

The Provision of Radio Aids, Associated Equipment and Maintenance

REPORT TO; the Corporate Director Children and Young Peoples Services (CYPS); Stuart Carlton and the CYPS Executive Member.

DECISION DATE: 20th May 2021

SUPPORTING ANNEX; N/A

PROPOSED RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Authority procure a supplier of equipment for deaf and hearing-impaired children and young people to enable them to hear effectively in educational settings. The recommendation is to join with the City of York Council who have also identified a need to procure a supplier of equipment for deaf and hearing-impaired children. The contract will commence on the 1st August 2021 for an initial term of three years with a possible extension of two years.

BACKGROUND TO SUPPORT THE RECOMMENDATION

North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) is committed to ensuring children and young people have access to education. Many deaf and hearing-impaired children and young people are unable to access education without the use of additional specialist hearing technology alongside their own personal hearing equipment.

The equipment required are Radio Aids, these come in two parts. The receivers that are small lightweight and attach discreetly to the young person's hearing aid or cochlear implants and the transmitter worn by the pupil's teacher. The teacher's voice travels directly from the transmitter to the receivers. This enables the pupil to hear the teacher even when they seated at a distance greater than a metre or when there is background noise. The devices are small, discreet and mobile and can be used with children and young people through each stage of their education. Their lifespan is approximately 5 years and the cost per unit is approximately £1,765.

A metre is the optimum distance a personal hearing aid can pick up speech from the person speaking. It is not possible for teachers to consistently stand a metre away from specific pupils. Background noise is inevitable in most educational settings and is produced due to classrooms having poor acoustics, daily and unavoidable environmental sounds and the sound of other pupils.

The local authority is duty bound to supply this equipment as part of its commitment to inclusive practice and removing barriers to learning as set out in the Special Education Needs Code of Practice 0 to 25 years:

'Some children and young people require special educational provision because they have a disability which prevents or hinders them from making use of the educational provision generally provided. These difficulties can be age related and may fluctuate

over time. Many children and young people with a vision impairment (VI), hearing impairment (HI) or a multi-sensory impairment (MSI) will require specialist support and/or equipment to access their learning, or habitation support.'

By conducting a procurement exercise NYCC will ensure they are securing the most competitive price for equipment whilst meeting our requirements as an Authority to provide these devices to the young people in our community.

LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE COMPLIANCE

Advice was sought from Procurement and Contract Management Service and several procurement methods were reviewed for their suitability. Different framework options were reviewed however, none was deemed fit for purpose as all are aimed at the adult market who require different hearing products to young people. Several neighbouring Authorities were also contacted in order to evaluate any commercial prospects from devising our own in house framework however, a lack of interest deemed this route to be unnecessary. Therefore, to ensure that North Yorkshire County Council complies with both the Public Contract Regulations 2015 and the Special Educational Needs Code of Practice an Open Procedure will be used to procure a supplier for the Provision of Radio Aids, Associated Equipment and Maintenance.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Authority procure a supplier of specialist hearing technology jointly with the City of York Council. This will enable the Authority to be compliant in its duty to remove barriers to learning as set out in Special Education Needs Code of Practice 0 to 25 years.