authority's dependant on the number of students they are hosting.
- 1.19 The DfE will provide the following funding to cover University fees for cohort 8, which represents the minimum guaranteed funding:
- **£11,667** per trainee
 - **£19,833** per trainee as a bursary payment over the 14 month period
 - **£1750 per trainee** to cover the supervision and support that hosting authorities provide during the programme.
- 1.20 This funding will be paid to the Council as the lead in the partnership who will then send the funding to each authority. Each authority in the partnership will send the funding for the bursary and supervision element per student which is paid three months in areas to MMU . The Council will ensure MMU is paid as per the terms and conditions of the contracts with each partner authority.
- 1.21 In addition to the above, administrative funding is also paid to the Council as follows:
- **£10,000** to each regional partnership for making delivery arrangements with MMU
 - **£38,000** to each regional partnership for establishing and administering the regional partnership activity required to support local authorities and MMU to deliver the programme.
- 1.22 The timeline given by the DfE for the programme is as follows: National advertising February-March, application process live from February 2023

closing March, shortlisting process April, written exercise administered by DfE support contractor in May, assessment centres running for 3 weeks in June/July, academic checks August, Keeping in Touch day October, trainee contract award October, start of programme January 2024, completion of programme March 2025.

2. HOW DOES THIS DECISION CONTRIBUTE ?

- 2.1 This fast track 14-month programme produces high calibre social work graduates who are able to gain employment into frontline child protection work. Evidence shows that Step up graduates progress through their first year of employment as a social worker at a faster pace than other graduates due to the intensity of the training that they receive on the Step up programme.
- 2.2 The programme is highly successful on a national level, so much so that the national demand for places frequently supersedes the number that the DfE are able to fund. As a consequence, this year the number of places funded by the DfE has increased nationally to 700.
- 2.3 This partnership values People with Lived experience engagement and the recruitment admissions process includes interviews with students by foster carers and young people who have been fully trained by officers in Sheffield City Council on behalf of the region. The region is encouraged to support the process by training their own People with Lived Experience to participate in this process and Sheffield City Council use young people from the Children in Care council. People with Lived Experience participation is encouraged throughout the process from the point of student admissions to readiness for practice and again at the employment stage interview process. They enjoy this process as they feel included in the social worker journey and career pathway.
- 2.4 Foster carers use their interviewing experience in this process for their development portfolios and young people use their interviewing experiences for their own CV's and to develop confidence. Many young people have been assisted in gaining employment and/or travel opportunities as a result of their experience in this process.
- 2.5 There continues to be supply and demand for frontline children and families social workers. The Step up to Social Work programme encourages those people who are financially unable to leave their jobs to study and qualify in the social work profession. Research shows that candidates with long standing experience of working with vulnerable children, young people and families or similar professions have the emotional resilience that is required by working in frontline child protection.
- 2.6 Retention is a key factor in social work as the constant turnover in staffing can result in children and families having a high number of

different social workers involved in their lives which is something we wish to lessen. Research undertaken by the DfE shows that the retention rate for Step up to Social Work graduates stands at 84% as opposed to mainstream graduates at 60%.

3. HAS THERE BEEN ANY CONSULTATION?

3.1 The Step up to Social Work programme is a national initiative which has been fully consulted and has been running since its creation in 2010 and this Cohort has gained approval by the Social Work Reform Unit. The DfE website explains the detail of the programme and the entry requirements and selection criteria.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/step-up-to-social-work-information-for-applicants>

4. RISK ANALYSIS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

4.1 Equality Implications

4.1.1 Decisions need to take into account the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty contained in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. This is the duty to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it

4.1.2 The Equality Act 2010 identifies the following groups as a protected characteristic: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex and sexual orientation

4.1.3 An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out and highlights that the training programme will increase the supply of high standard social workers across the Yorkshire and Humberside region.

4.2 Financial and Commercial Implications

4.2.1 The University contract will only be valid if DfE funding has been awarded. There have been no material changes to the grant agreement terms and conditions since Cohort 7, subject to decisions.

4.2.2 Key terms and conditions to note:

The programme is wholly funded by the Department for Education. The value of the DfE grant is £2.2 million. It will be paid in equal

instalments in arrears following submission of adequate monitoring information. The grant must be spent by the end of March 2025. Any unspent grant must be repaid to the DFE.

Duplicate funding must not be applied for.

Any variations to the agreed activities must be submitted to the funder in writing for approval.

An exit plan should be maintained for the duration of the grant and this should be reviewed periodically.

A continuity plan should be maintained and implemented in the event that the service choose to continue the programme after grant funding has ended.

The amount of funding offered will be reduced if it is not spent in full by the end of the grant period.

Failure to comply with the terms and conditions of the grant and the DfE General Terms and Conditions will mean that all or part of the grant will have to be repaid.

All public sector procurement is governed by UK National Law. In addition, all procurement in Sheffield City Council must comply with its own Procurement Policy, and internal regulations known as 'Contracts Standing Orders' (CSOs).

Contracts Standing Orders requirements will apply in full to the procurement of services, goods or works utilising grants. All grant monies must be treated in the same way as any other Council monies and any requirement to purchase/acquire services, goods or works must go via a competitive process.

The Project Manager will need to read, understand and comply with all of the grant terms and conditions and the [Code of Conduct for Grant Recipients](#).

4.3 Legal Implications

- 4.3.1 The Council has a duty to provide or arrange for the provision of services, facilities or resources, or take other steps, which it considers will—
- (a) contribute towards preventing or delaying the development by adults in its area of needs for care and support;
 - (b) contribute towards preventing or delaying the development by carers

in its area of needs for support;

(c) reduce the needs for care and support of adults in its area;

(d) reduce the needs for support of carers in its area.

4.3.1 The Council also has a duty to take reasonable steps, through the provision of services, to prevent children within its area suffering ill-treatment or neglect.

4.3.2 The receipt and spending of the DfE grant to train social workers will go some way to fulfilling these duties.

4.3.3 The Council must ensure that it complies with the term and conditions of the grant agreement. Key provisions of the grant agreement for Cohort 7 of the programme (which are anticipated to be materially similar to the terms and conditions for Cohort 8) are:

- As the accountable body for the project, the Council shall be responsible for the performance of the obligations under the grant agreement with the department.
- The Council must only use funding for the purposes of the funded activities and not make any material changes to the funded activities without the consent of the DfE.
- The DfE must have agreed to the use of any third-party contractors to deliver any material part of the project.
- The payment of the funding is conditional upon the recipient receiving or committing match funding for the project.
- The Council must ensure that they enter a back-to-back agreement with any sub-contractor mirroring the grant agreement.
- The Council must ensure that when making any grants to third parties, such grants comply with the Subsidy Control Regime.
- If the Council does not comply with terms and conditions of the grant agreement, it may be subject to clawback of the funding.

4.3.4 The Council's agreements with partner local authorities must ensure that it can comply with the funding agreement with the DfE.

4.4 Climate Implications

None

4.4 Other Implications

None

5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- | | |
|-----|--|
| 5.1 | Sheffield City Council has been the lead authority for the Step up to Social Work programme since its inception at a pilot stage in 2010. The Regional Partnership is one of the largest in the country and is highly praised by the DfE for its success. The DfE asks Sheffield City Council for expert guidance and seek our advice for new Partnerships and for knowledge of the degree programme. |
| 5.2 | Sheffield City Council wishes to continue to act as the lead authority for Step up to Social Work within the Yorkshire and Humberside region as it raises the profile of the authority not only for the workforce across the region but nationally. |
| 5.3 | Sheffield City Council continues to be the lead authority for the Trailblazer Teaching Partnership for the South Yorkshire region providing expert advice for new and existing Teaching Partnerships. The South Yorkshire Teaching Partnership allows Sheffield City Council to contribute nationally to the future and raising of standards of social work education which includes Step up to Social Work and the Social Work Apprenticeship degree programme. |

6. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

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| 6.1 | The Step Up to Social Work programme is a national initiative which is wholly funded by the Department for Education by way of a grant. This funding includes a bursary payment for each successful student on the degree programme, funding of the University course, funding for training and supervision of each student whilst they are placed in their host authority across the region and administration of funding by the lead authority. |
| 6.2 | The programme has been running since 2010 and has flagship status both regionally and nationally. The Yorkshire and Humberside Regional Partnership is one of the largest of the 22 national partnerships participating in the Step up to Social Work programme. This initiative has produced over 350 high calibre graduates since its initiation and 99% of these graduates have been successful in gaining employment as social workers in authorities across this region. This initiative has proven to be highly successful in resolving recruitment difficulties in social work in children and families and raising standards in social work education. Research undertaken is proven that the retention rates of Step up to Social work graduates is higher than mainstream graduates. |

6.3

Sheffield City Council submitted a bid to the DfE on 31st October 2022 for 65 places on behalf of the Yorkshire and Humberside region and notification of success for 55 places has been made by the DfE with a grant agreement due in January 2023. The total amount of funding bid for is £1.9m which is for 55 places across the partnership. Sheffield is the lead authority and acts as the broker for the grant funding with the responsibility of distribution of funding to each authority as directed by the Department of Education and oversees the success of the programme

6.4

The 9 local authorities in the Partnership include: Barnsley MBC, City of Doncaster Council, East Riding of Yorkshire Council, Hull City Council, North Lincolnshire Council, North East Lincolnshire Council, Rotherham MBC, City of York Council and Sheffield. Letters of Commitment from all these authorities were received at the point of submitting the bid and Inter Authority Contracts have been prepared in accordance with the DfE template.

6.5

Sheffield City Council has been the lead authority for the Yorkshire and Humberside Step up to Social Work Regional Partnership since 2010 and this will be the eighth cohort. The Manchester Metropolitan University are the current Higher Education Institution provider and the current contract with them expires at the end of the eighth cohort which will be March 2025.

6.6

The value of the HEI contract will be a maximum of £508k and this forms part of the £1.9m contract.

6.7

The timeline given by the DfE for the programme is as follows: National advertising February-March, application process live from February 2023 closing March, shortlisting process May, assessment centres running for 3 weeks in June/July, academic checks August, Keeping in Touch day October, trainee contract award October, start of programme January 2024, completion of programme March 2025.

6.8

Confirmation of DfE funding has been made with delays due to Ministerial changes and the grant terms and conditions have been outlined in the bidding document. Any underspend by March 2025 will be repaid to the DfE.

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