

Working to make
lives better
www.southend.gov.uk



Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Market Engagement Opportunity

Children's Advocacy and Independent Visitor Service

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council
Civic Centre
Victoria Avenue
Southend-on-Sea
Essex
SS2 6ER

October 2020

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council (the Council) is seeking to engage with the market to gain an understanding of the capacity and appetite to bid for the provision of Children's Advocacy and Independent Visitor Service within Southend-on-Sea.

The Council is currently in the process in reviewing results of undertaking a consultation to help shape the specification, and will carry out a Market Engagement event with potential Bidders prior to going out to tender to get an understanding of the market, including potential suppliers, market appetite, and the range of offerings.

However, it has been recorded that 77% of Southend's looked after children surveyed said they know how to access advocacy services but less 30% of these children wanted to engage with an advocate. The service should increase the use of advocacy so that it is viewed, and experienced, by eligible children as more than a way to raise concerns.

Advocacy is about empowering children and young people to make sure that their views and wishes are heard at all times and represented in decision making processes. The Council's vision is that all children and young people in Southend feel listened to and empowered, have choice and control over their support, and have their rights upheld. Furthermore, the views put forward by children and young people should inform the development of the Council's services.

The service is to provide advocacy and independent visiting services for the Council's Children and Young People in Care, Care Leavers and Children and Young People who are the subject of Child Protection conferences. It must contribute to the improvement priorities of Children's Services; improve the quality of practice so it is consistently good or better, improve the outcomes for looked after children, deliver the right services at the right time and work with children and families to shape services.

The advocacy element of the service will have contact with more children than the independent visiting element of the contract. The projected demand is for advocates to be allocated to 60 children per year and independent visitors to be allocated to 8 children per year.

The length of advocacy interventions will differ on a case by case basis. Looked After Child / Care Leaver advocacy may require more hours than Child Protection cases, but on average we do not expect cases to exceed 12-15 hours of advocacy support. It is however recognised that multiple issues may be raised by a young person and that some safeguarding cases could take longer. Cases that are likely to require more than 15 hours of advocacy support must be flagged at the earliest opportunity and the additional hours agreed with the contract manager prior to being delivered.

The Provider will offer both formal and informal advocacy.

We anticipate the contract will run for 3 years plus a possible extension of 2 years (to be taken in 12 month increments).

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 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 2020. The Council is looking to award the contract in February 2021.

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. In case of an unsatisfactory level of competition in the market able to fulfil the Council's requirements, the Council reserves the right to take appropriate action necessary in line with the PCR 15 to ensure continuity of service provision.

Market Engagement Expressions of Interest

Please confirm if this opportunity (if procured in the future) would be of interest to your organisation and if you wish to take part in Market Engagement Event scheduled for 15th October 2020, at 12pm.

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 Aleksandra Haker, Procurement Advisor aleksandra.haker@southend.gov.uk.

Your company's response to confirm interest in market engagement event must be received by the Council before:

14:00 Tuesday 13th October 2020.