

CABINET

19 September 2023

Title: Contract for School Data and Applications Solution Software	
Report of the Cabinet Member for Educational Attainment and School Improvement	
Open Report	For Decision
Wards Affected: None	Key Decision: No
Report Author: Ben Davis, IT Project Manager	Contact Details: E-mail: ben.davis@lbbd.gov.uk
Accountable Director: Jane Hargreaves, Commissioning Director, Education	
Accountable Executive Team Director: Elaine Allegretti, Strategic Director, Children and Adults	
Summary: <p>Access Solutions are a market leading Education software solutions company with presence in 20 London Boroughs and many other local authorities across the country, they are also the Councils current incumbent supplier for Education Case Management. On our estate currently there are two separate Access Solutions products with databases attached; these are Family Information Service and Pupils Admission. An approach was made following the Covid-19 pandemic to undertake workshops where we identified what our needs were so to understand what the two externally hosted systems, currently on the estate could look like if merged into one primary system and how that could benefit the service. Access Solutions were also queried on whether there were suitable additional software modules to support the above requirements.</p> <p>Access Solutions provided a demonstration of the additional modules available, which was attended by approximately 20 staff from the education team including the SMT. The demonstration session was followed up by another Q&A session following feedback from the team.</p> <p>Access Solution have provided a quotation to merge the current Family Information Service (Early Years) and Pupil Admissions service into a single system. This would be the first steps in providing the single view of the child or pupil. There are three additional modules which would support the service moving wholly into a systems environment without the need to rely upon separate worksheets and pupil files. These are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Specialist Case Management - Education• Specialist Case Management – SEND• Orchestra for Schools. <p>Included in Access Solutions are further modules for consideration. One includes the ability for Liquid Logic to pull data from Synergy which would be of benefit to the Social Service Teams. These modules will be investigated throughout the duration of the contract.</p>	

The contract will be acquired using the Yorkshire Purchasing Organisation (YPO) software and Application Solutions Framework which is operational until 20 February 2025. The YPO framework has been selected specifically for its Direct Award criteria for products pre-existing on the estate and is seen as the favoured compliant route to market to acquire a 7-year contract (5+2 contract structure).

The 7-year contract will result in a total cost of £1,096,283.50, this equates to £142,654.79 per annum with a one-off cost in the 1st year of £97,700 for implementation and training of the additional modules being acquired. The contract will start on 1 October 2023 and run until 31 September 2030.

Recommendation(s)

The Cabinet is recommended to:

- (i) Agree that the Council proceeds with the procurement of a contract with Access Solutions for the proposed Synergy database merge and the purchase of additional software modules to support the single view of the child and safeguarding via the YPO software applications and data framework 1095, in accordance with the strategy set out in the report; and
- (ii) Delegate authority to the Commissioning Director, Education, in consultation with the Chief Legal Officer, to award and enter into the contract and any extension periods with Access Solutions to fully implement and effect the proposals

Reason(s)

To accord with the Council's Contract Rules and the Public Contract Regulations 2015 and provide a more efficient service for pupils, families and carers which supports the Best Chance for Child Strategy.

1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1 One of the main drivers of the Education Senior Management Team (SMT) resulting from the pandemic was the need to review and improve current systems and work processes across the education service with regards to pupil information so to improve safeguarding and how limited resources are best directed to improve outcomes. The driver was a single view of the child or pupil which would not only be available to education professionals in carrying out their function or duties but extended wider to other services such as Social Workers and the Councils One View project.
- 1.2 Secondly, the review included what and when information was collected from schools besides the census information and in view of the Governments published White and Green papers for education, how could this be improved in terms of resource efficiency and perhaps live time data to track attendance, managed moves, exclusions and off rolling to improve visibility of safeguarding.
- 1.3 The SMT conducted a series of workshops so to understand what was working well and what areas could be improved. Currently, the Early Years and Pupil Admissions

service use an education software package called Synergy provided by Access Solutions to undertake the function of the services. In addition, the SEND Service also have a Synergy module which is used in part to support the functioning of the service. Within other service areas the use of excel worksheets and pupil files were used to track pupil information however these were insular and reliant upon regular updating/version control. This was considered a high risk in that there was a possibility of professionals not seeing the full landscape of the child or young person.

- 1.4 It was agreed that the best approach going forward was to explore the possibilities of moving to a systems environment for the service as a whole. The benefits would be a greatly improved SEND service and in particular Education Health Care Plans process management including yearly reviews, the tracking and recording of pupils who have elected to be home educated or were missing in education. Identification of pupils involved with other services, this could be the police, youth offending or Social Services.

2. Proposed Procurement Strategy

2.1 Outline specification of the works, goods or services being procured

- 2.1.1 This procurement will be looking to obtain Support and Maintenance as well as additional modules for the Synergy System. Furthermore, an exercise will be completed as part of this contract to merge the two existing primary databases into one.
- 2.1.2 Synergy is a third party hosted system, which uses a set of databases to collect and process pupil information in respect of Early Years, School Admissions and Education Health Care Plans. It is the backbone IT system for the service, where data is used to, for example, undertake national offer day for starting Primary, Reception and Secondary as well as completing data returned to the DfE such as SEND2. In addition, the data is collated and used to form cases for management by the Education team to create views of children and pupils from the borough in order to inform where resources or support is needed to improve outcomes.
- 2.1.3 The new proposed additional modules will include Specialist Educational Management Core which will enable education professionals to log, track data and integrate data which would be shared across the service, moving away from spreadsheets. Specialist Case Management SEND would be a major upgrade for the Education Health Care team which improves working for both Professionals and Parents or Carers involved with pupils or young persons with a Education Health Care Plan or going through the assessment for one. Other modules included in the procurement and would be considered for implementation during the contract would be Orchestra for Schools which would enable live data from schools to be imported daily. This would require support and agreement with schools if we were to proceed.

2.2 Estimated Contract Value including the value of any uplift/extension period

- 2.2.1 The estimated contract value over the 7-years (5+2) with Access Solutions for the Synergy system is £1,096,283.50, with a per annum cost of £142,654.79 and a one-off implementation and training cost in year one of £97,700.00.

2.2.2 These values include the support and maintenance of the current product set and the new products being procured, as well as their one-off cost.

2.3 **Duration of the contract, including any options for extension**

2.3.1 The overall contract length would be 7-years, this will be structured in a 5+2 format. The choice of a break clause is to give the Council the opportunity to assess the Market prior to the 5-year anniversary and ensure that Access Solutions still provide the best product for the Service.

2.4 **Is the contract subject to the Public Contracts Regulations 2015? If Yes and the Contract is for services, is it subject to the light touch regime?**

2.4.1 Yes, this is above the thresholds for goods and services which are currently £213,477 (inc VAT) in contract value.

2.5 **Recommended procurement procedure and reasons for the recommendation**

2.5.1 IT Services would like to proceed with a Direct Award to Access Solutions, for the aforementioned Synergy system and additional modules, via the Yorkshire Purchasing Organisation Framework 1095. This framework is for the provision of software application solutions which has been developed from extensive public sector customer and supplier engagement. Designed to meet the needs of all public sector organisations including Local Authorities, Education, Housing, Charities, Central Government, Emergency Service and NHS Establishments.

2.5.2 The Education Senior Management Team believe there are sufficient grounds to Direct Award based on point 1 of the Framework Direct Award criteria. This would ensure continuity of the Synergy system and its modules for the Education team.

2.6 **The contract delivery methodology and documentation to be adopted**

2.6.1 This contract will be managed on a day-to-day basis by Education and supported by IT services where necessary.

2.6.2 The management of the contract will be as per the T&Cs of the YPO Framework.

2.7 **Outcomes, savings and efficiencies expected as a consequence of awarding the proposed contract**

2.7.1 By securing the Synergy system for 7-years (5+2), this will allow Education to continue their current service, whilst also undertaking exercises and tasks to greatly improve the role of the product within the service. The merging of databases and addition of modules will result in better outputs as well as improved business process and thus efficiency.

2.8 **Criteria against which the tenderers are to be selected and contract is to be awarded**

2.8.1 This is a Direct Award to Access Solutions via the YPO Framework; no criteria will be used in this procurement process.

2.9 How the procurement will address and implement the Council's Social Value policies

2.9.1 As part of the Councils strategy to ensure Social Value is delivered by all major suppliers, Access Solutions have been notified of the Councils Social Value policies, as part of the contract signing agreement, Education will liaise with the Access Solutions account manager to discuss and negotiate a Social Value offering.

3. Options Considered

3.1 Option 1 – Do nothing (Rejected)

3.1.1 This option has not been considered due to the importance of the Synergy System to the Education team. Failure to renew and have a contract in place would be of huge risk and impact to the Service, the Council and most importantly children and pupils across the borough.

3.2 Option 2 – Alternative Frameworks (G-Cloud 13; YPO, 1095 Framework)

3.2.1 G-Cloud 13 is a Framework designed for Direct Award but often for products which are deemed off the shelf, meaning many prices are fixed, furthermore G-Cloud 13 only offers a maximum term of 4 years. The service believes the role of Synergy and its place in the market warranted a longer contract, thus rejected G-Cloud 13.

3.2.2 The YPO 1095 is a Framework designed for direct award for software applications, services and hardware for use by public sector organisations including, Local Authorities, Education, Housing, Charities, Central Government, Emergency Service and NHS Establishments. Having a simplified lot structure to allow for purchase based on solutions and outcomes is the preferred procurement route.

3.3 Option 3 – Open Market (Rejected)

3.3.1 Access Solution's Synergy are market leaders in Education case management systems and an open market tender would not be beneficial as Synergy is available on compliant frameworks of which the Council has access to.

4. Waiver

4.1 Not applicable.

5. Equalities and other Customer Impact/GDPR

5.1 At the time of this report, an Equalities and Impact Assessment has been submitted to the CE-Strategy Team and awaiting approval and guidance.

6. Consultation

6.1 The proposals in this report were considered and endorsed by the Procurement Board on 3 April 2023.

7. Corporate Procurement

Implications completed by: Francis Parker, Senior Procurement Manager

- 7.1 Officers have satisfied themselves that the chosen provider and their product offers the best value for money to the Council.
- 7.2 Officers must ensure that they comply with the terms of the framework and that a direct award to the chosen provider is permissible and compliant with the PCR 2015

8. Financial Implications

Implications completed by: Kofi Adu Group Accountant

- 8.1 This is a 7-year contract at an annual cost of £142,654.79, the total cost over the 7 years will be £998,583. In addition there will be a one-off cost in the 1st year of £97,700 for implementation and training.
- 8.2 The one-off cost will be funded from Admissions budget ringfenced grants from DSG, the annual revenue cost will be shared between the following three services: Admissions Service, Early Years and Education & Health Care Service. This contract will not have any adverse financial impact on the Council's general fund. The cost of any delays or slippages will be contained within the allocated budget.

9. Legal Implications

Implications completed by: Kayleigh Eaton, Principal Contracts and Procurement Solicitor, Law & Governance

- 9.1 This report is seeking approval to use the YPO 1095 Software, Services and Hardware Solutions Framework to procure Access Solutions via a direct call-off for the proposed Synergy database merge and the purchase of additional software modules to support the single view of a child and safeguarding needs plus support and maintenance.
- 9.2 This report states that the total value of the procurement will be £1,096,283.50, which is above the threshold for service/goods contracts means that there is a legal requirement to carry out a tender exercise in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (PCR). Using an already established framework is a compliant route to market under the PCR. This will also satisfy the Council's Contract Rules. Rule 5.1 (a) advises that it is not necessary for officers to embark upon a separate procurement exercise when using a Framework Agreement providing the Framework being used has been properly procured in accordance with the law and the call-off is made in line with the Framework terms and conditions.
- 9.3 The use of the YPO framework will satisfy the above requirements as the Council is permitted to call off from the framework, which has been set up following a compliant process for all local authorities in the country and is valid until 20 February 2025. It is noted that the framework also permits direct awards and allows call-offs up to 7 years in duration.

9.4 Contract Rule 28.8 of the Council’s Contract Rules requires that all procurements of contracts above £500,000 in value must be submitted to Cabinet for approval. In line with Contract Rule 50.15, Cabinet can indicate whether it is content for the Chief Officer to award the contracts following the procurement process with the approval of Corporate Finance.

10. Other Considerations and Implications

10.1 Risk and Risk Management

Risk Description	Mitigating Actions	RAG Status
Not acquiring a new contract with Access Solutions for the Synergy product could leave the Education service without a vital application preventing them from completing their tasks and statutory duties.	Approve the direct award of a 7-year contract via the YPO 1095 Framework for the Synergy system, its support and maintenance and additional modules.	A
Not amalgamating the existing databases and moving to a whole service integrated approach will prevent the underlying opportunity to have a single view of the pupil or young person to improve Safeguarding and business efficiency	Approve the direct award of a 7-year contract via the YPO 1095 Framework for the Synergy system, its support and maintenance and additional modules	A

10.2 **TUPE, other staffing and trade union implications** - Not Applicable.

10.3 **Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults** - The adoption of the recommendations would support The Barking and Dagenham Best Chance Strategy Sept 2022-25, the partnership plan for babies, children, young people and their families. This is so every baby, child or young person and their family gets the best start, is happy healthy and achieves, thrives in inclusive schools and settings, inclusive communities, are safe and secure, free from neglect, harm and exploitation, and grow up to be successful young adults. The additional modules would enhance the systems priorities of the strategy including, improving quality, access and support for those with SEND, a better offer for those with social mental or health needs.

Public Background Papers Used in the Preparation of the Report: None

List of Appendices: None