
Health and Social Care Scrutiny Board (5)

13th November 2024

Cabinet Member – Adult Services

20th November 2024

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member for Adult Services – Councillor L Bigham

Director approving submission of the report:

Director of Adults and Housing – Peter Fahy

Ward(s) affected:

All

Title:

Future Recommissioning of Carers Support Services and update on progress against the Carers Action Plan 2024/26.

Is this a key decision?

No - although the proposals affect more than two electoral wards, the impact is not expected to be significant.

Executive summary:

In the 2021 Census, 27,391 people in Coventry identified themselves as having caring responsibilities. We know this is likely to be an underrepresentation of our caring population, as many people do not recognise caring roles. Of those 27,391 – 8,391 carers reported to be providing over 50 hours of care, indicating an intense caring role (30.6%).

Supporting carers is of major importance to health and social care for a number of reasons including meeting duties arising from legislation, the important preventative aspects of maintaining support and because it is the right thing to do. We are all likely to take on caring responsibilities during our lifetime.

Adult Social Care in conjunction with Coventry and Warwickshire Integrated Care Board (CWICB) currently commission a range of support services for people with caring responsibilities across the city from Carers Trust Heart of England. These include:

- Carers Wellbeing Service – Information & Advice, Training, Peer Support, Activities, Wellbeing support
- Carers Assessments – Delegated responsibility from the council
- Carers Regulated Support – Carers Emergency Response Service & Carers Break Scheme
- Carers Projects – Primary Support for Carers, Employment Support, Direct Payments and Grief and Loss

The services are currently arranged in a mix of grant-based arrangements and a contract. All contracts and grants are due to expire on 31st March 2025. The current annual value of commissioned support is circa £775k which includes an annual contribution of £134k from CWICB.

A number of additional projects at a cost of £96k per year (included in above costs) commenced in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic, to respond to emerging needs and identified pressures for carers. This included Grief and Loss & Employment Support.

For the future recommissioning of carer services there will be an overall reduction in budget of £41,870 per year due to the development of alternative information and advice support corporately and how we want to reshape our future carer support. The procurement activity will be structured in such a way (with a maximum price or similar mechanism) to facilitate this reduction in budget required, with the intricacies of such arrangement to be discussed and finalised with procurement and legal services colleagues in due course.

Coventry City Council together with the CWICB plan to recommission carer support services within Coventry based on carer feedback. The recommissioning is also aligned to our priorities in the Carers Action Plan 2024-26. (See appendix one). The plan outlines three key priorities based on carers feedback:

- Empower carers with flexible respite options, ensuring they can take breaks
- Deliver the right support, at the right time, and in the right place
- Maximise the reach of carers assessments to benefit more carers

The aim of the Carers Action Plan is to improve the experience of carers with a particular focus on improving the life a carer lives alongside caring. We plan to review the success of the plan by engaging with carers and reviewing data such as the local authority's bi-annual survey.

Progress against the Carers Action Plan so far is captured in appendix 1 and includes:

- Advancing deployment of the Accelerated Reform Funds including onboarding of a specialist self-assessment and information and advice digital tool called Bridgit and the implementation of a project called My Time with the aim of supporting carers to take meaningful breaks.
- Developing Carers Assessments and pathways including delivery of a number of training sessions and rolling induction sessions to further support carers in their caring role.
- Updating and developing carer related information such as leaflets and websites to ensure carers are aware of the most up to date information to support them in their caring role.
- Developing a working group with University Hospital Coventry and Warwickshire to support carers whilst in hospital and upon discharge with the aim of improving carers experience and that they are aware of support options in the community.
- Development of Young Carer pathways including establishing a Young Carers Early Help Link
- Recommissioning of carer support services aligned to our three key priorities in the carers action plan.

Recommendations:

Health and Social Care Scrutiny Board (5) are requested to:

- Provide comments on the recommissioning of Carers Support Services and progress on Carers Action Plan 2024-26 to the Cabinet Member for Adult Services.

Cabinet Member is requested to:

- Consider any comments from the Health and Social Care Scrutiny Board (5)
- Endorse the recommissioning of Carers Support Services

List of Appendices included:

The following appendices are attached to the report:

Appendix 1 – Carers Action Plan 2024-26

Appendix 2 – Equality Impact Assessment

Background papers:

None

Has it or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

No

Has it or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel, or other body?

No

Will this report go to Council?

No

Report title: Recommissioning Carers Support Services

1. Context (or background)

National Context

- 1.1 There is no current National Carers Strategy or policy framework specific to unpaid carers. A consultation into a new national carers' strategy is currently on-going.
- 1.2 A commitment to carers is referenced within the "People at the Heart of Care" – Policy framework, which includes the now implemented Accelerated Reform Fund – a two-year fund which aims to promote innovation within adult social care.
- 1.3 There are two large national charities which supports the interests and lobbies for carers, Carers UK and Carers Trust.
- 1.4 Best practice in relation to supporting carers is available through the National Institute of Care Excellence (NICE), Social Care Institute of Excellence (SCIE), the National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTi) and Adult Directors of Social Services (ADASS), we have used best practice guidance to review and benchmark our current model and underpin our new specification and requirements.
- 1.5 From 2023 the Care Quality Commission have inspected local authorities; Coventry is yet to receive an inspection. This means that local authorities are now assessed around the quality of provision, people's (including carers) experience through the system, how responsive services are to need, how well-led the organisation is and the safety of those accessing care. The Local Authority will be assessed in accordance with how well they are meeting requirements under Part 1 of the Care Act 2014 of which there are significant duties towards carers.
- 1.6 Carers support services play a key role in the delivery of the local authorities' statutory duties in relation to people providing support for unpaid carers, it is pivotal that any awarded provider work in partnership with the local authority, will be a named partner in the inspection and will be expected to contribute to the information return.
- 1.7 Part of the awarded contract includes the completion of a statutory function – Carers Assessments and support planning which is a statutory duty under the Care Act 2014 and although will be undertaken by the awarded provider is still considered a delegated function of the local authority, this function will be subject to the same inspection regime as the local authority function.

Local Context

- 1.8 Supporting carers is at the heart of everything we do in Adult Social Care. It is well known that carers are the most significant layer of prevention between health and social care. Alongside an ethos of supporting carers, we hold significant legislative responsibilities for carers, which are embedded in the Care Act 2014.

- 1.9 In the 2021 Census, 27,391 people in Coventry identified themselves as having caring responsibilities. We know this is likely to be an underrepresentation of our caring population. Of those 27,391 - 8,391 carers reported to be providing over 50 hours of care.
- 1.10 Carers are often the unsung heroes when it comes to ill-health prevention, preventing hospital admissions and ensuring that our citizens are living their best lives at home. Care provided informally cannot be replicated in the same way as paid for services. A recent research study into the value of unpaid care within the city estimates that carers save the NHS Social Care system £970million per annum in Coventry alone, an enormous contribution which outstrips the value of the NHS and social care.
- 1.11 Identification is key to supporting carers, we know that the vast majority of people with caring responsibilities do not recognise themselves as being a “carer” and therefore do not access support where it might be of benefit to them. Services commissioned to support carers play a significant role in educating and raising awareness of carers in the community. It is essential that a proactive approach to identifying carers is embedded in any commissioned provision. The reason it is important that carers get support at the right time, is that by not doing so it can create further issues for the future, for example not applying for lasting power of attorney (LPA) whilst someone still has capacity to make decisions can cause long term difficulties, early adoption of technology can reduce the longevity of a caring role or understanding rights and responsibilities whilst working and caring can prevent employment breakdown.
- 1.12 The Carers Action Plan was launched at the end of December 2023, a plan which highlights key activity and actions being taken to improve the experience of carers within Coventry. The plan is based on extensive engagement with carers which informed our three core objectives:
- Empower carers with flexible respite options, ensuring they can take breaks.
 - Deliver the right support, at the right time, and in the right place.
 - Maximise the reach of carers assessments to benefit more carers
- 1.13 A Carers Steering Group has been reestablished to oversee and ensure actions within the Carers Action Plan are completed. Members of the steering group include Public Health, University Hospital Coventry and Warwickshire, Coventry and Warwickshire Partnership Trust, Carers Trust Heart of England, Alzheimer’s Society, Age UK, Dementia Hub & Children’s Social Care.
- 1.14 Progress around the plan is captured in Appendix 1.
- 1.15 In summary progress includes, advancing the Accelerated Reform Funds, developing Carers Assessments and progressing recommissioning of carer support services. With regards to the Accelerated Reform Funds, the procurement activity has been completed and two projects will commence in November 2024, My Time an innovative scheme which helps support carers access recreational breaks and Bridgit, a digital support tool which will help with the identification of carers and online information. Officers are exploring a further project to upscale support for carers within UHCW.
- 1.16 In relation to Carers Assessments, a number of training sessions have been held for staff including refresher and induction training and a number of team specific training sessions. Rolling induction sessions have been scheduled for the rest of the year. A practice learning alert was issued at the beginning of April 2024, setting expectations around completion of assessments, this will be followed up by a thematic review in the

Autumn 2024. Further focus will be on working with Mental Health teams to improve support for carers and the development of a new carers online self-assessment.

- 1.17 The recommissioned services will play a significant role in implementing the plan and actions and will be a key partner in the Carers Action Plan Steering Group
- 1.18 The last extensive recommissioning activity that took place in relation to Carers Support Services was in April 2018, when Carers Trust Heart of England were awarded a grant for the delivery of a Carers Wellbeing Service. This was 3 years after the implementation of the Care Act and prior to the pandemic. In 2019 the council provided the Carers Trust Heart of England with a further grant to deliver a project to improve identification of Carers within Primary Care Settings, this was in part to fulfil new guidance published by NHS England around embedding GP Quality markers in relation to carer friendly practice.
- 1.19 In September 2020, to respond to the emerging needs through the pandemic a number of additional grants were provided to enhance support to carers, this included improving digital skills of carers, the provision of Direct Payments, Grief and Loss support and working carers support.
- 1.20 Coventry has a long history of supporting carers within the local community having a mixed model of support that includes regulated services which enable carers to have a break and plan for an emergency and a universal service that supports carers with information and advice, training and peer support.
- 1.21 Since the implementation of the Care Act 2014, the local authority has delegated a statutory function to the Carers Trust Heart of England for the completion of Carers Assessments and support planning as part of a contract. The local authority also complete carers assessments internally and maintain ultimate responsibility for the delivery of the function.
- 1.22 We recognised that implementing support for carers, relies on a whole system approach, working across organisations, health and social care, businesses, employers, leisure and recreation.
- 1.23 A joint commissioning arrangement is in place for the provision of carers support with the CWICB contributing £134,096 per annum. CWICB have been consulted on the new proposals and have endorsed the recommissioning process.
- 1.24 Bi-annually a mandatory survey of people with caring responsibilities who have received a service or an assessment through Adult Social Care is undertaken. The results are used to benchmark performance nationally. Coventry has followed a national trend of decline in all areas during the pandemic and we are yet to see a return to pre-pandemic levels of performance however results are showing an incremental improvement. A strength is our involvement and consultation of carers during an assessment process but carers report to us that it is hard to live a life alongside caring, which is a common theme we see within our engagement with carers.

The Carers Action Plan focuses on improvements based on carer feedback and the recognition that services and support need to develop and further support carers.

1.25 Current Activity of Carers Support Services

- Provide general support to over 4000 carers per annum
- Identify approximately 1500 new carers per annum
- Manage contingency plans for 500 carers per annum
- Complete 340 Carers Assessments per year
- Administer approximately 70 Direct Payments per year
- Provide short breaks for 50-60 carers per year
- Provide approximately 1000 hours of emergency support
- Engaged with all 60 GP surgeries in the city, with regular presence in a number of surgeries

2. Options considered and recommended proposal.

2.1 **Option 1** - Preferred Option – Complete a tender exercise for the recommissioning of carers support services. This will require a short extension of the existing grants / contracts for 6 months (April to September 2024).

2.2 Current Services

Service	Value	Commissioning Arrangement	Services Covered
Carers Wellbeing Service (including regulated carers support)	£634,731 (£134,096 of this is contributed by CWICB)	Grant	Carers Wellbeing: Training Specialist Carers Support Employment Support CRESS Carers Short Breaks Groups Carers Direct Payments
Carers Assessments Contract	£140,000	Contract	Carers Assessments, Support Planning & Reviews
Total Contract / Grant Expenditure	£774,731		

2.3 The intention is to recommission all Carer Support Services for 2025 under one single contract, to ensure consistency of approach and alignment of services. This will involve a competitive procurement activity and a review of current services. An annual reduction of £41,870 has been applied to this commissioning activity. This will mean a reduction in the additional funding applied in 2020, and a reduction in some of this additional support. This will partly be mitigated in the short term by the Accelerated Reform Funding previously reported to Cabinet and the development of alternative information and advice support corporately. The Council are also exploring alternative funding streams through central government to develop an existing project within the Carers Trust Heart of England through the Accelerated Reform Fund which will develop carers support within University Hospital

Coventry and Warwickshire. In addition to this there are a number of additional new projects funded by the Accelerated Reform Fund that will be of direct benefit to carers, including a digital support tool that will supplement support provided by the Wellbeing service and an innovative project that provide recreational opportunities for carers to take a break.

2.4 A separate contract exists for the provision of Young Carers Assessments which is due to expire in 2030. Commissioners aim to align the contract breaks and duration with the Young Carers contract to ensure a more cohesive model and embed an “All Age” carer approach.

2.5 **Proposed Service Design of Carers Support Services**

The service will comprise of four key areas:

2.6 **Universal Service for Carers**

Specialist support, identification and awareness raising, training and a number of projects which include:

- o Hospital Liaison Support
- o Mental Health Carers Support Worker
- o Primary Care Support for Carers
- o Working Carers Employment
- o Young Adult Carers Pathway
- o Diversity and Inclusion Support
- o Carers Voice and participation project

2.7 **Carers Assessments, Support Planning and Reviews**

A delegated statutory responsibility under the Care Act 2014. This will include the administration of Direct Payments to meet eligible needs and oversight of the Carers self-assessment portal.

2.8 **Carers Peer Support**

Group based support for carers, including a small fund to enable community led carer groups to establish.

2.9 **Carers Regulated Support**

- o Short Breaks for Carers
- o Carers Contingency Planning and Carers Emergency Response Support
- o Carers one-off planned breaks provision
- o Preventative Short Break Offer

2.10 The service model will not differ significantly from the current provision, however as the existing arrangements will move from a grant-based arrangement to a contract we can provide more specificity to the model, requirements and key performance indicators. The specification includes:

- Greater emphasis on transitional arrangements between Young Carers and Young Adult Carers

- A fund to be distributed by the provider to help nurture and develop smaller carer groups in the community
- Preventative short breaks allowing carers to access breaks for an interim period, in a timely and responsive manner
- Greater focus on developing engagement and co-production models in service re-design and commissioning processes

2.11 **Option 2** - To not retender the contracts / grants – This is not contractually compliant. Due to the size and duration of the contract it is not an option to directly award to a single provider or roll over existing arrangements.

3. Results of consultation undertaken

3.1 Throughout 2023 the Council undertook extensive engagement with carers across Coventry, undertaking a survey, attending groups, and pop-up events to inform our future commissioning and carers support offer. In total 166 carers gave us feedback and told us their experience of caring. People told us:

- Many people did not recognise they were a carer
- The pandemic had exacerbated caring roles and this had a lasting impact
- They felt conflicted about accessing some services like respite or alternative care provision, due to infection risks, quality and worries around cost
- Cost-of-living is a significant concern for carers
- They do not always feel valued or recognised by wider society
- They weren't always aware of the support structures
- They predominantly used the internet for information but want a range of ways to find out information
- They were more likely to see their GP than any other professional
- They value practical support (such as being able to take a break) above other interventions
- They felt that their voice was not heard or considered at times
- The label 'carer' acted as a barrier to accessing support

3.2 Because of the proactive approach to identifying carers who require an assessment we often work with people much earlier in their journey this can often be prior to requiring support through Adult Social Care. Carers assessments help in identifying anticipatory needs. Information from carers assessments also inform us that carers are increasingly experiencing poorer physical and mental health and complexity around their caring role, this includes situations where both people in a relationship have care and support needs, people with multiple caring responsibilities, people caring alongside and managing parenting responsibilities.

3.3 An information and feedback session was held in June 2024 for Adult Social Care operational services (social workers and other front line staff) to feed into the service specification and requirements.

3.4 Re-commissioned services will have a focus on continued engagement with carers and embedding a co-production model in the delivery of carer related services.

3.5 We have used the engagement and feedback from carers to influence our service specification and design and to inform the evaluation criteria.

4. Timetable for implementing this decision.

- 4.1 With a short extension of contract / grants, the aim is to have a new contract in place for October 2025.

5. Financial Implications

Comments from Director of Strategic Finance and Resources (Section 151 Officer) and Director of Law and Governance

- 5.1 There are on-going funding requirements from both the local authority and CWICB. The contractual term will be 3 years with an option to extend for a further 2 years. Over the lifespan of the contract (inclusive of extensions) the funding commitment from the council will be approximately £2,993,825 (£598,765 per annum). The ICB will continue to contribute £134,096 per annum.
- 5.2 A reduction of £41,870 per annum has been applied to the contract which will equate to £209,350 over the lifespan of the contract (inclusive of extensions). The procurement activity will be structured in such a way (with a maximum price or similar mechanism) to facilitate this reduction in budget required, with the intricacies of such arrangement to be discussed and finalised with procurement and legal services colleagues in due course.

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1 The Council has a number of legal duties with regard to the provision of support for carers and the successful provider will play a substantial role in the delivery of these duties. The Care Act (2014) sets out parity of esteem for carers which means that the same duties that exist for people with care and support needs exist for carers and there is an expectation that processes and support are mirrored to ensure equity in the system.

6.2 Carers Assessments and Care Planning - Duties Outlined in the Care Act 2014

- The duty to assess a carers' needs (this can be anyone providing care or intending to provide care) and is based on the appearance of need. This includes establishing:
 - What a carer is willing and able to provide
 - Sustainability of a caring role
 - The outcomes a carer wishes to achieve
 - The impact of caring on a person's own wellbeing
 - Whether a carer presents with eligible needs
- The duty to meet eligible needs of a carer is outlined in [The Care and Support \(Eligibility Criteria\) Regulations 2014](#) – this means that a range of services and support need to be available to meet need, including the provision of direct payments for carers
- Promotion of wellbeing
- The duty to prevent needs from arising with the provision of information, advice and support
- Provision of information and advice including the provision of support for people who do not have eligible needs
- The duty to conduct a “transition” assessment when a child (young carer) turns 18

6.3 Delegation of Local Authority Functions

Under Section 79 of the Care Act 2014 – Part 1 – Local Authorities can authorise a third party to carry out certain statutory functions, this can be done in part or fully.

Ultimately the delegated activity is still considered a function of the local authority. Requirements may be needed to replicate those of the local authority such as data protection and confidentiality guidelines.

6.4 Carers and Market Shaping - Duties Outlined in the Care Act 2014

- There should be personalisation of carers support, including local specialised support which enables carers to make meaningful choices and control their support arrangements
- Carers should be helped to “micro-commission” support were helpful
- Include carers in commissioning processes
- Outlining carers support within the Market Position Statement

6.5 Health Care Services and Carers

- A set of new responsibilities primarily for ICBs to implement were outlined in the Health and Care Act (2022), with particular reference to Section 91, the responsibility of ensuring that carers are involved in hospital discharges.
- Places a duty on ICBs to involve carers in commissioning and policies that impact carers
- Places a duty on NHS Trusts and Foundation Trusts to involve carers within discharge planning
- Supporting carers in general practice: a framework of quality markers – sets out a requirement for Primary Care settings to embed carer friendly practice.

6.6 Duties with regard to carers are irrespective of whether the person they are caring for is self-funding, eligible for continuing health care funding or the person they are caring for does not have eligible needs, which makes the local authorities’ duties towards carers wide and far reaching.

7. Other implications

7.1. How will this contribute to the One Coventry Plan?

The recommissioning of Carers Support Services would support the Council’s key objectives through a contribution to improving outcomes and tackling inequalities.

7.2. How is risk being managed?

Risk of reducing expenditure through the contract – There is a risk that we will see a reduction in the quality of support provided by reducing the overall funding envelope. We will work with the awarded provider to mitigate risk against this and explore where changes can be implemented with the least impact. We will work with the provider to explore other funding channels for example we are planning on utilising funding from the Accelerated Reform Fund to upscale current support within UHCW.

Risk of discontinuity in services – With any competitive procurement exercise there is the possibility that a different provider to the incumbent will be awarded the contract. The Council

will work with any provider to ensure that continuity in service delivery is maintained, this is particularly important with the provision of Carers Assessments and ensuring there is no disruption to this statutory duty or gap in provision. A loss of skills, knowledge and expertise is a plausible risk if continuity is not maintained. Tupe arrangements may apply that will support the on-going continuity of services should the incumbent provider not be successful. There are no significant changes to the overall model of delivery.

7.3. What is the impact on the organisation?

There are no direct impacts on the organisation. Recommissioning of Carers Support will assist the council in delivering statutory responsibilities.

7.4. Equalities / EIA?

An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed and can be found at Appendix two.

The recommissioning of Carers Support Services is expected to have a positive impact on the population of Coventry.

7.5. Implications for (or impact on) climate change and the environment?

There are no direct implications for climate change and the environment however as part of the tender activity providers will be required to set out their commitment to tackling climate change.

7.6. Implications for partner organisations?

NHS Coventry and Warwickshire Integrated Care Board and wider health partners are expected to benefit from the recommissioning of carers support services.

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Member: Councillor L Bigham	Cabinet Member for Adult Services		08/10/2024	10/10/2024

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