

Report to Cabinet

15 January 2025

Subject:	Extension and Variation of School Health Nursing Services
Cabinet Member:	Adult Social Care, Health and Wellbeing Cllr Taylor
Director:	Interim Director of Public Health Liann Brookes-Smith
Key Decision:	Yes
Contact Officer:	Eilish James, Children's Public Health Programme Manager. Eilish_James@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations

For the reasons set out in the report, it is recommended that Cabinet:-

- 1.1 approval is given to extend the School Health Nursing Services within Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust, on terms to be agreed with the Interim Director of Public Health from 1 April 2025 until 31 March 2027 at a cost of £2,044,806.62 for 2025/26 and £2,085,702.75 for 2026/27;
- 1.2 delegate authority to the Interim Director of Public Health, in consultation with the Monitoring Officer, Assistant Director – Legal and Assurance and the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Health and Wellbeing, to make and agree variations to the contract (as set out in 1.1 above) up to a maximum of 10% of the Contract value, should they be necessitated; and
- 1.3 delegate authority to the Monitoring Officer, Assistant Director – Legal and Assurance to execute any documents necessary to give effect to the proposals in recommendation 1.1 for the provision of School Health Nursing and to execute any documents required to vary any licenses to occupy agreement to a lease resulting from this recommendation.

2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 The recent School Health Nurse service procurement was abandoned as no bids were received (Cabinet approval 4th July 2024).
- 2.2 A contract extension is required from 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2027, to prevent a gap in provision of the School Health Nursing Services.
- 2.3 The proposed extension previously gained cabinet approval on 24th May 2021 as part of approval to reprocure.
- 2.4 An increase in cost is necessary following National implementation of NHS Agenda For Change payments, where the % increase year on year since 2022/23 is above that built into the existing contract (2%).
- 2.5 A variation will enable changes to the staff skill mix, service model and cost model, ensuring the service remains flexible to meet the needs of Sandwell children and young people, and provides value for money.
- 2.6 SMBC asset management advised that the current license agreement is no longer appropriate for occupancy of Floor 2 of Blackheath Library, and a lease is required. A termination of license to occupy was issued on 30/07/2024 and a new lease agreement has been developed.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Council Plan?

Growing Up in Sandwell	The best possible health underpins a child's or young person's ability to fulfil their potential as they grow up. Research shows that good health and emotional wellbeing are associated with improved attendance and attainment at school, which in turn lead to improved employment opportunities. In addition, children who thrive at school are better placed to act on information about good health.
Healthy in Sandwell	The service will contribute to improving a wide range of outcomes. The national specification for 0-19 Healthy Child Programme identifies the following key impact areas for School Health Nursing Services: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Building resilience and improving emotional health and wellbeing- keeping safe, managing risk and reducing harm

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- promoting healthy lifestyles including reducing childhood obesity and increasing physical activity- maximising achievement and learning- helping children to realise their potential and reducing inequalities- supporting additional health needs- transition and preparing for adulthood
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4 Context and Key Issues

- 4.1 On the 24 May 2021 Cabinet approved the decision to procure a School Health Nursing Service (Key decision Ref. No. SMBC 97/21). Following a competitive process, a contract was awarded to Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospital Trust (SWBHT) for 3 +2 Years.
- 4.2 Due to a high vacancy rate within the service, and the impact on service delivery and performance, a Remediation Action Plan (RAP) was issued on 23rd February 2024. A decision was therefore made not to utilise the option to extend period and this contract was due to end on the 31st March 2025.
- 4.3 On the 4 July 2024 Cabinet approved the decision to procure a School Health Nursing Service (Key decision Ref. No. SMBC 85/24) through a competitive process in line with The Health Care Services (Provider Selection Regime) Regulations 2023. No bids were received, and the procurement was abandoned.
- 4.4 An options appraisal was undertaken, considering timescales, risk and service needs, and a decision was made to rescind the July 2024 Cabinet paper (Key decision Ref. No. SMBC 85/24) and enact the extension in the current contract.
- 4.5 Through implementation and management of the RAP, the School Health Nursing Service has evidenced improved vacancy rates and service delivery.

5 Alternative Options

- 5.1 The School Nursing Service is a key Public Health priority and any change to the delivery of this would have a detrimental impact on the health of school-aged children. Therefore, due to the high value and nature of the service the best option at present is to extend.
- 5.2 An options appraisal was undertaken and considered re-procuring with an updated specification and financial envelope. However, due to the timescale and risk involved this is not feasible.
- 5.3 An options appraisal was undertaken and considered bringing the School Health Nursing Service in-house. However, due to the timescales and risk this is not feasible.
- 5.4 Extending the current contract enables a longer-term and robust options appraisal to be undertaken for the future.

6 Implications

Resources:	<p>6.1 Expenditure relating to the contract for School Health Nursing Services is funded by the ring-fenced public health grant. The overall budget for Public Health Services from 2025/26 and onwards is always uncertain. In the event of any reduction in the Public Health Budget, a review of the contract values may be required to ensure that the costs of the service are able to be met from the Public Health Budget allocation.</p>									
	<p>6.2 The budget for the extension period was stated by the incumbent provider during the original procurement process.</p>									
	<table border="1"><thead><tr><th>Contract extension period</th><th>Contract budget</th><th>10% Maximum variation</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>2025/26</td><td>£2,044,806.62</td><td>£2,249,287.28</td></tr><tr><td>2026/27</td><td>£2,085,702.75</td><td>£2,294,273.02</td></tr></tbody></table>	Contract extension period	Contract budget	10% Maximum variation	2025/26	£2,044,806.62	£2,249,287.28	2026/27	£2,085,702.75	£2,294,273.02
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2025/26	£2,044,806.62	£2,249,287.28								
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6.3 The location of the current School Health Nursing service is Blackheath Library Building, 2nd Floor and currently operates under a licence from the Council that is integral to the contract.

6.4 The Council is responsible for providing accommodation for the provider and this is integral to the Service. A new lease agreement is required as part of the extension, which will run until the service contract ends or is terminated.

6.5 The accommodation costs will be retained separately from the contract's budget and paid directly by Public Health. These are agreed as follows:

Contract extension period	Accommodation costs
2025/26	£54,337.50
2026/27	£56,239.30

Legal and Governance:

6.6 In addition to the National Healthy Child Programme, the School Nursing Service also delivers the National Child Measurement Programme which is a mandated requirement under Regulation 3 of the Local Authorities (Public Health Functions and Entry to Premises by Local Healthwatch Representatives) Regulations 2013.

6.7 The Health and Care Act 2022 introduced a new procurement regime for health care services from 1 January 2024, namely the Health Care Services (Provider Selection Regime) Regulations 2023 (PSR 2023). This means that the contract extension and any modifications (variation(s)) to the contract will now be governed by the PSR 2023.

6.8 The Council's Contract Procedure Rules require contracts of the value £250,001 or above must be in writing and executed by the Monitoring Officer, or by the Chief Executive and a Legal Services Manager, or sealed by the Council.

Risk:

6.9 The corporate risk management strategy has been complied with to identify and assess the risks associated with the decision being sought. This has concluded that the following significant risks have been identified. For the risks identified, suitable

	<p>measures will be in place to mitigate the risk to an acceptable level.</p> <p>6.10 Uncertainty about future financial resources and increased demand (see 6.1 and 4.2) - Mitigation would be to review contract values (6.2) and/or permitted variations being made to the specification. If the service is no longer affordable there is the option to terminate the contract, re-model and re-procure with a reduced financial envelope.</p> <p>6.11 Poor performance of the provider- Mitigation would include an effective performance management framework and putting sufficient contract monitoring resources and procedures in place.</p>
Equality:	<p>6.12 An initial equality screening has been undertaken and no adverse impact on protected groups has been identified if the recommendation is approved. If the recommendation is not approved, there will be a risk of a service gap which could potentially affect several protected groups which currently receive targeted support from School Nurses as well as the universal population of school-aged children in Sandwell.</p>
Health and Wellbeing:	<p>6.13 This is a health and wellbeing service that will contribute to a wide range of outcomes for children and young people (see section 3).</p>
Social Value	<p>6.14 Social Value was built into the original procurement criteria and SWBHT will continue to deliver the activity and outcome commitments.</p>
Climate Change	<p>6.15 The School Health Nursing service contract will support the delivery of SWBHT's Green Plan to cut 1M tonnes of CO2 emissions in Sandwell. Supporting a local anchor institution to deliver these services may reduce travel emissions as it is more likely to employ staff who live in the area.</p>
Corporate Parenting	<p>6.16 The universal offer is provided to all primary, secondary, and alternative provision schools, including where Children in Care will access.</p> <p>6.17 This service will contribute to the Children in Care annual health reviews, and mid-year reviews.</p> <p>6.18 The service will play an integral part in multi-agency safeguarding and early help.</p>

	6.19 A triage pathway will be in place where vulnerable groups, including children in care will be prioritised where a referral is made.
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7. Appendices

Equality Impact Assessment

8. Background Papers

National Commissioning Guidance

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/healthy-child-programme-0-to-19-health-visitor-and-school-nurse-commissioning>