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| Children’s Services Finance Solution |
| Tameside Council |

# Background

Tameside Council, with the support of STAR Procurement, are looking to identify a strategic partner for a Children’s Finance IT Solution that is compatible with the existing Children’s Social Care, Early Help and corporate finance systems to enable more streamlined and accurate financial monitoring and projection around children’s payments and automate time-consuming manual processes that currently exist.

Tameside currently uses Liquidlogic’s LCS social and EHM early help case management solutions. Softbox is the software used to generate payment files for foster carers, and payments are paid via the Council’s finance system, Unit 4 Business World. There is no Children’s specific Financial IT Solution in place so placements and commissioning activity are recorded utilising Microsoft Excel.

In the current financial climate and with high demand on children’s services it is pivotal that the Council has full understanding and control of its significant spend in this area both in current and future financial years.

For the purpose of this soft market test exercise, we are actively looking for expressions of interests from suppliers who can fulfil these requirements.

# Corporate Principles

The following describes the overarching principles and phases that shape what the organisation is hoping to achieve through the introduction of a new children’s finance system.

# Key Stakeholders

Listed below are some of the key stakeholders who would be influential to the overall success of the project. Please note that this list is not exhaustive and could be subject to change throughout the duration of the project.

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| **Role** |
| Head of Children’s Commissioning |
| Senior Systems Officer |
| Payments Manager |
| ICT Systems Manager |
| Head of Systems, Payments and Registrars |
| Finance Business Partner |
| Fostering Service Unit Manager |

# Service Specifications & Requirements

**4a. Core Functional Requirements**

**General**

1. Interface with multiple Systems (including Liquidlogic LCS / EHM / Unit4 Business World)
2. Retention functionality to allow automated record management in line with GDPR principles.
3. Audit functionality - record creation / deletion and access to the system to ensure GDPR compliance.
4. Record access restriction functionality.
5. Provider portal – where care providers can access online information and communication around placements and payments via a self-service methodology.
6. Consideration will be given to either on premise or cloud.
7. Option to enable single sign on.

**Commissioning Functionality**

1. Removal of the manual process for authorising invoices. As a minimum, batch authorisation of multiple invoices through a single screen. Users should not be clicking through multiple sub screens to authorise invoices as part of the work flow.
2. Removal of annual and manual purchase order creation: We do not want to have to manually create individual orders for each payments so that leads through to goods receipting each individual element.  Record fee information once and use multiple times.
3. Invoices automatically checked against predicted spend and flagged when not compliant, but a degree of simple fast tracking where invoices are correct against costs and order.
4. Automatic implementation of placement length discounts (at 12 months 2 years etc).
5. Accurate cost projection and modelling.
6. System triggers and alerts when placement moves are recorded on LCS which impact on a budgeted spend to prevent overpayments where social work placement change have not notified to brokerage.
7. Sometimes the date a child leaves a setting is different than when the placement costs finish (notice) or we pay in advance of the child moving (bed blocking). This is often failure demand, but we need the ability to pay and place on different timelines and this information to be recorded effectively to support placement and financial modelling.
8. Ability to split costs into basic package cost and time limited additional funding support. i.e. Identify where additional resource are being funded over and above the basic placement cost. This needs to be time limited/review date eg. 28 days of 1-1 support or a therapy etc and needs to be reportable and monitor-able
9. Support invoices being paid from multiple services eg health, education, or others budgets.
10. Housekeeping tools to flag errors or inconsistencies.

**Monitoring**

1. Alerts in advance of fixed term funding ending that can drive monitoring work.
2. Where ongoing with monthly review, this is flagged and action is required to upload review documentation or at least record its receipt.
3. Ability to run monthly reports for monthly, financial year costs by individual child, and breakdown of the components of spend.
4. Provide a monthly changes report - where a child whatever the placement type has had changes to the financial package a report is available to identify these.
5. Ability to track monthly allowances for the child if appropriate.
6. Ability to track Housing Benefits eligibility where appropriate.
7. Ability to report at cost centre and account code level.
8. Ability for the system to auto generate standard reports in an excel or CSV format.
9. Ability to keep an audit change in line with reporting month ends. (Ie retrospective changes do not change the historical information. Ability to cross reference with Unit 4.
10. Need to be able to track VAT or tax if appropriate. (Need to be able to deal with different rates of VAT where appropriate).
11. Ability to add future anticipated placements so that future costs can be forecasted
12. Ability to run a test version/form of scenario testing to determine the cost implications of different scenarios –eg uplift in fostering rates, uplift to private provider rates
13. Ability to apply blanket changes if there are changes to the finance ledger account codes and cost centres without the need to manually re-purchase/make changes to each child’s record
14. Option for dashboard functionality for visual graphical reporting.

**Foster Care and Leaving Care Payments**

1. Generates payment files for payment via Unit 4 Business World.
2. Periodic payment runs.
3. Payments composed of foster carer allowances and skills payments and other relevant allowances that can be set up in advance. We must be able to report on the appropriate components.
4. Retrospective backdated changes to pay.
5. Clear electronic remittance advice or portal to enable clear transparent communication of payments to carers.
6. Workflow approval of payments.
7. Exception reporting e.g. pay run variance reporting
8. Ability to track the changes to any of the components of pay on a monthly basis.
9. Payments to social work decisions. We can build in future discounts, and set time limits on additional payments and ability to report on.
10. Ability to set up payments prior to a placement plan being completed and then run a report to show where children’s social workers have not completed the plan.
11. Efficient streamlined system to reduce administrative burden.
12. Every fostered child is eligible to receive one festival allowance per year. There needs to be a warning alert if a member of staff tries to pay a second festival allowance within a year
13. Birthday payments should not need to be manually added/set up, they should be automatically paid when it is the child’s birthday.
14. Weekly fostering child allowances to be automatically purchased based on the child’s age – no need for someone to manually purchase them.
15. Ability to change payment runs – bring them forward if there is a bank holiday or switch from making payments in advance to in arrears, fortnightly payment runs to weekly payment runs etc.
16. Portal for foster carers example of portal functionality including but not limited to uploading receipts for approval, or mileage claims and a manual workflow leading to the payments being made within the system.
17. **Estimated Project Timescales:**

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| **Stage of the project** | **Anticipated deadline** |
| Soft market testing – start date | **1/6/2021** |
| Soft market testing – end date | **3 weeks from start date 22/06/2021** |
| Progress to chosen procurement | TBC following Soft Market Test |

1. 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 Councils.

**Stage 1 -** Interested suppliers are required to complete the following company information form and a short questionnaire using the ‘Supplier Response Document’ provided in section **7a.**

Suppliers who complete and return the questionnaire ***may*** be invited to meet with the stakeholders to discuss the requirements in more detail. The questionnaire should be returned via The Chest - <https://www.the-chest.org.uk/> by 12noon on **22 June 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.

**Stage 2** - Shortlisted suppliers ***may*** be invited to a meeting to demo their solution, explore further their approach, suggestions and solutions to deliver the provision on the stages outlined above. The meetings are proposed to be held during the week commencing **5 July 2021 (subject to change).**

**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.**

# 7a. Supplier Response Document

# Section 1: General Information

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| **Full name of your organisation:** | |  |
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| **Contact Details Name:** | |  |
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| **Address:** | |  |
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| **Telephone no:** | |  |
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| **Fax No:** | |  |
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| **Mobile No:** | |  |
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| **Email Address:** | |  |
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| **Web Address (if any):** | |  |

# Section 2: Undertaking from the supplier

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| **Name:\*** |  |
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| **Signed:** | Duly authorised on behalf of the Supplier  (Electronic signature required here) |
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| **Position:** |  |
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| **Date:** |  |

# Section 3: Questionnaire

Please complete the following questionnaire fully, highlighting any information that you consider to be commercially sensitive\*. Please note the word limit for each response – you do not need to meet the word count, but should not exceed it.

1. Please detail how you **can** meet the requirements as detailed in this document and subsequent appendices (word limit: 300)

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1. Please give detail on which requirements and services you **cannot** meet based off limitations on the scalability of your product and evidence of where you have been unable to implement it (word limit: 300).

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1. Please give details of the future road map of your system including any other planned future developments that are noteworthy and of relevance to this soft market test (word limit: 300).

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1. If the Council decided to go out to tender following the Soft Market Test, is there anything in addition to the information in this brief that suppliers will need to understand in order to better understand the requirements? (word limit: 300)

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1. Please give some indicative licensing costs/ structures, assuming you can meet all of the requirements of the service areas you have selected in section 1 of this form (word limit: 300).

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1. If you would like to include information about other modules and functionality that you feel would benefit the Council and its customers to meet their future objectives. (word limit: 300)

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1. Given the requirements and objectives set out in this Soft Market Test brief, please give some indicative costs and timescales based to deliver and implement a suitable ICT solution (word limit: 300)

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1. Please give your thoughts on the ease of integrating your system with other relevant ICT systems and how this process will be managed within the project (word limit: 300)

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9 Please tell us about your experience of working with other local authorities and/or similar services to what we have outlined in this document, including your implementation approach (word limit: 300)

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