

Equalities Analysis in Lambeth

Proposal Title *

Early Years Commissioning

Author

Laura M Griffin

Please provide name of lead author and/or those within project team who may be required to contribute to this assessment

Who will sign off the assessment?

Daniel Stoten

Please indicate who will be involved in approving this assessment. This will need to be signed off by the Director

Q1a. What is changing?

This EIA relates to proposals to waive contract standing order 8.2 and directly award contracts to:

1. St Michael's Fellowship; Contract for the delivery of one to one and group based support for young parents of children antenatally and to age four.
2. Merton and Lambeth Citizen's Advice Service; Contract for the provision of financial advice services to cover money management; debt; and housing advice.
3. The Centre for Parent and Child Support, South London and Maudsley; Contract for the delivery of the Empowering Parents, Empowering Communities (EPEC) programmes.

Current contracts are due to expire on 31.12.21, and new direct awards are proposed to be under new contracts with revised service specifications to fully reflect the current service requirements, which have changed considerably since specifications were previously developed in 2015. Issuing new direct award contracts with revised service specifications which will be co-produced with the providers will ensure that the specification reflects current delivery requirements, and that proposed output and outcome measures and key performance indicators are fit for purpose and sit within the wider service context.

Commissioning priorities for Early Years Commissioning will be reviewed in

readiness for a new procurement exercise in 2024 to take account of the learning and evaluation from the Big Lottery Funded a Better Start programme led by the Lambeth Early Action Partnership (LEAP).

The rationale for proposed direct awards is explained in detail in the Procurement Strategy Report and Business Case which have been approved by the Strategic Director, Cabinet Member and Procurement Board, and is summarised as follows:

a) Continuity of service provision for vulnerable service users during a pandemic.

b) Market limitations: there are a very small number of provider organisations in Lambeth with the specific skills and necessary qualifications to deliver the services currently commissioned from St Michael's Fellowship and Merton and Lambeth Citizen's Advice Service; and no other providers licenced to deliver the EPEC parenting interventions.

c) Interdependencies with other funding streams and the added value to Lambeth residents through commissioning of current provider organisations.

What is the most significant or key change taking place? Can you indicate the type of change in your response (e.g. policy/decision/strategy/ service/procedural/ geographic/procurement etc.) so it is clear what is being equalities assessed? Why is this change happening? What do you aim to achieve? Can you clearly indicate what decision-makers are being asked to take a decision on?

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Q1b. Who will be involved in approving this decision?

Cabinet Member Delegated Decision (key)

Who else will be involved in signing-off this decision?

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Q2a. What do we know about the people who will be impacted by this change?

Young parents and their children aged 0-5 - supported by St Michael's Fellowship

Monitoring data related to this contracts shows that:

- The majority of parents using the service are aged 17-20, with significant minorities also being 16 or under, or aged 21-25.
- The very large majority of service users have some level of vulnerability and that their children are at risk of poorer outcomes than

their peers without additional support.

- The large majority of adult service users are Black British / Black African / Black Caribbean, with a significant minority being White British and the remainder in other minority ethnic groups. Ethnicity data is not routinely collected by the service at a child level, but data shows that approximately 50% of children supported by the service are aged 0-1, with the remainder being aged 2-5.

The families receiving support under this contract face significant challenge and disadvantage. A significant proportion of the parents receiving support are care leavers or have had significant social care involvement in their own lives as children. Many of the children being supported are also receiving support from social care as child in need or with a child protection plan. Families typically live in the more deprived areas of the borough and have low incomes.

A direct award at this time will provide service continuity for this group of parents and children. St Michael's Fellowship have an established reputation as the 'go to' organisation for support amongst young parents themselves, with a significant proportion of referrals being based on word of mouth and recommendations from peers. This is of crucial importance for the cohort of families they support, who face multiple disadvantage and barriers to accessing services. St Michael's Fellowship have been able to maintain continuity of support for these families during the current pandemic, with services offered virtually, by phone and, where circumstances permit, on a face to face basis.

A direct award will build on these established partnerships, relationships and organisational reputation to maintain business and service continuity during the pandemic, when the support needs for young parents who are already isolated and vulnerable are further heightened.

Advice Services delivered through children's centres - Merton and Lambeth Citizen's Advice Service

The current provision is heavily used by parents and carers of children under five who need to access support around benefits, debt and housing as part of the wider package of support they are receiving through the children's centre, and in a familiar and trusted setting with creche available if required. Data and monitoring on take up of current provision illustrates an ongoing need for this service to support parents, carers and families facing multiple disadvantages, including a very significant proportion of parents with long term health conditions and disabilities. The demographic profile of service users in 2020/21 was as follows:

- 85% of service users were female and 13% were male. No gender was recorded for 2% of users.
- Parents / carers aged 30-34 were the largest representative group by age, accounting for 29% of all service users. 20% were aged 35-39, 18% aged 40-44 and 12% aged 25-29.
- 20% of all service users disclosed a long term health condition.
- The largest group by ethnicity were Black African parents / carers at 31%, followed by Black Caribbean at 16%. 14% were of Other White

ethnicity, and 9% were White British.

Empowering Parents, Empowering Communities evidence based, peer led parenting support programmes

EPEC programmes including Baby and Us, Being a Parent and Living with Teens represent a key part of Lambeth's Parenting offer for families. The EPEC programme is unique in that there are two key elements: the delivery of courses to parents by other local, trained and paid parent facilitators; and the opportunity for parents who have attended courses to access further training to become parent facilitators. This means that Lambeth parents accessing the EPEC courses are receiving support from other Lambeth parents from similar communities experiencing similar challenges.

Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the programme shows that it reaches a very diverse group of parents, with the majority being from Black and Minority Ethnic groups. Lone parents make up approximately 50% of the cohort, and most of those participating do not have a degree level qualification. A very small proportion are in full time work, and most are not owner occupiers. Evaluation of impact at a local level is done using a range of evidence based, accredited tools, and outcomes are positive.

What does your information tell you about the people who will be affected by this change? Are protected groups impacted? What information do you hold on the protected characteristics of the people affected by the change? (Age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race/ethnicity, religion or belief, gender, sexual orientation, health, socio-economic, language) Are there any gaps or missing information?

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Q2b. How will they be impacted by the change?

A previous EIA was completed in relation to these contracts in January 2021, and assessed the impact on service users of a recommissioning process.

Following completion of that initial EIA, the full impact of a change in service provider during the pandemic was reconsidered, and the following wider factors considered:

St Michael's Fellowship are the only established provider of targeted support for young mothers and fathers in the borough. They have demonstrated and developed expertise in this area as an integral part of Lambeth's Sure Start Local Programmes, and then as part of the children's centre programme since 2000. As an organisation, they have strong and established relationships with key partner agencies, including maternity services at both Guys and St Thomas's Trust and Kings College Hospital; Public Health Nursing services including Health Visiting and the Family Nurse Partnership at Evelina London; and Lambeth children's social care. These established relationships mean that partner organisations have confidence in referring vulnerable young parents to them in the antenatal period or during the early years of parenthood.

They also have an established reputation as the 'go to' organisation for

support amongst young parents themselves, with a significant proportion of referrals being based on word of mouth and recommendations from peers. This is of crucial importance for the cohort of families they support, who face multiple disadvantage and barriers to accessing services. St Michael's Fellowship have been able to maintain continuity of support for these families during the current pandemic, with services offered virtually, by phone and, where circumstances permit, on a face to face basis.

A direct award will build on these established partnerships, relationships and organisational reputation to maintain business and service continuity during the pandemic, when the support needs for young parents who are already isolated and vulnerable are further heightened.

An additional factor informing the proposal to make a direct award in this instance is the added value that St Michael's Fellowship bring to the borough. The early years commissioning contract enables the provider to employ a small staff team specifically to provide one to one and group-based support for young parents. Based on this, the provider has recently been successful in two external tender processes to provide additional targeted support to improve outcomes for babies and young children through work with young fathers. These two external funding sources when combined provide match funding equivalent to the value of the early years commissioning contract. The Council and the Clinical Commissioning Group provided direct endorsement for one of the funding applications as part of the Health and Well Being Fund: Starting Well programme. If St Michael's Fellowship were no longer commissioned by the council post 31st December 2021, their ability to deliver the requirements of that funding application to Lambeth residents would be compromised as there is an interdependency between programmes.

The impact on users of Advice Services

As with other providers currently commissioned under the early years funding stream, Merton and Lambeth Citizen's Advice are a long standing and established provider of services as part of the children's centre programme. This has been of significant benefit in terms of business continuity and ongoing support for families during the pandemic, with advice appointments being an integral part of a new service offer and referral / support request process set up to support families with young children during the initial lockdown in 2020, and developed and embedded throughout 2020/21. It would not have been possible for the service to adapt so quickly and effectively if relationships and ways of working together to support families were not already at a mature stage. Potentially introducing a new provider with effect from January 2022 risks undermining this integrated service offer at a point when an increasing number of families are in need of an increasing level of support as a result of the coronavirus pandemic and its impact on the economic stability of families, and particularly those who were already financially precarious.

The impact on parents requiring parenting support

The EPEC programmes are well established and well known to a wide range of professionals, who have confidence in referring families in need of parenting support. Establishing a comparative level of trust in a new

programme at a time when most partner agencies and colleagues are working remotely will be challenging and will be likely to lead to a drop in referrals and take up of the service. This in turn will lead to needs escalating as parents and families do not access the support they need at an early stage.

The contract will focus on delivery of two core programmes, Baby and Us and Being a Parent. Baby and Us is one of a very small number of universal parenting programmes suitable for parents of babies aged from 2 months plus. There is an enhanced need for support for this cohort of parents at present, as the wider range of universal support activities and social networks have been significantly reduced due to pandemic restrictions. These new parents and children are at particular risk of high levels of isolation and the consequent impact of this on maternal mental health and child outcomes as a result: maintaining delivery of a programme specifically for parents of new babies is therefore crucial at this time.

Commissioning priorities for Early Years Commissioning will be reviewed in readiness for a new procurement exercise in 2024 to take account of the learning and evaluation from the Big Lottery Funded a Better Start programme led by the Lambeth Early Action Partnership (LEAP).

Would you assess the impact as positive, adverse, neutral? Do you have any uncertainty about the impact of your proposal? Is there a likelihood that some people will more impacted than others? Can you describe the ways in which they will be affected? How might this change affect our 'general duty'?

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Q3a. How do you plan to promote and deliver any positive impacts of the proposal?

The services to be commissioned under this proposal are targeted to support children and families facing particular challenges and inequality, and are dependent on positive, respectful relationships to enable families to overcome these wherever possible.

The outcomes to be measured as part of the contract monitoring for both contracts will focus on the reduction of inequalities across a range of relevant indicators, and these will be reviewed with the service provider as part of the routine contract monitoring process.

How might the principles of fairness, equality of opportunity and positive relationships be further promoted as a consequence of this proposal? How do you propose to measure your positive outcomes and the benefits outlined to find out if these have been achieved?

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Q3b How do you plan to address and mitigate any negative impacts of the proposal?

Direct awards are proposed in this instance in part because it would not be possible to mitigate against the full negative impact of changes to service providers at this time.

A new procurement exercise will take place in 2023/24.

What impact has this evidence had on what you are proposing? What can you do differently that might lessen the impact on people within the timeframes i.e. development-implementation? Who can help you to develop these solutions?

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Q4. How will you review/evaluate your proposal, mitigating actions and/or benefits? Who will be responsible for this?

The reduction of inequalities and improved outcomes for children and families using the services to be recommissioned will be a central part of the routine contract monitoring process by officers within the Early Years and Parenting / Children's Commissioning team.

The successful organisations will be asked to provide case studies and other service user testimony to support this.

In addition to reviewing information relating to the contracts on an individual basis, the impact of the wider Better Start programme of which these services are a part will be routinely reviewed and assessed against key performance indicators.

Who will you be accountable to for the above actions/outcome? How will those responsible know these actions have worked? What performance indicators will you use to demonstrate this? Are there any other forms of evidence you can use to support this assessment of their effectiveness?

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Section to be completed by Sponsor/Director/Head of Service

Outcome of equality impact assessment

- No adverse impact, no change required
- Low adverse impact, minor adjustment required
- Significant adverse impact, further action required
- Significant impact identified unable to mitigate fully
- Unlawful in/direct discrimination, stop and rethink

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Comments from Sponsor/Director/Head of Service

Approved - Dan Stoten 22.10.21

Submit for approval

Submit for approval

Executive Approval
Approved

Attachments

Close