

Subject:	Step by Step		
Date of Meeting:	30th July 2020		
Report of:	Rob Persey, Executive Director Health & Adult Social Care		
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Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

Note: The special circumstances for non-compliance with Council Procedure Rule 3, Access to Information Procedure Rule 5 and Section 100B(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), (items not considered unless the agenda is open to inspection at least five days in advance of the meeting) were that information required to update the future delivery model could not be confirmed and was unavailable in sufficient time to comply with the normal timetable for publication.

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update and further recommendation on the provision of the Step by Step literacy and numeracy service following the recommendation approved by the Policy & Resources Committee on 30 April 2020. The service is currently provided under contract by the Friends Centre. The Friends Centre have informed the council that it would not be in a position to provide the contracted services beyond 31 July 2020. The Friends Centre have subsequently advised the council of its intention to appoint Administrators on 31 July 2020.

1.2 Policy & Resources Committee on 30 April agreed in relation to the Step by Step service:

That delegated authority be granted to the Executive Director for Families, Children & Learning to:

- (i) Take forward the option to bring in-house two externally funded projects, Step by Step and Get Socially Active projects and manage TUPE arrangements and subsequent liaison with funders;
- (ii) Take any other steps necessary to implement the recommendations in this report including a comprehensive review of the service after one and three years of operation to assess value for money, opportunities for efficiencies, investment and growth opportunities, performance, satisfaction, and impact on equalities data.

1.3 The delivery model proposed was for the council's Adult and Community Learning Service ("ACLS") to provide the Step by Step services alongside Community Learning services.

1.4 The current position

The position with respect to the Adult and Community Learning Service is reported in the Committee Report on the agenda which sets out the reasons why the community learning services cannot be delivered in house at this time and makes alternative proposals for the delivery of Community Learning services in the new academic year. If implemented this means that the council will not have in place the infrastructure to deliver the Step by Step programme in house with effect from 31 July.

2. RECOMMENDATION:

2.1 It is recommended that the Committee agree

- (i) that the Step by Step project be withdrawn from 31 July 2020 and that ASC consult with relevant stakeholders as part of a comprehensive review of the service reporting the outcomes of that consultation to Housing Committee.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Background:

3.1 The Step by Step project was initially commissioned by the council in 2008. The current contract for this service was awarded to the Friends Centre in 2018 for a period of 3 years expiring on 31 January 2021. The Friends Centre have indicated that they will not be delivering services under the current contract from 31 July 2020.

The contract has an annual value of £60,000. The following services are delivered under the contract by 1.5FTE employees of the Friends Centre:

- Literacy, Numeracy, IT and ESOL teaching to those who have previously been homeless and are currently living in supported accommodation.
 - Users of the service are supported with basic skills and can progress to achieve recognised qualifications.
- 3.2 Referrals for the service come from commissioned supported accommodation services, residential rehabilitation services for substance misuse and non-commissioned supported accommodation services for homeless people.
- 3.3 H&ASC also commissions a work and learning service via Brighton YMCA which supports individuals to access training, work experience, volunteering and paid employment.

Review of Work & Learning Services:

- 3.4 With the contract for Step by Step due to end in January 2021 a review of the work and learning services delivered on behalf of the council was due to take place in Spring 2020.
- 3.5 Due to Covid-19 and the unprecedented workload this has generated for the Commissioning Team the review and commissioning process has been delayed. This review will take place later in the year and will now also take into account the implications of the Covid-19 pandemic and the impact this will have on the priorities for the rough sleeping and homeless services budget.
- 3.6 Evidence shows that paid employment is the most effective way of supporting recovery from homeless. The review will look at the services required to help increase the numbers of people accessing paid work to help lift people out of poverty and prevent them returning to homelessness. In particular the review will:
- Examine the needs of service users in relation to work and learning
 - Review current services
 - Examine national good practice in the provision of work and learning services
 - Examine what is available city wide and ensure homeless people have access to mainstream education and learning opportunities
 - Review existing non-commissioned services for homeless people to avoid duplication in any future commission.
 - Assess if the provision of separate services for homeless people is the right model or if the current service model further marginalises homeless individuals by limiting accessibility to mainstream services.
- 3.7 The findings of the review will be reported to a future Housing Committee together with proposals for the provision of future commissioning of work and learning services.

The Continuation of the Step by Step Service:

- 3.8 The issue of long-term funding has been discussed with the Lead Member for Housing who agreed that the council was not in a position to commit to funding Step by Step post January 2021 until completion of the review and consideration of budget priorities.
- 3.9 The high demand for supported accommodation for move on from Covid-19 hotels, places pressures on H&ASC commissioning budget for rough sleepers and single homeless people. The funding for Step by Step service would support at least 6 Housing First high support accommodation placements or a small supported accommodation service.

4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 The option to bring the Step by Step service in-house to be delivered by the Adult and Community Learning Services as approved by the Policy & Resources Committee on 30 April 2020 was initially supported. This would have required a commitment to at least 2 years of further funding beyond January 2021 at a cost

of £60,000 per annum. In light of the issues raised and set out in this report and the matters raised in the associated report regarding the insourcing of the Adult and Community Learning Centre this option is no longer considered viable.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

- 5.1 Due to the circumstances of the ending of the service and the intense Covid-19 workload of the Commissioning Team it has not yet been possible to undertake community consultation.
- 5.2 The Commissioner Team is aware from previous service reviews that the service has been well respected by partners and valued by service users. However, a full review including consultation with a wider group of service users and professionals would enable a full assessment of the best way for the city to meet the education and work needs of the client group.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 Step by Step has provided a good quality service to homeless people and we value the contribution those delivering the service have made to the city.
- 6.2 In normal circumstances a short extension of the current contract would have been sought to allow for a full review to take place. However, due to the financial circumstances of the ending of the contract by the Friends Centre that is no longer an option.
- 6.3 The possibility of the service being delivered in house by Adult and Community Learning following cessation of the contract with the Friends Centre is not now an immediate option. A formal review of need and means of delivery is required and it is appropriate that this take place before committing to future service funding particularly in the uncertainties about the impact of Covid-19 on budgets and priorities in the coming months.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 7.1 There is no guarantee that the services will be able to continue beyond 31st July 2020 and the council should therefore minimise any potential financial risk beyond that date.

Finance Officer Consulted: Sophie Warburton Date: 28/07/2020

Legal Implications:

- 7.2 The council is under a duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way it exercises its functions having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness (LGA 1999). The duty to deliver best value must be considered when considering the services, it needs to deliver and how those services are best delivered.

The proposed consultation exercise must be conducted fairly and proportionately and in accordance with the Public Sector Equality Duty which requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination and advance equality of opportunity.

Lawyer Consulted: Judith Fisher

Date:26 July 2020

Equalities Implications:

- 7.3 This service supports some of the most vulnerable people in the city, however there are other services in Brighton & Hove which offer literacy, numeracy and ESOL support to adults which are accessible to those on welfare benefits. Those who have previously been homeless can be supported to access these services by their keyworkers or via the commissioned access to work and learning service.

Sustainability Implications:

- 7.4 There are no sustainability implications

Brexit Implications:

- 7.5 There are no Brexit implications

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 7.6 None

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 7.7 None

Public Health Implications:

- 7.8 None

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 7.9 None

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. N/A

Background Documents

1. N/A

