

Occupational Health Collaborative Tender

1.0 Introduction

The Authority outsources Occupational Health (OH) Services and Employee Assistance Provision (EAP). These contracts are managed by Human Resources.

The OH contract for OH Services and Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) was part of a sub contract arrangement with Buckinghamshire County Council (BCC) and in place since 2013. With the contractual arrangement coming to an end in September 2016, this created an opportunity to consider new suppliers and to improve the OH service through new collaborative arrangements.

An OH Tender was created in Quarter 4 2016/17 to seek a provider to replace our incumbent due to the contract expiration. This included Core OH, EAP and Whistleblowing Line. The tender specification contained the option to add a preventative Health and Well-being service to include the provision of initiatives for the promotion of improved health in specific areas, not available under the previous contract.

This OH project fits well with the Authority's strategic aim within the Corporate Plan 2015-20 "to optimise the contribution and well-being of our people".

2.0 Key Aspects of the Initiative

Initially exploring the concept of collaborative arrangements with Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) and Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service (OFRS) then adding an additional partner Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS). The project involved:

- Maintaining positive relationships and contractual arrangements with BCC in order to maintain the existing arrangements should it not be optimum to venture to join with other partner FRS' or to go solo on a tender.
- BFRS negotiated and fixed the price of the existing contract to allow for BFRS contract end times to be extended, at no additional cost between September 2016 and March 31 2017. This facilitated a seamless ending of existing OH contract and alignment with the new collaborative partner Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS).
- Collaborative working between BFRS, OFRS and NFRS. The BFRS Employee Relations and Procurement Team led the project to establish, agree and set out a fit for purpose tender specification and evaluations containing both financial and service level improvements.
- The tender was awarded in Quarter 4 2016/17 and the commencement of service set for 1 April 2017.

3.0 The Aims of the Occupational Health Services Contract

The arrangements needed to allow for management referrals for physical and mental health of employees and routine medical assessments to include:

- Promoting healthy working practices/lifestyles.
- Routine medicals and management referrals at selected geographical locations.
- Assessing and monitoring the effects of health on work, and work on health.
- Preventing ill health arising from working practices or conditions.
- Reducing sickness absence and ill-health retirements, including monitoring long-term and/or recurring sickness absence.
- Education/Awareness of Health and wellbeing.
- Rehabilitation.
- Liaison with external specialists.
- Pre - employment assessment / Return to work assessments.
- With cause and pre-arranged substance misuse and alcohol testing.
- Employee Assistance programme 24/7.
- Counselling services as per the previous provider.
- Whistleblowing line 24/7.

3.0 Outcome

Milton Keynes Occupational Health (MKOH) were the successful tenderer, offering us three clinic locations across the county and a reciprocal arrangement providing the opportunity to book sessions across the border in Northamptonshire and Oxfordshire, should there be a need in the future. A competitive pricing proposal was received which will be on an annual basis as opposed to a pay when used service.

Positive results of the successful tender included:

- Successful transfer from existing OH provider for BFRS and NFRS on 1 April 2017 with OFRS retaining an option to join in late 2018.
- Use of the new service commenced on schedule 1 April 2017 in tandem with NFRS.
- An anticipated like for like minimal cost reduction to BFRS of like for like OH services. A financial summary is contained in the financial implications of the cover paper.
- Tighter contract management controls set with clear, specific and tighter Key Performance Indicators set out in the tender contract specification.

- Continued collaborative working with contract management and the opportunity to share best practice OH management with NFRS and OFRS.
- Increased optional flexibility of the availability of OH clinic locations.

4.0 Summary and Conclusion

BFRS and NFRS have been able to slightly decrease the budgeted cost of services rendered, whilst increasing what is being provided in the nature of preventative health and Well-being services. It is expected that OFRS can also achieve cost reductions when their existing contract ceases in 2018, should they take up the option.

This tender process was conducted in line with the principles of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) of collaboration between the Thames Valley Fire and Rescue Services. Early in the process BFRS approached NFRS to establish their interest in joining the tender process, this proved to be the case and was successful.

It is anticipated that the new arrangements will achieve service improvements whilst still maintaining integrity in deliverables. The new contract is designed to provide value for money like for like, allowing funding for well-being initiatives.

This initiative is an example of how services from different counties can work effectively together, accommodating the inherent differences between fire and rescue services; to get an outcome that works for all.