

REPORT OF  
The Strategic Director for Children's Services  
TO  
Procurement Board  
ON  
12<sup>th</sup> May 2021

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TITLE: Approval to Award the Contract for the Step Up to Social Work Initiative (Postgraduate Diploma in Social Work) for 32 students on behalf of the Greater Manchester Regional Partnership

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RECOMMENDATION:

That the Procurement Board approves the award of the Contract to Salford University for delivery of the Step Up to Social work Initiative Cohort 7, as detailed in the table below:

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Detail required	Answers
<b>Title/Description of Contracted Service/Supply/Project</b>	Delivery of Cohort 7 of Step Up to Social Work Programme
<b>Name of Successful Contractor</b>	The University of Salford
<b>Supplier Registration Number</b> <i>(to be supplied by Corporate Procurement)</i>	RC000666
<b>Type of organisation</b> <i>(to be supplied by Corporate Procurement)</i>	Registered Charity
<b>Status of Organisation</b> <i>(to be supplied by Corporate Procurement)</i>	Non-SME
<b>Contract Value</b>	£307,200   Full Project
<b>Contract Duration</b>	24 months
<b>Contract Start Date</b>	01/06/2021
<b>Contract End Date</b>	30/04/2023
<b>Optional Extension Period 1</b>	

<b>Optional Extension Period 2</b>					
<b>Who will approve each Extension Period?</b>	Procurement Board (extension > £150k)				
<b>Contact Officer (Name &amp; number)</b>	Chris Rourke				
<b>Lead Service Group</b>	People Services				
<b>How the contract was procured? (to be supplied by procurement)</b>	Tender (open)				
<b>Framework Details (where applicable) (procurement body, framework reference &amp; title, start/ end date)</b>	N/A				
<b>Funding Source</b>	Choose an item.				
<b>Ethical Contractor</b>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Mayor's Employment Charter Committed to sign up to charter</td> <td>✓</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Accredited Living Wage Employer</td> <td>✓</td> </tr> </table>	Mayor's Employment Charter Committed to sign up to charter	✓	Accredited Living Wage Employer	✓
Mayor's Employment Charter Committed to sign up to charter	✓				
Accredited Living Wage Employer	✓				

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the award of the above mentioned contract.

Step Up to Social Work is a Department for Education (DfE) initiative which started in 2010. Six cohorts of students have been through the programme with the Greater Manchester Regional Partnership. A successful bid for grant funding has allowed a seventh cohort to be progressed and the regional partnership to include ten Local Authorities (Salford, Manchester, Bolton, Wigan, Bury, Stockport, Oldham, Rochdale, Tameside, and Trafford).

Salford City Council acts as Lead Authority in the partnership, holding and dispersing all funding and establishing the contract with an approved Higher Education Institution on behalf of the partnership. This report seeks to gain approval to award the contract.

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**BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:**

Please also see Appendix 1

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**KEY DECISION:**

No

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## DETAILS:

Step Up to Social Work has recently completed its sixth cohort, with ten Greater Manchester authorities currently participating. The success of the programme means that almost all candidates are likely to be employed by their host authority.

The programme is delivered through the Greater Manchester Regional Partnership, formed when funding announcements were originally made in 2009/10. The programme is wholly funded by grant funding made available - originally by Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) and subsequently by the DfE. Salford City Council currently acts as Lead Authority for the partnership. This involves amongst other things, receiving and dispersing the funding from DfE in line with the grant funding requirements.

Salford City Council also holds the contract – on behalf of the partnership - for the academic input which allows the award of Postgraduate Diploma in social work to be made to candidates – thus allowing them to be registered with Social Work England (SWE) and become practicing social workers.

Funding for a Cohort 7 was announced in June 2020 and the Greater Manchester Regional Partnership was notified of its successful bid March 2021. The partnership consists of ten participating authorities with 32 trainees.

### Funding to be made available for the period April 2022 - April 2024 by DfE

- £19,833 per trainee this will be made available to the trainees as a bursary
- £1,750 per trainee this will be dispersed to each participating authority pro rata
- £11,667 per trainee available “to allow local authorities to procure the academic course from their chosen HEI”

In addition to the above, administrative funding is also paid to the local authorities involved in the project as follows:

- **£38,000** to each regional partnership for establishing and administering the regional partnership of local authorities and their selected HEI provider.
- **£10,000** to each regional partnership for making delivery arrangements with an HEI provider.

The tender documentation makes provision for an extension for a further cohort, however this will be subject to continuation of the Step Up to Social Work programme and a successful bid for grant funds from the DfE. Providing the Partnership is successful in securing grant funds in 2023, a separate report for permission to award a further cohort will be presented to Procurement Board at that time.

### The Procurement Process

Invitation to tender documents (ITTs), were advertised on the Chest and the closing date was 5<sup>th</sup> April 2021.

In total there were 3 expressions of interest, with 1 bid being submitted by the closing date.

Following an evaluation of the ITT by a panel consisting of all members of the Greater Manchester Regional Partnership, the outcome of the total scores is shown in the table below;

Total Overall Scores and Ranking				
	Quality Score	Price Score	Total	Ranking
T1	74%	20%	94%	1

Therefore it is the recommendation that the contract is awarded to bidder T1 who scored highly both in quality and price (after initial negotiations regarding cost).

### Social Value

Bidder T1 has addressed social value within their tender submission and some of the key points included;

- Accredited Living Wage Employer, sharing Salford's ambition to make Salford a Real Living Wage Place, and tackle poverty in our city. Furthermore 23% of the Universities workforce lives in Salford, and 76% in Greater Manchester (including Salford).
- Working in partnership with local suppliers and businesses, in Salford and Greater Manchester.
- Promotion of donations and in-kind contributions within Salford, for example, at the end of the Cohort 6 contract, 27 iPads (value £8,833.00) loaned to the trainees during the programme were donated to vulnerable children via the RP LAs. This is something they would replicate for Cohort 7.
- Active involvement in volunteering projects across the City.
- The University is a member of the new Greater Manchester Energy Innovation Agency, kick-starting a decade of clean energy innovation to meet the region's 2038 carbon neutral target. This approach has been incorporated into their work with Step Up, in terms of content delivery, resources available, greener transport, and is supported by their Environmental Sustainability Policy (to reduce waste).
- Continued development, monitoring and reporting on social value through teaching, learning, research and enterprise. These skills are harnessed to work

in partnership to change people and communities and deliver lasting economic and social benefit.

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KEY COUNCIL POLICIES: N/A

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#### EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND IMPLICATIONS:

The contract will have no negative impact on any of the communities within Salford. Recruitment to the Step Up to Social Work Programme is national and positively encourages applicants from a range of diverse backgrounds.

As part of the competitive process, it was ensured that the contract was awarded to providers who understood and could train participants to develop skills and knowledge on anti-discriminatory practice – essential social work skill requirements. Therefore, the new award will have a positive impact on communities in Greater Manchester.

#### ASSESSMENT OF RISK:

Step Up to Social Work is assisting Children Services in all 10 participating Local Authorities to meet their social work staffing requirements. This is achieved by providing high quality staff able to 'hit the ground running'. As a tailored children and families training programme, it allows trainees to work towards a Postgraduate Diploma in social work, alongside intensive hands-on experience. Failure to participate has an impact on the recruitment strategy of social workers.

#### SOURCE OF FUNDING:

The Step Up to Social Work initiative is 100% grant funded through the DfE.

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LEGAL IMPLICATIONS: Supplied by: The Shared Legal Service (Tony Hatton)

In awarding the contract for the delivery of the postgraduate diploma it is important that the Council complies with public procurement legislation and its own Contractual Standing Orders. Expressions of interest have been sought as part of an open tender process which has been advertised widely, thus ensuring that the process has been fair and transparent. It is also important that the Council can meet the timescale set by the Department of Education since the scheme is wholly funded by grant funding.

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FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS: Submitted by: The Finance Team (Dave Cope)

Salford City Council act as the Lead Authority for the Step Up to Social Work Programme.

The Programme is fully funded by a DfE grant and as such there is a Low Risk to the City Council.

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PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS: Supplied by: The Corporate Procurement Team (Emma Heyes)

This contract opportunity was advertised in Find a Tender, and also Contracts Finder.

Tender documents were made available online through the Chest.

The procurement process outlined within the report complies with the requirements under Salford City Council's contractual standing orders.

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HR IMPLICATIONS: Supplied by: Human Resources (Catherine Sharples)

This Step up to Social Work programme provides a valuable talent pipeline of Social Workers across Greater Manchester and specifically within Salford City Council.

This successful programme is an integral part of the Social Work Workforce Development Strategy for the Council.

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CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS: Supplied by: Environment Policy Team (Michael Hemingway)

The University is a member of the new Greater Manchester Energy Innovation Agency and a of the Salford Climate Action Board and like SCC is working towards a 2038 carbon neutral target. They have committed to this informing their approach to their work on Step Up. They will include a proportion of online content within the programme for some lectures and meetings. The Library provides e-books and online access to journals. Staff and trainees are encouraged to travel by public transport for face-to-face teaching including placement visits. The university adheres to the principles of their Environmental Sustainability Policy which aims to reduce the quantity of waste produced by staff and trainees; e.g. by encouraging paper/card recycling and using reusable plastics.

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OTHER DIRECTORATES CONSULTED: N/A

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CONTACT OFFICER: Chris Rourke  
TELEPHONE NUMBER:

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WARD(S) TO WHICH REPORT RELATE(S): None

## Appendix 1

### Additional Information on Step Up to Social Work programme

The initial training of social workers remains almost exclusively a candidate/academic-driven process. Typically individuals apply for places on university courses (to a quantum determined by Higher Education funding and the ambition of HE Institutions, not the employment market for social workers), are trained (with significant placement input from agencies) and then may, or may not, enter the job market dependant on individual ambition.

From an agency point of view this process is wasteful. Despite engagement with universities in the design and delivery of courses, the agencies can remain junior partners and very much accidental beneficiaries.

Step Up to Social Work remains a tailored children and families training programme which allows trainees to work towards a Postgraduate Diploma in social work, alongside intensive hands-on experience. It is specifically designed as a new way for career changers to train to become qualified social workers.

The programme is designed to enable coursework and practical experience to happen simultaneously. Students are work-based rather than campus based throughout the period of their training. However, this means the demands on the individual are rigorous and the level of commitment expected from students is high. The course is also designed to be completed within a 14 month period as opposed to the usual 36 months.

A lot is expected of candidates, but they are fully supported throughout with one-to-one support within the workplace as well as having access to tutors in allocated universities. In addition, trainees will receive £19,833 for the 14 month period - to support them through their training.

On successful completion of the programme, trainees qualify as a social worker and are awarded a Postgraduate Diploma in social work

Applicants can only be considered if they have;

- A 1st or 2:1 degree in any discipline (except social work)
- GCSEs in English and mathematics at grade C or above (or equivalent)
- Experience of working with children, young people and families
- Emotional resilience (assessed in the selection process).

Experience from previous cohorts, is that the programme produces competent and motivated social workers who are able to 'hit the ground running'. The shortage of good quality and experienced children and families social workers remains an issue, we anticipate that the employment of trainees through the SUTSW Programme with help to address this issue.

### Step Up to Social Work Indicative Timetable

Activity	Date to be completed by/between
Step Up to Social Work LA Bid Application window	July – October 2020
DfE appoints support contractor	September/October 2020
RPs notified of Bid outcome	November 2020
Publicity – National and Local advertising	Nov/Dec – April 2020
Step Up to Social Work candidate application form goes live	Feb 2021
Application window closes	March 2021
Contractor begins sift of application forms	Feb – April 2021
Successful applications available to be accessed/requested by RPs for pre-assessment centre stage (electronic/ paper format)	Feb – April 2021
Assessment centres	April/May 2021
Successful applicants invited to confirm place on course	From May 2021
RPs perform necessary checks on successful applicants	From May/June 2021
Local management of reserves within and between regional partnerships	June – August 2021
Contractor manages the reserve pool of remaining eligible candidates to fill as many places as possible	Sept – November 2021
Partnerships confirm SWE approval for programme	By end of October 2021 latest
Step Up to Social Work programme starts	January 2022

DfE has made every attempt to confirm these timescales, but dates beyond may be subject to change. DfE will give partnerships and HEIs maximum possible notice of any changes and will reissue the timetable periodically.