

Public Health
222 Upper Street
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Report of: Director of Public Health

Date: 27 January 2023

Ward(s): All

Subject: Contract award for the Camden and Islington Oral Health Promotion Service

1. Synopsis

- 1.1. This report seeks approval of the award of the contract for the Camden and Islington Oral Health Promotion Service. The service will include a number of specific programmes that include a Fluoride Varnish Programme, Supervised Tooth Brushing, Brushing for Life (toothbrushing packs) and a targeted oral health promotion offer for vulnerable adults.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. To award the contract to Whittington Health NHS Trust from 1 May 2023 for a period of five (5) years with the option to extend by a further three (3) periods of one-year each.
- 2.2. The total value of the proposed service is £346,590 per annum, with the costs split evenly across Camden and Islington (£173,295) which amounts in total to £1,386,360 (per borough) for the length of the contract. The aggregate value is £2,772,720 (including all extensions) of which Islington's investment is £1,386,356 over the full eight (8) year duration of the contract.

3. Date the decision is to be taken

- 3.1. 3 February 2023.

4. Background

4.1. Nature of the service

4.1.1. The Oral Health Promotion Service will deliver innovative, evidence-based targeted oral health promotion programmes in Camden and Islington that will improve oral health outcomes for the following groups of people:

- Children living in communities with high levels of untreated disease
- Older people living in residential and care homes and those living independently
- Adults and children with learning disabilities and other special care needs
- Adults with alcohol and substance misuse
- People with serious mental illness
- Homeless people

4.1.2. The service specification sets out the areas of the contract that will be commissioned which includes:

- Brushing for Life: Brushing for Life packs are given to families including the two-and-a-half-year review as part of the Healthy Child Programme (0-5).
- Tooth-brushing Programme in Children's Centre Nurseries: children's centres and targeted early year's settings with higher proportion of funded two-year-olds.
- Health promotion programmes in primary and secondary schools that have been identified as having a "high caries rate". Groups targeted include Looked After Children and children with special needs.
- Oral health promotion programmes for adults with special needs, older people in nursing and residential homes, substance misuse and mental health services/supported accommodation.
- Wider Health Promotion Activity such as Epidemiological Surveys and staff training.
- Targeted Fluoride Varnish Programme for children aged three to ten years old within Children's Centres and Primary Schools identified as having high % of free school meals with two applications of fluoride varnish and signpost children and their families to local NHS dental services for their continuing care

4.2 Key Objectives

4.2.1 To appoint a suitably skilled organisation to deliver an efficient, effective and innovative oral health promotion service to improve oral health and reduce oral health inequalities in the population of Camden and Islington. The strategic outcomes are:

- a) Reduction in prevalence of tooth decay in children and adults
- b) Reduction in oral health inequalities
- c) Increased access to the NHS dental services in children and adults
- d) Increased adult oral health quality of life

4.2.2 It was clear in the procurement strategy that the Fluoride Varnish Programme delivery across both boroughs will be evaluated at any time from Year three onwards. For this purpose, all costs for the Fluoride Varnish Programme were presented separately. The programme is being commissioned as part of the overall oral health promotion services and not as a separate programme.

4.3 Options appraisal

4.3.1 The procurement strategy was approved by the Director of Public Health on 8 November 2022. The strategy included an appraisal of four options: to bring the service in-house; to procure a joint service with Camden; to tender for the contract as a single borough; to not re-commission but let the existing service end.

4.3.2 There is an interdependency between oral health promotion programmes and local Community Dentists. Due to the clinical input and dental expertise required for the service the in-house option was not the recommended option.

4.3.3 The recommended procurement route was a collaborative competitive tender led by Camden Council (in partnership with Islington Council).

4.3.4 The service sits under the Light Touch Regime (LTR) within the Public Contracts Regulations 2015, which applies to 'certain social and other specific services' namely health care, social care, education, cultural and certain other services. The regime allows the Council to design its own procedure for LTR procurements provided that the process complies with the principles of equal treatment and transparency and builds in time limits that are reasonable and proportionate. As the contract value was above the current threshold of £663,540 (inclusive of VAT) a procurement process similar to the open procedure was undertaken.

4.3.5 The contract notice was advertised on 'Find a Tender', 'Contract Finder' and the 'London Tenders Portal'.

4.4 Evaluation

4.4.1 Three expressions of interests were received and two tenders were returned. One organisation did not pass the selection stage so only one bid was evaluated. However, this is known to be a small and specialist market due to the fluoride varnish element of the service.

4.4.2 The following award evaluation criteria was used for the tender.

Award Criteria	Weighting
Price	40%

Quality of which:	
• Service Model and outcomes	20%
• Service Implementation	10%
• Performance Management	10%
• Partnership Working	10%
• Social Value	10%

- 4.4.3 The Whittington Health NHS Trust met all the requirements in the method statement questions and demonstrated how they will work in partnership with key stakeholders such as the Local Authority, Dentists, NHS, Education, VCS and Early Years and Adult Social Care commissioners and key care settings to achieve the KPIs.
- 4.4.4 The overall tender score for Whittington Health was: Quality (36%), Price (40%) with a total score of 76%.
- 4.4.5 The approach to targeting vulnerable groups was clearly set out. The service will work with community organisations to adapt the delivery model. The service will also use data to target inequalities e.g. working in schools, nurseries and care settings targeting residents with the poorest oral health outcomes. Oral Health Champions will also provide culturally specific, evidence-based information in the community. The delivery model will ensure culturally appropriate approaches by working with key stakeholders including the voluntary sector and community organisations to address any challenges regarding take up of the service.
- 4.4.6 The Whittington Health NHS Trust were able to demonstrate how their delivery model was evidence based; why there are oral health inequalities and who is most at risk which then translates into how they will focus effort on key areas for delivery. The response clearly demonstrated how they will use local epidemiology / data to drive action and to set priorities.
- 4.5 The Whittington Health NHS Trust are committed to providing social value as per the Invitation to Tender and Service Specification. They have either met or exceeded our minimum requirements. This is not published information.
- 4.5.1 In addition to social benefits the Whittington NHS Trust will offer training sessions for pharmacists and GPs around oral health promotion and handling dental emergencies or helping access dental care, increase use of public transport, cycling or walking and to maximise digital communications and forms.
- 4.5.2 The payment of London Living Wage was included as a requirement of the contract.
- 4.5.3 All outcomes will be reported back to commissioners as part of quarterly monitoring

5 Implications

5.1 Financial Implications

- 5.1.1 The total value of the contract for is £2,772,720 (£1,386,360 per borough) for the full 8 years shared equally between the boroughs of Camden and Islington (£173,295 per annum per borough). The contract length is for an initial 5 years (£866,475 per borough) with a possible extension to extend by 3 x 1 year extensions (£173,295 per borough per year).
- 5.1.2 It should be noted that this contract contains provisions to alter the fluoride varnish service in Islington after the third year if required. Any review and subsequent contract variation may realise efficiencies through reducing the service or through engaging in funding support from alternative sources. The provider would be given up to 12 months' notice of any service provision, meaning any financial changes will not come into effect until the fourth year of the contract. Any variation that delivers financial efficiencies will be put towards meeting other Islington Public Health service objectives/targets. Any financial pressures created from any contract variation will need to be met from departmental underspends and reserves.
- 5.1.3 If the event of provider failure, Public Health would seek to reprocur the service or engage with existing service provision from partner organisations.
- 5.1.4 Owing to the potential length of the contract, sufficient provision will need to exist in any contracts to cover the impact of inflation by the provider. The full cost of inflationary pressures will need to be absorbed by the provider, additional funding will not be provided from Camden and Islington Public Health.

5.2 Legal Implications

- 5.2.1 The Council has power to undertake a joint procurement exercise with other local authorities under section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 which provides the power for the Council to do anything which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of its functions. The council has a duty to improve public health under the Health and Social Care Act 2012, section 12. The council must take such steps as it considers appropriate for improving the health of the people in its area including providing services or facilities designed to promote healthy living (whether by helping individuals to address behaviour that is detrimental to health or in any other way) as well as providing services or facilities for the prevention, diagnosis or treatment of illness (National Health Service Act 2006, section 2B, as amended by Health and Social Care Act 2012, section 12 and Regulation 2013/351 made under the National Health Service Act 2006, section 6C). Therefore the council may provide oral health promotion services as proposed in this report. The Council has power to enter into contracts with providers of such services under section 1 of the Local Government (Contracts) Act 1997. Corporate Directors have power to award contracts paid for using revenue money of up to £2,000,000 of Islington Council spend (council's Procurement Rule 18.1.1).
- 5.2.2 The public health services being procured are subject to the light touch regime set out in Regulations 74 to 77 of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (the

Regulations). The threshold for application of this light touch regime is currently £663,540.00. The value of the proposed contract is above this threshold and accordingly it was advertised on the Find a Tender Service (FTS). The council's Procurement Rules require contracts of this value to be subject to competitive tender. In compliance with the requirements of the light touch regime in the Regulations and the council's Procurement Rules a call for competition was advertised and the service was procured using a competitive tender process (led by Camden Council).

5.2.3 The Whittington NHS Trust bid was evaluated in accordance with the evaluation model and found to meet the requirements. The contract may therefore be awarded to them as recommended in the report.

5.2.4 In deciding whether to award the contract as recommended the Director of Public Health should be satisfied as to the competence of the supplier to provide the services and that the tender price represents value for money for the Council

5.3 Environmental Implications and contribution to achieving a net zero carbon Islington by 2030

5.3.1 Under social value the provider will be adopting paperless approaches to gaining consent for fluoride varnish along with other similar measures.

5.4 Equalities Impact Assessment

5.4.1 The council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it (section 149 Equality Act 2010). The council has a duty to have due regard to the need to remove or minimise disadvantages, take steps to meet needs, in particular steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, and encourage people to participate in public life. The council must have due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

5.4.2 An equalities impact screening assessment was completed on 8 August 2022 and the tender did not require a full equalities impact assessment.

5.4.3 The tender included standard equality and diversity questions as part of the selection stage, which required bidders to submit their Equality and Diversity policy, along with a written narrative explaining how the policy has been put into practice. The award criteria sought responses from tenderers on:

- how you will identify and target the groups specified in the service specification to ensure that the programme is addressing oral health inequalities;
- how you will implement and deliver an inclusive oral health promotion programme/s to residents from socially deprived /vulnerable groups who experience the poorest oral health outcomes; and

- how the needs of vulnerable and/or underrepresented groups will be met in an equitable and culturally appropriate way.

6 Conclusion and reasons for the decision

6.1.1 The Whittington NHS Trust provided a stronger tender. They are an integrated care organisation based in Islington with extensive experience of delivering public health programmes including oral health promotion, fluoride varnish, research and epidemiology in north central and North West London boroughs (including Camden and Islington). They bring strong clinical and strategic leadership in delivering programmes and have a good track record in meeting contractual expectations.

6.2 Minimum thresholds for both quality and price were met. By tackling oral health inequalities in vulnerable groups and during the early years stage the service will prevent more costly interventions and therefore offers value for money. It is recommended that the contract for Camden and Islington Oral Health Promotion Service is awarded to The Whittington NHS Trust.

7 Record of the decision

7.1 I have today decided to take the decision set out in section 2 of this report for the reasons set out above.

Signed by

Director of Public Health

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