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Award

## **Independent Advice to the OAWY Adoption Panel**

Leeds City Council - PACS

F15: Voluntary ex ante transparency notice

Notice identifier: 2022/S 000-007421

Procurement identifier (OCID): ocids-h6vhtk-032397

Published 18 March 2022, 1:27pm

### **Section I: Contracting authority/entity**

#### **I.1) Name and addresses**

Leeds City Council - PACS

Civic Hall

Leeds

LS11UR

#### **Contact**

Katie King

#### **Email**

[Katie.king@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:Katie.king@leeds.gov.uk)

#### **Country**

United Kingdom

#### **NUTS code**

UKE4 - West Yorkshire

**Internet address(es)**

Main address

[www.leeds.gov.uk](http://www.leeds.gov.uk)

Buyer's address

<https://yortender.eu-supply.com>

**I.4) Type of the contracting authority**

Regional or local authority

**I.5) Main activity**

General public services

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**Section II: Object**

**II.1) Scope of the procurement**

**II.1.1) Title**

Independent Advice to the OAWY Adoption Panel

Reference number

50403

**II.1.2) Main CPV code**

- 79000000 - Business services: law, marketing, consulting, recruitment, printing and security

**II.1.3) Type of contract**

Services

**II.1.4) Short description**

Provision of a quality assurance and advisory role to the 8 monthly One Adoption West Yorkshire adoption panels, ensuring that processes are compliant with Adoption

Regulations and Minimum Standards. Advice will be provided to the five West Yorkshire Agency Decision Makers and the One Adoption West Yorkshire Agency Decision Maker as required.

#### **II.1.6) Information about lots**

This contract is divided into lots: No

#### **II.1.7) Total value of the procurement (excluding VAT)**

Value excluding VAT: £192,000

### **II.2) Description**

#### **II.2.2) Additional CPV code(s)**

- 79110000 - Legal advisory and representation services
- 79400000 - Business and management consultancy and related services

#### **II.2.3) Place of performance**

NUTS codes

- UKE4 - West Yorkshire

#### **II.2.4) Description of the procurement**

Provision of a quality assurance and advisory role to the 8 monthly One Adoption West Yorkshire adoption panels, ensuring that processes are compliant with Adoption Regulations and Minimum Standards. Advice will be provided to the five West Yorkshire Agency Decision Makers and the One Adoption West Yorkshire Agency Decision Maker as required.

The following services will be delivered;

Quality assurance of reports coming to the adoption panels to ensure they meet a high standard, are compliant with regulations and that information is sufficient to allow panel to make a recommendation

Provide professional advice and feedback to the social workers with a view to improving the quality of information for children and families

Attend adoption panels

Provide advice to the Chair and the panel regarding the work of the panel and the

recommendations that they can make

Quality assurance of panel minutes to ensure they sufficiently capture the panel discussion, recommendations, reasons and panel advice

Meet with Local Authority and One Adoption West Yorkshire Agency Decision Makers to provide advice and information relating to panel discussions

Coordination of panel letters

Attend meetings with OAWY and The Panel Chairs to review and develop practice in relation to Adoption Panels

Support Panel Chairs with annual reviews of Panel Members

#### **II.2.5) Award criteria**

Price

#### **II.2.11) Information about options**

Options: Yes

Description of options

option to extend by up to 24 months

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## **Section IV. Procedure**

### **IV.1) Description**

#### **IV.1.1) Type of procedure**

Negotiated without a prior call for competition

- The works, supplies or services can be provided only by a particular economic operator for the following reason:
  - absence of competition for technical reasons

Explanation:

The council intends to directly award a contract to Highton Consultancy Ltd on the

grounds set out at Regulation 32 (2) (b) (ii) - Negotiated Procedure without prior publication - of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015. The below sets out the technical reasons why competition is absent and the reasons why no reasonable alternative or substitute exists, as required by Regulation 32(2)(b)(ii) ;

Independent Advice to Adoption Panel is a regulatory requirement and from the establishment of OAWY in April 2017 was a role fulfilled by Team Managers within the Agency. In response to Covid 19, OAWY utilised monies from the Adoption Support Fund Covid 19 scheme to appoint a consultant to undertake this work from 24/07/2020. This was due to increased pressures on Team Managers as a result of increasing case numbers. There was a requirement to increase the number of Adoption Panels from seven to eight per month in response to increased work and also the need to move panels from face to face to online in response to the pandemic. A further 12 month contract was awarded in April 2021 to maintain the service due to the ongoing capacity challenges as the pandemic continued.

The specific Advisor role has proved beneficial to OAWY. A focused role allows for increased focus on quality assurance. As a result, fewer cases are deferred due to outstanding information. There has been an improvement in the quality of documentation presented to the adoption panel. With four panel chairs across the eight panels and a wide variation in membership, a consistent Advisor ensures consistency in process and recommendations resulting in an improved staff and customer experience. There has been positive feedback from OAWY and Local Authority staff, Panel Chairs and Local Authority Agency Decision Makers regarding having a consistent Adoption Panel Advisor. This post has proved vital in raising standards and in ensuring timely and good quality decision making for children.

Awarding a further contract to the current consultant is required, not just for consistency but also because of the importance of relationships to this work. The consultant has worked to understand the OAWY procedures and developed strong relationships with the Panel members and contributing social workers over a period of two years. Relationship building is crucial to this support. The time it would take for a new consultant to build the positive and strong relationships as well as the in-depth knowledge of procedures would be significant. This would be detrimental to the continuing development of good decision making by Panels, particularly at this time as the service continues to recover from the impact of the pandemic. Due to all the above factors, the Council considers that there are no reasonable alternatives or substitutes to the support provided by Highton Consultancy that can be utilised by the Council.

#### **IV.1.8) Information about the Government Procurement Agreement (GPA)**

The procurement is covered by the Government Procurement Agreement: No

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## **Section V. Award of contract/concession**

### **Contract No**

50403

### **Title**

Independent Advice to the OAWY Adoption Panel

A contract/lot is awarded: Yes

### **V.2) Award of contract/concession**

#### **V.2.1) Date of conclusion of the contract**

16 March 2022

#### **V.2.2) Information about tenders**

The contract has been awarded to a group of economic operators: No

#### **V.2.3) Name and address of the contractor/concessionaire**

Highton Consultancy Ltd

Sleigh and Story - Thornhill Brigg Mills Thornhill Beck Lane

Brighthouse

HD6 4AH

Email

[lois@hightonconsultancy.co.uk](mailto:lois@hightonconsultancy.co.uk)

Country

United Kingdom

NUTS code

- UKE4 - West Yorkshire

The contractor/concessionaire is an SME

Yes

**V.2.4) Information on value of contract/lot/concession (excluding VAT)**

Initial estimated total value of the contract/lot/concession: £192,000

Total value of the contract/lot/concession: £192,000

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**Section VI. Complementary information**

**VI.3) Additional information**

Contract Award under Regulation 32(2)(b)(ii) of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 - Use of the negotiated procedure without prior publication of a Contract Notice - to Highton Consultancy for provision of independent advice and quality assurance to the OAWY Adoption Panel.

**VI.4) Procedures for review**

**VI.4.1) Review body**

The High Court of Justice

The Strand

London

WC2A 2LL

Country

United Kingdom

**VI.4.3) Review procedure**

Precise information on deadline(s) for review procedures

The authority will incorporate a minimum 10 calendar day standstill period at the point information on the award of the contract is communicated. This period allows potential tenderers to seek further information from the contracting authority before the contract is entered into.

Such additional information should be requested from the addressee found in I.1. If an

appeal regarding the award of a contract has not been successfully resolved the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (SI 2015 No 102) provide for aggrieved parties who have been harmed or are at risk of harm by a breach of the rules to take action in the High Court (England, Wales and Northern Ireland). Any such action must be brought promptly (within 30 days beginning with the date when the economic operator first knew or ought to have known that grounds for such action had arisen).

Where a contract has not been entered into the court may order the setting aside of the award decision or order the authority to amend any document and may award damages.

Following the correct implementation of a 10 day standstill period and publication of appropriate notices the court may only award damages once the contract has been entered into.