

## **Wiltshire Council**

### **Cabinet**

**10 October 2023**

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**Subject: Commissioning of Carers Support Services**

**Cabinet Member: Councillor Jane Davies, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, SEND, and Inclusion**

**Key Decision: Key**

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#### **Executive Summary**

This paper sets out a commissioning plan for Carers Support Services from 2024 – 2027 and seeks agreement to go out to tender for these services.

Wiltshire Council and Wiltshire Integrated Commissioning Board currently jointly fund Carers Support Services through a pooled budget arrangement.

The current contract is due to end on the 31st of March 2024

#### **Proposals**

Cabinet is asked to approve:

- 1) The Carers Support Service Commissioning Plan for a 3-year service commencing in 2024 -2027 and with a 2-year extension option. And,
- 2) To delegate authority to the Corporate Director, Resources and Deputy Chief Executive (S.151 Officer) in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, SEND, and Inclusion, following completion of the necessary competitive procurement exercise, to award the contract and take such other necessary steps to achieve the outcomes and objectives set out in this report.

#### **Reason for Proposals**

The existing All Age Carers Support Service Contract has been in place for 6 years and is due to expire on the 31 March 2025. There is no option to further extend the contract.

The service specification which has been in place now for 6 years and needs refreshing based on extensive co production of the new strategy and delivery plan.

**Terence Herbert  
Chief Executive**

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### **Purpose of Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to note and approve the need to tender for, and award, a new contract for a service that will offer support to carers of all ages across Wiltshire.
2. Carers support is currently provided under a contract which has been in place now for 6 years operating with the same service specification. The contract is due to end on the 31 March 2024, and there is no ability to further extend this contract.
3. A new service specification has been drafted which has been informed by carers, changes in the market, the impact of Covid-19 on carers, learning from the last five years, and the need to ensure better identification and support for young carers.
4. Carers are a large diverse group of people. Their needs are extremely varied and complex. They are a resource and asset upon which care, and support systems depend. There is therefore a strong economic case for supporting and investing in carers support services due to the enormous contribution they make to supporting the overall health and social care system.
5. Failure to support carers would not only result in poor outcomes for the carer and the cared for person but could also have negative implications on areas such as education, housing, primary and secondary health, and social care services.
6. Most people who have caring responsibilities are proud to be a carer. They are caring for people they know and care deeply about. However, to successfully undertake their caring responsibilities they need support and guidance, which will enable them to also live a life of their own.
7. The current carers support service is a jointly commissioned service with health and the new service will continue to be jointly commissioned with the BSW Integrated Care Board.

### **Relevance to the Council's Business Plan**

8. The Council has a statutory duty to assess and meet the needs of carers who meet the eligibility criteria set out in The Care Act 2014 and the Children and Families Act 2014.
9. These two Acts improved and extended carers rights to assessment and support to meet their eligible needs.

10. The Care Act 2014 and the Children and Families Act 2014 require Local Authorities to adopt a whole system approach, whole Council, whole family approach, co-ordinating services and support around the person, child, and their family. It requires that the impact of the care needs of an adult or their family, including children are taken into consideration.

## **Background**

11. Carers Support Services have been jointly funded since 2010.

12. The service was last tendered, and a contract awarded in 2018.

13. The current contract is for an all-age carer support service and the new service will also be an all-age service.

14. The list of principal services under the current contract include:

- Improving carer awareness across health, social care, education, and the wider community, recognising that people do not always know what they need or what is available to support them and that carers may not identify with the term as carer.
- Operating a reduce, prevent, and delay model including information, advice, intelligent signposting, and onward referral.
- Increasing carer involvement and ensuring that the voice of carers is heard when decisions are made about how their own needs and the needs of those they care for are met.
- Undertaking Care Act compliant carers' assessments for 18+ carers. This is a two-level function: primarily undertaking health and wellbeing assessments that result in a reduce, prevent, and delay outcomes in 80% of cases and a secondary function of 'Carer Assessments' that are likely to lead to the provision of services, usually through a Direct Payment or brokered direct service.
- Undertaking health and wellbeing assessments for parent carers;
- Undertaking young carer and parent carer transition assessments.
- Organising organised carer breaks and activities that are an opportunity to meet others in a similar situation and who share the same interests and help to build a network of peer support.
- Enabling carers to access training to support them to provide care and support, maintain their own wellbeing and build resilience.
- Providing emotional wellbeing support
- Supporting opportunities for carers to get into volunteering, which adds value to the service as well as an opportunity, particularly for those whose caring role has ended and who are seeking a return to employment.
- Administering and supporting registration to the carers' emergency card scheme

15. The current service provider up until April 2023 sub-contracted support for individual young carers including the provision of young carer break activities to a different

provider. The plan is to not have sub-contracting arrangements for the new service, but to encourage partnership or consortium bids through the competitive tendering process.

16. Under the terms of the existing contract the provider is required to 'add value' to services by reducing, preventing, and delaying needs. They are also required to add value by raising funds from other sources such as trusts, grants, and community fundraising to contribute to the available funding for delivery against the service specification. This requirement will remain in the new contract.
17. The service is funded from a carers' pooled budget under a section 75 agreement between health and social care. The carers' pooled budget forms part of the Better Care Fund and is aligned with the BCFs vision of ensuring care is delivered as close to home as possible.
18. The new commission will seek to build on achievements made to date and will look to improve outcomes for young carers and young adult carers, improve carer journey pathways particularly for young carers and those carers who receive a statutory carers assessment.
19. The new contract will also support the development of more meaningful key performance indicators which the current service provider has been keen to develop to better demonstrate value for money.

### **Main Considerations for the Council**

20. There is a pooled budget available within the Better Care Fund from which to commission this service. This is shown as **Appendix 1**.
21. The Council currently outsources its responsibility under the Care Act (2014) Section 10 statutory carer's assessments to the current service provider. The intention is for the Section 10 assessments to remain outsourced as part of the new service.
22. If a new Carers Support Service were not to be commissioned the Council would need to internally resume this statutory responsibility, which would have resource and TUPE implications.
23. If the procurement process results in a new supplier/suppliers winning the contract TUPE will apply. The ending of the relationship with the current supplier will also need to be carefully managed.
24. The existing Joint Carers Strategy will need to be updated in 2023 and having a new supplier/suppliers in place to work with commissioners, carers and the Carers Partnership Forum will ensure that a new Strategy can be developed which addresses local priorities for development and sets out the Council's aspirations for supporting carers.

### **Overview and Scrutiny Engagement**

25. Health Select Committee received a presentation on the Draft All Age Carers Strategy and Delivery Plan 2023-2026 on 4<sup>th</sup> July 2023.

## **Safeguarding Implications**

26. The contract that will be awarded will contain robust safeguarding measures in line with Council policy.
27. A representative from the Wiltshire Safeguarding Vulnerable People Partnership Board attends the Wiltshire Carer Partnership Forum. This Partnership Forum will work with commissioners and carers to ensure that actions are agreed and taken to meet the outcomes set out in the existing and any new Wiltshire Carers Strategy.

## **Public Health Implications**

28. A carer is anyone, including children and adults who looks after a family member, partner or friend who needs help because of their illness, frailty, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction and cannot cope without their support. The care they give is unpaid.
29. The 2011 Census found that in Wiltshire there were:
  - 47,608 people who said they provided unpaid care.
  - 42% of carers were men and 58% women.
  - 2,723 carers were aged 24 and under (5.8% of the Wiltshire population).
  - 11,876 carers were aged 65 or over (25.1% of carers in Wiltshire).
30. The 2021 Census data produced by the Office of National Statistics shows that the population in Wiltshire has increased by 8.4% from around 471,000 to 510,400. The largest population increases being in age groups 55-59, 70-74, 75 to 79 and 90 plus, which all show population increases of over 30%. There is currently no new census data specifically relating to carers in Wiltshire as yet.
31. Unpaid care has increased at a faster pace than population growth because of such things as the Covid pandemic, an ageing population with people living longer with more complex conditions which means that more and higher levels of care are needed for longer.
32. In 2018 the Department of Health & Social Care produced the 'Carers Action Plan 2018-2020'. This document said that 'A sustainable social care system for the future is simply not possible without focusing on how our society supports carers'. Coronavirus has applied even more pressure to our health and social care systems in Wiltshire, which means that now more than ever, there is a need to recognise, support and value carers.
33. Caring responsibilities can be difficult and stressful. Taking on the physical and emotional demands of supporting a family member with a long-term illness, disability, mental ill health, or addiction problem can lead to significant negative impacts on carers physical and mental health and wellbeing, education, and employment potential, which in turn can lead to poor quality of life outcomes for carers.
34. Without appropriate support a carers effectiveness can be affected which leads to the admission of the cared for person to hospital or residential care.

35. 84% of carers surveyed for the 2013 State of Caring Survey said that caring has had a negative impact on their health and carers attributed their health risk to a lack of support.
36. There is increasing prevalence of 'sandwich carers' – those looking after young children at the same time as caring for older parents. This term can also be used much more broadly to describe a variety of multiple caring responsibilities for people in different generations.
37. Providing appropriate support to carers can help to avoid carer breakdown. It can result in better physical and mental health outcomes, and this can lead to better quality of life outcomes.

### **Procurement Implications**

38. The services will be procured in line with Procurement Regulations and Policies.
39. There is a joint budget in place for the service.

### **Equalities Impact of the Proposal**

40. The procurement of Carers Support Services by the Council will support equitable access to services for carers. The specification for the service will state that the successful supplier/suppliers will be expected to demonstrate use of local resources and provision of services which take account of the diverse needs of the Wiltshire carer population.
41. A full equalities impact assessment was undertaken in respect of the current joint All Age Carers Strategy. The new supplier/suppliers will work with commissioners, carers, and the Carers Partnership Forum to carry out a new full Equality Impact Assessment as part of the development of a new Carers Strategy for Wiltshire.

### **Environmental and Climate Change Considerations**

42. The new service supplier will be asked to consider the Climate Change Act (2008) with regards to carbon reduction as part of their service delivery model e.g., delivering services closer to people's homes therefore reducing the need to travel.
43. Services will be delivered from existing facilities and venues so there will be no environmental impact on biodiversity, landscape, built heritage, archaeology and flooding, or greenfield sites.
44. The proposed 3 plus 2-year contract will ensure business continuity and provide the opportunity for the supplier/suppliers to develop closer community involvement in the delivery of services in the future.

### **Workforce Implications**

45. TUPE may apply when awarding this contract. This will be managed through the procurement process e.g., the need to transfer relevant information between the outgoing and incoming suppliers.

## **Risks that may arise if the proposed decision and related work is not taken**

46. Unpaid (family) carers play a vital role in supporting the health and wellbeing of individuals with a disability or illness. This care often comes at the expense of unpaid carers' own wellbeing, with negative effects on the carers' physical and emotional health, finances, and social activity. Without agreement to commission a new Carer Support Service support services will end on the 31st of March 2024 in line with the contract, and carers' wellbeing could be further affected by the lack of such services.
47. Directly supporting carers will reduce the likelihood of carer breakdown. A preventative approach is better for the local economy. This is because by meeting the needs of the carer, the requirement for health/social care funded services reduces.
48. Evidence shows that caring can have an impact on educational attainment. By working to support young carers their life chances could be improved, which in turn will benefit the national/local economy.
49. If a new support service is not commissioned the statutory responsibility for undertaking adult carers assessments will remain with the Council and this will have resource implications and TUPE may apply which will impact on Council HR and Legal Services.
50. Carers quality of life and mental health could be further impacted if opportunities to engage with other carers and break activities are not offered.

## **Risks that may arise if the proposed decision is taken and actions that will be taken to manage these risks**

51. The procurement process may be burdensome for the current supplier. To alleviate some of this burden regular communication has been taking place with the current supplier so that they can plan effectively for the tender process.
52. A Market Engagement Event is planned for September which will provide all potential suppliers with the opportunity of understanding what will be required of the new service and provide an opportunity to ask clarification questions about the tender process.
53. The opportunity to tender will be advertised through the Southwest Procurement Portal. This means that all potential suppliers will receive information at the same time.

## **Financial Implications**

54. A pooled budget is managed by Wiltshire Council on behalf of the Council and the Integrated Care Board. The funds sit within the Better Care Fund. There is a Section 75 Agreement (NHS Act 2006) which covers the legal and financial governance of this arrangement.
55. The Carers Pooled Budget also commissions support for Carers through the Wiltshire Citizens Advice Service. There is no impact on this service.

## **Legal Implications**

56. The Care Act 2014 and the Children and Families Act 2014 improved and extended carers' rights to assessment and support to meet their eligible needs (including parent carers and young carers). Adults and carers have similar rights to an assessment on the appearance of needs.
57. Section 2 of the Care Act 2014 outlines the Council's duty regarding 'preventing needs for care and support'. Section 1(2) states that 'A local authority must provide or arrange for the provision of services, facilities, or resources, or take other steps, which it considers will ... (b) contribute towards preventing or delaying the development by carers in its area of needs for support ... (d) reduce the needs for support of carers in its area'.
58. Local Authorities must meet their duties to identify, assess and support young carers, young adult carers and their families. They need to proactively identify all young carers. They must make sure that the assessment process meets the criteria set out in the legislation. They must make sure that they join up the work of children's services and adult services so that young carers and young adult carers benefit from professionals working together. The new service will include responsibility for transition assessment.
59. Due to the value of the contract a full tender process needs to be followed to secure services.

## **Conclusions**

60. Cabinet are requested to approve:
- a) The Carers Support Service Commissioning Plan for a 3-year service commencing in 2024 -2027 and with a 2-year extension option; and,
  - b) To delegate authority to the Corporate Director, Resources and Deputy Chief Executive (S.151 Officer) in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, SEND, and Inclusion, following completion of the necessary competitive procurement exercise, to award the contract and take such other necessary steps to achieve the outcomes and objectives set out in this report.

**Andy Brown, Corporate Director, Resources and Deputy Chief Executive (S.151 Officer)**

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## **Appendices**

None

## **Background Papers**

None