

<b>9 November 2022</b>		<b>ITEM: 11</b>
		<b>Decision: 110626</b>
<b>Cabinet</b>		
<b>Contract for Occupational Therapy and Independent Mobility Assessment Service</b>		
<b>Wards and communities affected:</b> All	<b>Key Decision:</b> Key	
<b>Report of:</b> Councillor Deborah Arnold, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Adults and Health		
<b>Accountable Assistant Director:</b> Tania Sitch, Interim Assistant Director Adult Social Care and Community Development		
<b>Accountable Director:</b> Les Billingham, Interim Director Adult Social Care		
<b>This report is Public</b>		

## Executive Summary

This report seeks Cabinet support for the procurement of the Occupational Therapy and Independent Mobility Assessment Service via an open tender.

The Occupational Therapy and Independent Mobility Assessment Service was commissioned to facilitate high quality outcome focused assessments for individuals eligible for non-specialist Occupational Therapy (OT support) and Independent Mobility Assessments (IMAs), via one-to-one assessments and clinics, for the Passenger Transport Services.

The Authority is compelled to undertake assessments of individuals for OT support as a statutory function under the Care Act (2014) and for Independent Mobility Assessments pursuant to the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act (1970) and the Equality Act (2020) when Local Authorities were passed the responsibility for administering the Blue Badge schemes in August 2019.

### 1. Recommendation(s)

**1.1 That Cabinet agrees with HOSC's recommendation to go to market to procure the contract to provide an Occupational Therapy and Independent Mobility Assessments service.**

### 2. Introduction and Background

2.1 Adult Social Care adopts a strength-based approach, focusing on the strengths and abilities of the individual and aims to connect them to support

from friends, family and the wider community. By adopting an ethos of providing the right care at the right time in the right place, this equipment services enables individuals to remain at home and part of their local communities.

- 2.2 The current contract is held by Inclusion.Me for the last 5 years costing £99,360 per annum, and the contract price has not increased during this period. During 2021/22 504 assessments were undertaken from 594 referrals, of which 96.5% had outcomes completed and submitted within 2 working days.
- 2.3 This is despite an increase focus on early intervention and prevention via the use to OT equipment, as well as the additional impact that the pandemic has placed upon the service.

### **3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options**

There are 4 options set out below:

- 3.1 **Do nothing – let the contract expire on 30 September 2023 (not recommended).**
  - 3.1.1 This would, without any subsequent action, result in a significant backlog of OT assessments as previous restructuring of internal services reduced retained OT specialist employed by the Authority to 4 FTE. Therefore, assessments would be significantly delayed, potentially placing individuals at risk or forcing the commissioning of more costly alternatives.
  - 3.1.2 Additionally, without the IMA service in place Authority's would either breach its statutory requirements under the legislation detailed earlier in this document, or source this service on a spot provision they may result in a more costly solution for the Authority.
- 3.2 **Extend current contract (not recommended).**
  - 3.2.1 The contract has utilised all extension options and has been extended up to 50% of the contract value. Therefore, this is not a viable option to pursue.
- 3.3 **Bring the service back inhouse (not recommended).**
  - 3.3.1 This would require the Authority to recruit OT specialists on Thurrock Council terms and conditions to undertake the same function. This would result in a greatly inflated staffing budget and undo the previous savings exercise that restructured the OT offer, as to run the service at a safe and appropriate level a minimum of 4 FTE would be required, each costing a minimum of £26k per annum before on costs were factored in. Additionally, recruitment challenges would also be faced due to national shortages of qualified Occupational Therapists making this option even less desirable. This would be far in excess of the current tendered rate of the contract.

### **3.4 Procure the services via a tender process in the open market (recommended)**

- 3.4.1 The previous decision to restructure and take this service to market has delivered the desired outcomes in that staffing overheads were reduced providing savings and quality levels were maintained. During the lifecycle of this contract performance has been consistently high, only seeing dips in assessments carried out within 10 days KPI dropping during the pandemic but maintaining positive rates of outcome indicators level above 90% during the same periods.
- 3.4.2 Additionally, feedback from frontline staff regarding the quality and quantity of assessments is extremely positive. The Provider has been flexible and solution focused in its approach during the pandemic which has built frontline confidence in this market sourced solution.
- 3.4.3 The Authority has, and continues, to lean on OT solutions to promote and create a greater level of independence for eligible individuals. It is likely that demand will increase during the lifecycle of the contract therefore consideration should be given to the budget levels as there have been no uplifts in the last 5 years despite significant external pressures (i.e. NLW, NI).

## **4. Reasons for Recommendation**

- 4.1 The current contract with the provider, Inclusion.Me, is coming to an end and a new contract to fulfil the statutory duty is required.

## **5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)**

- 5.1 Engagement has taken place with Occupation Therapy Leads as well as Thurrock's Principle Occupational Therapist who have reviewed the quality of the service as well as fitness for purpose of the current service specification. As it is felt the current quality of service is high, which is reflected in KPI indicators and value for money, the service will seek to develop a similar specification in order to meet future service demands.
- 5.2 Service User feedback was limited, however compliments for the service have increased over the last financial year to 1 per quarter compared to 1 for the entirety for 2021/22.
- 5.3 Health & Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the procurement of Occupational Therapy and Mobility services on 1 September 2022 and have recommended that Cabinet support this.

## **6. Impact on corporate policies priorities, performance and community impact**

- 6.1 The contract for Occupational Therapy and Independent Mobility Assessment Service:

*People – a borough where people of all ages are proud to work and play, live and stay.*

## **7. Implications**

### **7.1 Financial**

Implications verified by: **Mike Jones**  
**Strategic Lead Finance, Corporate Finance**

The funding for the provision of the contract was set at £99,360, and formed part of the 2022/23 ASC base budget. This agrees with the value quoted under para 2.2.

Three options are presented within the report under paragraphs 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3. The recommended option within paragraph 3.3 represents that which is most financially viable. The alternative options will result in both direct and or indirect additional financial costs to the department, and do not present any wider longer term financing benefit to the Council.

### **7.2 Legal**

Implications verified by: **Mark Bowen**  
**Interim Head of Legal Services**

The recommendation if agreed is for a procurement process to enable a statutory duty to be discharged and is legally sound.

### **7.3 Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Lee**  
**Team Manager Community Development**

The executive summary of the report sets out the responsibilities of the authority to provide the Occupational Therapy and Independent Mobility Assessment service in line with the Care Act (2014), Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act (1970) and the Equality Act (2010).

Social value has been considered as part of the commissioning process for this service and will be monitored as part of the standard contract review cycle with the agreed supplier.

### **7.4 Other implications** (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health Inequalities, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder and Looked After Children

N/A

8. **Background papers used in preparing this report** (include their location and identify whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

N/A

9. **Appendices to the report**

N/A

**Report Author**

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