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**Market Engagement Questionnaire – All Age Advocacy Services**

**Introduction**

Southend-on-Sea City Council is seeking to engage with the market to gain an understanding of the capacity and appetite to deliver its all-age Advocacy service from 1st April 2025. This exercise is to inform the Council in its consideration of options for the future service model and provision of the all-age Advocacy service.

This is not a call for competition. As such any future procurement process will be compliant with the Public Contract Regulations (2015 (updated 2016)). This includes but is not limited to advertising and fair treatment of economic operators, regardless of their involvement in this Market Engagement.

The issuing of this document and the carrying out of this Market Engagement does not commit the Council to commencing any related procurement process or to a single means of procurement.

The Council is interested to understand the capacity of the market to be able to bid on this opportunity should it be advertised in October / November 2024. The Council is looking to award the contract in January 2025.

**Background**

We are looking to commission an all-age Advocacy service for a contract to start on 1st April 2025 and end of 31st March 2028 with an option to extend for a further two years or any part thereof, subject to the discretion of the Council, continued funding and provider performance. The combined contract value, for both lots is a maximum of £278,923 per annum. Providers are able to bid for one lot, or both lots as follows:

***Lot 1: Adult’s Advocacy Service – Maximum of £222,948 per annum:***

The service will require the provision of information and advice and support across various areas and the provision of a range of advocacy services for adults.

The Adult’s Advocacy contract is currently held by a single provider and covers the following services:

* Independent Mental Capacity Advocacy
* Independent Mental Health Advocacy / DOLs
* Care Act Advocacy
* Complaints Advocacy
* Non-statutory advocacy

This also includes, but is not limited to, Generic Advocacy, Citizen Advocacy, Peer group advocacy self-advocacy, financial advocacy and practical support.

Our Adults Advocacy service helps over 1,700 vulnerable adults each year. In 2023 / 2024, of these:

* 887 people accessed the statutory advocacy provision.
* 663 people received support from the non-statutory advocacy service.

***Lot 2: Children’s Advocacy Service – Maximum of £55,975 per annum:***

Southend-on-Sea City Council commissions a Children’s Advocacy service to provide Independent Advocacy services and a Children’s Independent Visitor service. The service provides Advocacy to Looked after Children living in all placement types and Care Leavers aged 18-25 and subject to CP Plans or who are CIN, as agreed on a case-by-case basis by the contract manager.

The Children’s Advocacy provider delivers the Independent Visitor service which provides volunteers to visit, befriend and support children who are Looked After and those who live in foster care, residential homes and residential special schools and supported living arrangements up to age 18.

The Children’s Advocacy service is anticipated to deliver approximately but not limited to:

* 100 to 130 Advocacy referrals per year.
* 30 Independent Visitors per year.

However, any new service would need to be flexible to work if further demand arises. The Children’s Advocacy service delivers Advocacy to children in Southend, as well as those placed out of area. Any new provider must be able to provide services as needed across the country.

**Market Engagement Questions**

Please view and complete a short questionnaire (below) to confirm if you are able to fulfil the requirements of the Council and this opportunity (if procured in the future) would be of interest to your organisation.

The written confirmation of your company’s interest in taking part in this process and its response to the Market Engagement Question should be returned to the Council via an email to [**strategiccommissioning@southend.gov.uk**](mailto:strategiccommissioning@southend.gov.uk)

Your company’s response to confirm interest (if this opportunity is procured in the future) must be received by the Council before:

**5pm on Friday 27th September 2024**

The responses provided in relation to these Questions are to be used solely for the purpose of Market Engagement consultation.

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| **Question Number** | **Question** | **Response** |
| **1** | **CONTRACT DURATION**  The authority would like to understand the views of prospective providers regarding letting the contract for an initial term of 3 years with an option at the authority’s discretion to extend by up to a maximum of a further 2 years (3+1+1).   1. Is this a reasonable term to let a contract on with a view to achieving a value for money contract and if not, why not? 2. What other term, if any, would offer best value to the authority and why? |  |
| **2** | **CONTRACT ATTRACTIVENESS**  What are the key factors influencing the attractiveness of this type of contract for your organisation? (For example, contract term, potential scope to transfer staff from incumbent provider, other commercial factors). |  |
| **3** | **OTHER INFORMATION**  Are there any other issues the council should take into account when compiling the contract in order to achieve best value from its delivery?  If more than one, please list in priority order with the most important first and give a brief explanation of each. |  |
| **4** | **TIMEFRAME**  Please advise if you are able to fulfil stated Council’s requirements within agreed timeline?  Including bidding on the opportunity in October / November 2024 and if successful mobilisation by 1st April 2025. |  |
| **5** | **Would your organisation be interested in bidding for this Contract?**  Yes / No |  |
| **6** | **If so, which element would you be interested in delivering:**   1. Adult’s advocacy service 2. Children’s advocacy service 3. BOTH services |  |