

Divisions Affected -

Delegated Decision by Cabinet Member for Public Health & Inequalities 4 July 2023

Budget approval for provision of a Healthy Child and Young Person Public Health Service in Oxfordshire

Report by Corporate Director for Public Health and Wellbeing

RECOMMENDATION

1. **The Cabinet Member for is RECOMMENDED to**

Approve the budget and delegate authority to the Director of Public Health in consultation with the Head of Legal and Deputy Monitoring Officer to award and complete the contract for **a Healthy Child and Young Person Public Health Service in Oxfordshire** as referred to in this report following the conclusion of a procurement exercise pursuant to the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.

Executive Summary

2. Every child is entitled to the best possible start in life and health visitors play an essential role in helping to achieve this. By working with and supporting families during the crucial early years of a child's life, public health services have a profound impact on the lifelong health and wellbeing of young children and their families. They also lead on the delivery of the 0 to 19 years elements of the Healthy Child Programme in partnership with other health and social care colleagues.
3. The following Public Health Services for Children and Young People are being commissioned through an integrated contract and include Health Visiting, Family Nurse Partnership, School Health Nursing, College Nursing, National Child Measurement Programme, Vision Screening, and Protective Behaviours. The current commissioning arrangements are contracted in four different contracts which all end during 2024.
4. The new contract arrangements need to be in place from 1st April 2024, as there can be no break in service provision. The current providers are aware of the contract end date and the need to re-procure services. There is sufficient time to procure and award a new contract.
5. These public health services have a pivotal role in supporting the wider system approach for Children and Young People and their families. They will be

required to work in partnership with a breadth of organisations, e.g. Oxfordshire County Council Early Help & Children’s Social Care, NHS Providers, Integrated Care Board, Education Settings, Voluntary and Community Sector.

6. Contract value is expected to be approximately £12,500,000 per annum once all service elements have commenced in the year 2024. The contract term is 7 years with a break clause at the end of year 5.
7. The annual contract value will be over £500,000 and therefore is required to be entered in the Forward Plan, in accordance with the Access to Information Rules. This is a key decision and a delegated decision consistent with overall Council policy to deliver agreed strategy/plans within the area of responsibility and within approved budgets.

Background Information

8. The Healthy Child Programme is the national evidence-based framework for the delivery of universal public health services for all children and families from conception to 19 years. The Healthy Child Programme model¹ and commissioning guides² were updated in May 2021 outlining a vision of a modernised health visiting and school nursing service that responds flexibly to need to offer every family a programme of screening, developmental reviews and information and guidance to support parenting and healthy choices. The programme supports healthy pregnancy, children’s early development and readiness for school, support for children and young people in and out of school settings and reducing health inequalities and vulnerabilities.
9. Eighty per cent of brain cell development takes place by age three, and early attachment and good maternal mental health impact on emotional, behavioural and intellectual development. There is also evidence that “socially disadvantaged children are more likely to have speech, language and communication difficulties than their peers”. In turn poor communication issues have been linked to worse educational attainment, peer relationships, emotional problems and impaired social behaviour³.
10. Poor attainment in the early years’ indicators have been associated with an increased risk of premature death and major chronic diseases in children and ongoing into adulthood. These include developmental problems, mental and behavioural disorders, as well as an increase in injuries, falls and traffic accidents that require hospital admission or result in death⁴. Also inadequate support for early years care and education costs England more than £16 billion every year⁵. Studies from the United States on the Family Nurse Partnership programme show that participation increases young mothers’ entry into workforce⁶. The benefits of breastfeeding to babies are clear in terms of reduced

¹ [Health visiting and school nursing service delivery model - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/91221/Health_visiting_and_school_nursing_service_delivery_model_-_GOV.UK_(www.gov.uk).pdf)

² [Healthy child programme 0 to 19: health visitor and school nurse commissioning - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/91221/Healthy_child_programme_0_to_19_health_visitor_and_school_nurse_commissioning_-_GOV.UK_(www.gov.uk).pdf)

³ [BSIL ROI report v14 update \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/91221/BSIL_ROI_report_v14_update_(publishing.service.gov.uk).pdf)

⁴ [BSIL ROI report v14 update \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/91221/BSIL_ROI_report_v14_update_(publishing.service.gov.uk).pdf)

⁵ [Report - Centre for Early Childhood](https://www.cef.ac.uk/resources/reports/early-childhood)

⁶ [Child poverty and early intervention | Early Intervention Foundation \(eif.org.uk\)](https://www.eif.org.uk/research/child-poverty-and-early-intervention)

illnesses and obesity. The benefits to mothers include reduction in breast cancer (by 6% for each year breastfeeding). Benefits to society also clear with evidence of higher IQ and productivity in adult life from those breastfed⁷.

11. The latest child and maternal health profile for Oxfordshire⁸ 2020/2021 shows that whilst for the majority of indicators the county is doing better than the overall England average, there are some indicators that Oxfordshire performs worse than the South-East⁹ and these relate to school readiness and average attainment score for education for all children.
12. The Oxfordshire resident population by five-year age group, in Oxfordshire (Census, 2021)¹⁰ is as follows

| | All ages | Aged 4 years & under | Aged 5 to 9 years | Aged 10 to 14 years | Aged 15 to 19 years | Total aged 0-19 years |
|---------------------------|----------|----------------------|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Oxfordshire (Census 2021) | 725,300 | 38,000 | 41,000 | 43,000 | 45,000 | 167,000 |

13. The following public health services are included within this commission:
 - (a) **Health Visiting Service** supports families from the antenatal period up to school entry. It focuses on six high impact areas: transition to parenthood, maternal and family mental health, breastfeeding, healthy birthweight and nutrition, managing minor illness and reducing accidents, and supporting child development.
 - (b) **Family Nurse Partnership** improves the life chances of first-time young parents and their children by breaking the cycle of disadvantage. It supports children from 0-2 years.
 - (c) **Vision Screening** is recommended by the UK National Screening Committee for 4- to 5-year-olds to detect children with amblyopia, a form of abnormal vision system development. If detected the treatments available have been shown to result in improved vision.
 - (d) **National Child Measurement Programme** is a nationally mandated public health programme. It provides data from Reception Year and Year 6 for child excess weight as well as providing families with advice and support. It is part of the government’s approach to tackling child obesity.
 - (e) **School Health Nursing and College Nursing** service offers year-round support for children and young people both in and out of education settings. It focuses on six high impact areas: supporting resilience and wellbeing, improving health behaviours and reducing risk taking, supporting healthy lifestyles, supporting vulnerable young people and improving health inequalities, supporting complex and additional health and wellbeing needs, promoting self-care and improving health literacy.
 - (f) **Protective Behaviours**, the delivery of PSHE, RSE and personal safety programmes in schools for children and young people and their parents.

⁷ [The case for investing in early childhood interventions | RCPCH](#)

⁸ [Child and Maternal Health - Data - OHID \(phe.org.uk\)](#)

⁹ [Child and Maternal Health - Data - OHID \(phe.org.uk\)](#)

¹⁰ [Local Government Inform, Census 2021](#)

It complements school/college nursing provision and contributes to public health outcomes, including a reduction in reducing risk-taking behaviours and supporting PHSE and RSE delivery in schools and colleges in line with guidance¹¹.

14. The OCC procurement route will comprise a single stage process advertised in OJEU under the 'Light Touch Regime' of the new Public Procurement Regulations. It will use the Council's e-tendering portal, organisations will be invited to tender for the provision of the service.

Corporate Policies and Priorities

15. This commission aligns with the following local priorities
- (a) Oxfordshire County Council's **Strategic Plan 2022-2025**¹² includes commitment to having a positive role in giving all local children the best start in life.
 - (b) One of the four priorities of the **Children's Trust**¹³, part of the Health and Wellbeing Board, is ensuring children have a healthy start in life and stay healthy into adulthood.
 - (c) The 2022/23 **Director of Public Health's Annual Report**¹⁴ recommend continued partnership work to tackle mental health issues in young people as well as reducing childhood obesity and increasing physical activity ready for healthy adulthood.
 - (d) The **Early Help Strategy**¹⁵ provides an outline of what the current provision of Early Help looks like in Oxfordshire and describes the workplan and reporting arrangements for improving early help provision in the county. There are four areas of focus underpinning the strategic vision, which are for all children to be successful, be healthy, be safe and be supported.
 - (e) The **School Readiness Strategy**¹⁶ outlines Oxfordshire's vision for children and young people to be well educated and grow up to lead successful, happy, healthy and safe lives. The strategy reflects UNICEF principles that school readiness is achieved through ready families, ready communities, ready services and ready children.
 - (f) **The Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy**¹⁷ outlines how the NHS, Local Government and Healthwatch work together to improve health and wellbeing as the Oxfordshire Health and Wellbeing Board. Key aims are to prevent ill health before it starts, give patients and services users a high-quality experience, co-produce re-shaping local services and tackle chronic workforce shortages.
 - (g) **Child Exploitation Toolkit for Schools**¹⁸ provides information to support children and families who are impacted by exploitation.

¹¹ [Personal, social, health and economic education - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

¹² [Our strategic plan 2022 - 2025 | Oxfordshire County Council](#)

¹³ [The Children's Trust | Oxfordshire County Council](#)

¹⁴ [Oxfordshire Public Health | Oxfordshire County Council](#)

¹⁵ [Early-Help-Strategy-Update-June-2022-v2.1-1.pdf \(oscb.org.uk\)](#)

¹⁶ [Oxfordshire school readiness strategy](#)

¹⁷ [Oxfordshire Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#)

¹⁸ [PowerPoint Presentation \(oscb.org.uk\)](#)

- (h) **Oxfordshire's Better Wellbeing and Mental Health Strategy for Children and Young People**¹⁹ aims to take a public health approach to the emotional wellbeing and mental health of children and young people. The strategy focuses on both promoting emotional wellbeing, and on preventing mental ill health, with the vision that all children and young people in Oxfordshire can achieve good mental health and wellbeing with access to the right support at the earliest opportunity when they need it.
16. The service also fits with national priorities for children and young people:
- (a) Implementing the **Healthy Child Programme**²⁰ from 0-19 years of age
 - (b) **Getting it right for children, young people and families**²¹ - Maximising the contribution of the school nursing team: Vision and Call to Action
 - (c) Responding to the **Public Health England Child Health Profile for Oxfordshire**²²
 - (d) Reflecting the needs identified in the **Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health: State of Child Health report**²³
 - (e) **The Best Start for Life: A Vision for the 1001 Critical Days**²⁴

Financial Implications

17. Public Health has a ring-fenced grant which specifies that a proportion must be spent on 0-19 services.
18. £11.5 million is already committed within the Public Health grant to fund 0-19 children and young people services. The additional £1m resource has been identified for the new contract through a prioritisation process which was undertaken by Public Health Assistant Finance Business Partner and Deputy Director of Public Health.
19. Contract value is expected to be approximately £12,500,000 per annum once all service elements have commenced in the year 2024. The contract term is 7 years with a break clause at the end of year 5.
20. The total contract value over 7 years is expected to be £87,500,000.

Comments checked by:

Stephen Rowles, Public Health Assistant Finance Business Partner,
Stephen.Rowles@Oxfordshire.gov.uk

¹⁹ [Oxfordshires Better Wellbeing and Mental Health Strategy for Children and Young People SEPTEMBER 20.pdf](#)

²⁰ [Healthy child programme 0 to 19: health visitor and school nurse commissioning - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

²¹ [Getting it right for children, young people and families: health services - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

²² [Child and Maternal Health - Data - OHID \(phe.org.uk\)](#)

²³ [RCPCH – State of Child Health – Insight into the state of child health in the UK](#)

²⁴ [The best start for life a vision for the 1 001 critical days.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

Legal Implications

21. The Council has a statutory obligation to “take such steps as it considers appropriate for improving the health of the people in its area” (s2B National Health Service Act 2006 (“NHS Act 2006”) as amended by s12 Health and Social Care Act 2012). Regulations 2015/921 further imposes a mandatory obligation on the Council to provide or secure the provision of universal health visitor reviews, to carry out a policy intention to ensure that elements of the Healthy Child Programme, led by health visitors, should be provided in a universal fashion. The National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) is also a nationally mandated public health programme.
22. The Council therefore has a mandatory duty to provide health visiting services and the National Child Measurement Programme and the procurement of a service provider to provide such services would fulfil this duty. Any procurement process must comply with relevant procurement legislation on competitive tendering for public contracts.

Comments checked by:

Jonathan Pool, Solicitor, Contracts (Legal Services) Law & Governance
jonathan.pool@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Staff Implications

23. The Start Well Team will carry out the procurement process. Procurement and Legal staff time will also be required to complete the procurement to the timescales of service commencement on 1 April 2024. This capacity has been included within the service delivery planning process for 2023/2024.

Equality & Inclusion Implications

24. These public health services are universal and are provided to children and young people aged 0-19 years and their families/carers in Oxfordshire. All eligible children will be invited to participate in the screening programmes and families of babies and toddlers will be invited for their developmental reviews in accordance with national guidance.
25. The new service will also be needs led and provide targeted support and advice when identified.

Sustainability Implications

26. The Council introduced a new social value policy in February 2022 to enable spending to go further, by encouraging suppliers to provide social value that will benefit local communities within Oxfordshire.
27. The social value policy becomes effective when the tender value is above £100,000 (the contract spend threshold) and bidders are expected to submit social value bids as part of the procurement process. This applies to this tendering exercise.

Risk Management

28. The key risks identified for this commission are
 - (a) affordability which has been considered in the finance section of the report
 - (b) increasing complexity of need and a growing demand for support which may require a more targeted interventions and a flexible approach adopted alongside system partners
 - (c) workforce issues due to insufficient qualified health visitors and school health nurses in the sector, this has been mitigated by having a clinician led service with triage to a trained skill mix workforce

Consultations

29. The Councils Let's Talk Oxfordshire was utilised on two occasions in 2022 to gather views on the health and wellbeing services for children and young people. The surveys were for parents, carers and professionals to complete. Focus groups were also held with young people in 2022. We have also engaged with professionals across the system in various different forums. All of these views have been utilised in designing the new service.

Ansaf Azhar
Corporate Director – Public Health and Community Safety

Contact Officer: Donna Husband, Head of Public Health Programmes – Start Well, donna.husband@oxfordshire.gov.uk 07827 979240

19th June 2023