



Home-Start Aberdeenshire Consortium,

Aberdeenshire Council wanted to streamline its services for children and families and started a competitive process for Local Authority-wide services for families with children under 5 years. Five Home-Start organisations active in Aberdeenshire collaborated to tender and win the competitive contract.



Background

There are five Home-Start organisations active in Aberdeenshire. Their core work of all the Home-Start organisations is the same, but some do additional work responding to the needs of the families of the area they work in. All consortium members received funding from Aberdeenshire Council in the form of a Service Level Agreement; however, the additional activities are funded in a variety of ways.

Aberdeenshire Council wanted to streamline its services for children and families and started a competitive process for services for families with children under 5 years.

A series of services, delivered by a wide range of providers through Service Level Agreements and Grants, were to be offered as lots through a tender process in early 2016.

Scope and Focus

The five Home-Start organisations have been delivering these services for the past 20 years funded by various grants.

When the tender was advertised, the five organisations decided to join forces and bid as a consortium. After a competitive process the Home-Start Aberdeenshire Consortium won the contract.

Home-Start UK is a leading family support charity in the UK that helps families with young children deal with the challenges they face and supports parents to learn to cope, improve their confidence and build better lives for their children. The Home-Start services are delivered locally by 32 independent Home-Start organisations under the umbrella of Home-Start UK.

The five Home-Start organisations in Aberdeenshire are:

- Home-Start Garioch
- Home-Start Deeside
- Home-Start North-East Aberdeenshire
- Home-Start Deveron
- Home-Start Kincardine

Implementation

The Invitation to Tender (ITT) required the successful bidder to deliver a combination of home visits and group work, on an Aberdeenshire-wide basis. There was further expectation that the successful bidder would bring a high-quality standard and consistency to service provision across all parts of Aberdeenshire, linking into local planning clusters, and creating wider networks. Some of the Home-Start organisations were more focussed on delivering group work and others on home visits and some in both.

The five Home-Start organisations decided to form a consortium and submit a joint tender. Home-Start Garioch took the lead.

In support of the changes, Aberdeenshire Council provided a series of briefings and advice to delivery organisations likely to be affected by the new tendering process.

Key Challenges

There were a few challenges to overcome.

- Bidders had 6 weeks to submit their tender – a very short timescale in which they had to form a partnership, develop a joint response to the tender specification, develop a strategy for expansion to ensure full geographical coverage, devise a robust fundraising plan to add value to the contract.
- In addition, the new consortium members also had to agree how they would share resources, develop joint initiatives to meet the needs of the contract, and collaborate to meet the responsibilities of working – and managing a contract - as a consortium.
- For each of the consortium members it was the first time that they entered in a tendering process and had no previous experience in tender writing. Also the Co-ordinators of the five Home-Start organisations had to do the tender-writing additional to their 'day-jobs'. Their competitors for this contract were all national children's charities of significant scale who employ bid-writing professionals.

Outcomes

The new Home-Start Aberdeenshire Consortium won the lot they bid for.

Winning this tender against serious competition from national children's charities, the organisations have gained in confidence.

Winning the tender was recognition of their skills and experience in delivering high quality services.

Consortium members now regularly share expertise, skills and best practice at a 6-weekly consortium meeting to enhance the outcomes. They are able to access wider networks and partnerships at a local and shire level, and to offer a wider range of group work activity through sharing knowledge.

Based on the contract, all five Home-Start organisations have been able to access additional grant funding to cover for cost that are not covered by the contract.

Critical Success Factors

There were a number of factors that were essential to the success of the tender:

- Keeping an ear to the ground : partners accessed briefings and had identified support needs before the tender was advertised.
- Willingness to collaborate : individual organisations made contact with each other as soon as the tender was advertised to discuss the possibility and benefits of a consortium approach.
- Existing awareness of each other: The five Home-Start organisations were known to each other, and understood each other's work. They shared common backgrounds and values, which helped forming a consortium in a short period of time.
- At an early stage, consortium members looked for similarities and synergies as a basis on which they could build a joint response. An example was in Quality Management: with similar ethos, common systems and approaches, they could quickly establish a strong performance management framework for the contract.
- They asked for, and accessed, support and advice from tendering and consortium specialists who support social enterprises. The partners were supported in completing the tender by advisers from both Just Enterprise (<http://www.justenterprise.org/>), who are experienced in tender writing, and a partnership specialist from Senscot /Social Firms Scotland.

Next Steps

As a result of the successful tender, the five Aberdeenshire Home-Start organisations, are now preparing collective bids for other tenders.

For further information, contact:

Mhairi Philip, Senior Co-ordinator Home-Start Garioch
P: Lumphart Cottage, Port Road, Inverurie, AB51 3SP
T: 01467 624801
E: e-mhairi@homestartgarioch.org.uk