



TAMESIDE MBC

# SOFT MARKET TESTING

**CONTRACT FOR THE COMMISSIONING OF TAMESIDE'S SENDIASS SERVICE**

Contract Period:

**1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023**

## 1. Background

We would like to take the opportunity to do some 'soft market testing' as outlined below, to determine current interest levels in the market.

## 2. Overview of service

This service will need to provide information, advice and support to children and young people with Special Educational Needs (SEN), and those with Disabilities, and their parents/carers (who have children/young people aged 0-25 years).

It will encourage and develop partnerships between children, young people, parents/carers, schools, the local authority and all other partners who are involved in working to identify, assess and meet the special educational needs of children and young people.

It will do this by providing

- Confidential and impartial information, advice and support to children, young people and their parents/carers on education matters and health and social care matters in relation to education.
- Information, advice and support on subjects including local policy and practice, personalisation, personal budgets, preparation for adulthood, the law on SEN and Disability, Health and Social Care.
- Information, advice and support throughout the Education, Health and Care (EHC) needs assessment process and review process.
- Information, advice and support about SEN Support in settings, schools and further education.
- Individual casework.
- Support in preparing for and attending meetings.
- Help in filling in forms and writing letters/reports.
- Support in resolving disagreements, including Disagreement Resolution, Mediation and Tribunals.
- Signposting to other local or national sources of advice, information and support.
- Links to local parent support groups and forums

We would be interested to know your offer in terms of:

- Numbers of staff you would envisage for the Tameside service
- Case work numbers
- Range of services offered e.g. mediation

It is anticipated that TUPE may apply to 2 staff, 1 manager and 1 case worker, both full time.

## 3. Project Timescales

Stage of the project	Anticipated deadline
Soft market testing	5 <sup>th</sup> November 2021 – 15 <sup>th</sup> November 2021
Progress to tender	December 2021

Closing date for suppliers to have submitted documents	15 <sup>th</sup> January 2022
Result of Procurement Process	28 <sup>th</sup> February 2022
Contract Start Date	1 <sup>st</sup> April 2022

## 4. Soft Market Testing

### **THIS IS NOT A CALL FOR COMPETITION**

The Soft Market Test is intended to allow interested organisations with relevant experience to outline their views and provide information with no commitment to themselves or the Council.

The Council is looking to award a contract commencing 1st April 2022. If a decision is made to tender this service the maximum annual budget is £67,500. It is further envisaged that the initial contract would be for a period of 2 years with an option to extend by 2 years. During the Soft Market Test we would like to gauge the level of interest.

**Stage 1** - Interested suppliers are required to complete the following company information form and a short questionnaire (at appendix 1). Suppliers who complete and return the questionnaire *may* be invited to meet with Council representatives to discuss its requirements.

The questionnaire should be returned via The Chest - <https://www.the-chest.org.uk/> by noon on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2021.

If Suppliers have any questions about this soft market test, such questions should be submitted to the Council using the 'Question and Answer' facility within the opportunity advertised on The Chest. A copy of the question and a copy of the written reply may be circulated to all Suppliers, with anonymity of the Supplier preserved. Suppliers must not raise questions through any other channels, including emails direct to the Council or to STAR Procurement. No questions will be responded to, other than those raised through The Chest as described above

**We encourage your participation in this soft market testing exercise, but must emphasise that your involvement in this exercise will not carry any commercial advantage in any ensuing procurement process.**

**No information provided in response to this soft market testing exercise will be used in any evaluation of any subsequent response to a procurement exercise.**

## 5. General Information

Full name of your organisation:	Together Trust
Contact Details Name:	Paul Baker
Job Title:	Head of Business Development
Address:	Together Trust Centre, Schools Hill, Cheadle, SK8 1JE
Telephone no:	0161 283 4848
Fax No:	
Mobile No:	07983 262460
Email Address:	Business.development@togethertrust.org.uk
Web Address (if any):	www.togethertrust.org.uk

## 6. Undertaking from the supplier

Name:*	Paul Baker
Signed:	Duly authorised on behalf of the Supplier 
Position:	Head of Business Development
Date:	9 November 2021

## **Appendix 1 – Questionnaire**

**Please complete the following questionnaire (questions 1 – 5) fully, highlighting any information that you consider to be commercially sensitive\***

1. Would you be interested in bidding for this proposed Project?

If Yes, why?

If No, why not?

### **Response:**

We would be interested in providing this service.

At the Together Trust, our vision is a society where people thrive because they are valued within their communities. For 150 years we've been championing and caring for people with disabilities, autism and complex health needs. And providing life-changing support for looked-after children and care-experienced people.

Today we're one of the North West's leading disability charities. We help children, adults, parents and carers, delivering individual care, support and education to thousands of people each year.

Delivery would complement a range of related services which we currently provide, whilst building upon past provision.

2. Please detail the experience your organisation has in delivering this type of service?

**Response:**

We have extensive experience of delivering 40+ high-quality, outcome-focused services predominantly across the NW including:

- Residential care and overnight short breaks
- Specialist education including children and young people with ASC, SEBD and post-16 education
- Foster care
- Clinical and therapeutic services and support
- Community based provision.

Together Trust has extensive experience of providing similar and related services to this opportunity including information, advice & guidance on behalf of children, young people with complex needs and their families over many years including:

- 'Independent Supporters' on behalf of the following local authorities; Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Tameside, Oldham, Salford
- 'Mediation & Dispute Resolution' for local authorities across the NW and beyond including: Cheshire West & Chester, Cheshire East, Rochdale, Oldham, Manchester City and St Helens (recently re-contracted to deliver this service).
- Previous experience of delivering 'Parent Partnership' services in Stockport and Bury.

In December 2020, we were contracted by Stockport MBC to deliver an 'Information, Advice, Support & Advocacy Service for SEND, Health & Social Care'.

3. Please detail how you will meet the requirements as detailed in the key aims (section 2)?

**Response:**

The service will be delivered by experienced, fully trained IASS Workers supported locally by a dedicated Service Manager - planned delivery model will be based upon previous experience delivering effective IAS services across Bury and Stockport.

At point of delivery our service will offer free, full-time, impartial, confidential information, advice, advocacy and support to parents/carers of children/young people with SEND and to the young people themselves. The service will be delivered 52 weeks a year and will be available as required by the service specification.

Our early intervention approach delivered by our experienced, specialist SEND team will include:

- 37.5 hours-a-week service, during office hours whilst maintaining flexibility, eg. meetings/telephone advice held outside office hours; digital communications, voicemail available 24/7
- Inclusive communication - face-to-face, telephone, online, assistive digital service:
- 'Information sheets', 'This is Me' (young person's booklet), 'SENDIASS leaflets in paper, digital, other languages, accessible/easy read
- Digital platforms - secure website/social media/video conferencing
- Telephone/text/voicemail/encrypted email available 24/7
- Assistive technology - 'Text to Talk'/Picture board/maker symbols
- Staff trained in Makaton/Talking Mats
- Additional support, eg. SENDIASS/advocacy
- Neutral, accessible venues meeting access/mobility needs, suitable for confidential discussions
- Mutually agreed times.

The service will encompass children/young people aged between 0 - 25 years across Education, Health and Social Care (EHC) reflecting developments in policy. We fully understand/will design provision to meet any challenges resulting from the Children and Families Act including impact on schools, colleges and those young people accessing Apprenticeships and Internships. We will support children/young people and parents/carers to ensure views are heard, understood, respected and needs foremost in planning support.

We will help promote independence and self-advocacy for children/young people and parents by providing:

- Accurate, up to date and impartial information and advice about the law on special education needs and disability, including people's rights and choices
- Information regarding EHC plans



- Support with writing letters, completing forms
- Help in preparing for/attending meetings with the LA, school, health or social care
- Information about local services and how to access them
- Guidance with choosing appropriate schools for children with SEND
- Support in SEND school exclusions and discrimination.

Delivery methodology for the service:

Supporting parents/carers

- Ensuring parents/carers are recruited/involved in effective and meaningful participation at a level sustainable for them, in a way that develops capacity in Stockport to inform/influence services for children/young people with SEND at all levels of decision making
- Working with parents/carers to identify opportunities to develop self confidence /other areas of development
- Increasing number of under-represented groups of parents/carers e.g. male carers, BME, those with additional needs.

Accessibility for all:

- Ensuring all who have contact with the service receive same level of service
- Pitching information at pace/level appropriate to child/young person and his/her parent or carer; providing 1:1 support to parents/carers and young people as required using person-centred practices
- Providing individual casework, representation for those who need it
- Offering/providing information in an accessible, inclusive format
- Ensuring that when a young person reaches the age of 16, they are made aware of their own rights and able to participate in decision-making about their EHC plan.

Central Services support:

All managers/front-line staff responsible for delivery of services are supported by a well resourced head office based in Cheadle - central services are delivered by suitably trained, experienced staff supported by comprehensive processes and systems including:

- Finance and Contracts
- Human Resources
- Communications and Marketing
- Information Technology and IT Support.

4. When/if the Council go to tender following the soft market test, is there anything in addition to the information in this brief that suppliers would need to be advised of in order to aid in their response.

**Response:**

- comprehensive information about TUPE should this apply
- detailed information about historic and current needs and outcomes delivered; information about future requirements and expectations
- local demographics
- anticipated barriers and challenges
- clear information about social value expectations etc
- realistic budget to enable delivery of the best quality service.

5. Please can you detail a brief statement to demonstrate what added value your organisation can offer in the market?

**Response:**

Response

This service will form part of a wider existing range of community based provision, just one element of a wider, integrated range of services (40+) shaped by those people who we care for/support, including residential care, fostering, community services, specialist education, clinical/therapeutic support. Key potential examples of added value could include:

**Promotion of local skills/employment:**

- safeguarding existing jobs/recruiting new staff - for new posts, we will advertise vacancies locally/prioritise employment of local people
- staff will receive pay above “living wage”.
- training, apprenticeships, staff progression: L&D offer expands annually - includes 180+ fully funded accredited/non-accredited/81 e-learning courses. We make best use of Apprenticeship Levy; 70+ staff enrolled on vocational apprenticeships - from NVQ3 to post-graduate qualifications.

**Supporting Growth of Responsible, Regional Business: local SMEs and VCSEs:**

- Each year, we spend £3,000,000+ on goods/services – we continuously look to identify local SMEs and 3<sup>rd</sup> sector organisations which can provide these.
- We have introduced principles of fair, ethical procurement across all areas of charity, guided by our Ethical Procurement Policy.

**Environmental Sustainability:** as a charity providing social care/education to children/young people we in a heightened responsibility to ensure the world is a cleaner, greener place for them to grow up in.

Energy Savings Opportunity Scheme compliance – we undertake an energy assessment by Environment Agency every 4 years.

Actions we will take/already take to improve environmental standards with this contract/other services include:

- Limiting energy consumption:
  - energy-saving light bulbs
  - motion-sensitive lighting
  - IT Virtual Servers - reduction in cooling/energy use/costs
  - AAA appliances

- Reducing CO2 emissions:
  - Cycle to Work scheme
  - Procuring materials from sustainable sources.
- Waste reduction:
  - recycling points in each of our services
  - commercial recycling larger/bulk volumes.

All 40+ Together Trust services take account of, foster every opportunity to and provide data of the positive impact each service delivers for every person's:

- health/well-being (including mental health)
- facilitating healthy life choices about food and diet
- fitness/exercise
- peer relationships, friendship groups
- compliance to medication/care routines
- independence
- identity/cultural needs
- self-confidence
- informed decision making
- feelings of safety; positive risk taking in a safe environment.