

Procurement of an All-Age Unpaid Carers Service

To:	Adults and Health Committee
Meeting Date:	25 January 2024
From:	Patrick Warren-Higgs, Executive Director, Adults, Health & Commissioning
Electoral division(s):	All
Key decision:	Yes
Forward Plan ref:	2024/038
Outcome:	Unpaid carers of all ages in Cambridgeshire can access information and support to enable them to maintain their caring role.
Recommendation:	<p>Adults and Health Committee are being asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) approve the procurement approach and the overall value of £6,315,616 based on 2023/24 values over 3 years plus a 12-month extension period of the all-age carers service.b) delegate responsibility for awarding and executing contracts for the provision of the all-age carers service to the Executive Director, Adults, Health & Commissioning in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Adults & Health Committee.

Officer contact:
Name: Anne Betts Walker
Post: Commissioning Manager - Adults
Email: Anne.bettswalker@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

1. Background

- 1.1 The Care Act 2014 defines an unpaid carer as: “someone who helps another person, usually a relative or friend, in their day-to-day life. This is different from someone who provides care professionally or through a voluntary organisation.”
- 1.2 Unpaid carers are an asset in society, helping to support people’s independence and meet their social care needs. The value of unpaid care in England and Wales now exceeds the value of the NHS budget in England, which was £156 billion for 2020-21¹. The contribution of unpaid carers is estimated to be worth £162 billion per year demonstrating just how significant their impact is. Taking the same approach, the value of self-identified unpaid carers contribution is currently estimated to be £1.69 billion annually in Cambridgeshire (see Appendix 1). Whilst providing care can be a rewarding experience, it can also have an impact on the carer's own health, education, ability to remain employed, relationships and social life. [Cambridgeshire All-Age Carers Strategy 2022- 2026](#)
- 1.3 Under the Care Act 2014, the Council has a statutory duty to “recognise unpaid carers in law in the same way as those they care for”. The Act sets out unpaid carers’ legal rights to assessments and support. It relates predominantly to adult carers, as young carers under the age of 18 years are assessed and supported under the Children and Families Act 2014. The Council delivers its statutory duty through provision of care assessments for both the carer and “cared for” person through in-house operational and social work teams, and providing access to a range of early intervention and prevention support including:
- support offered by the commissioned All-Age Carers service
 - direct payments to the unpaid carer
 - access to a range of Technology Enabled Care (TEC) such as movement sensors, the emergency lifeline service, and digital alerts for hard of hearing carers enables carers to feel less anxious about their loved one
 - access to the Carers UK digital app offering a range of services to Cambridgeshire unpaid carers². This support includes access to online learning, a care co-ordination app and Carers UK guides
- 1.4 The Council recognises the importance of providing early support to unpaid carers. The earlier we can identify unpaid carers and connect them to information, advice and planned and emergency support, the longer they can continue caring for their loved ones in their homes and communities. By taking a proactive approach to supporting unpaid carers, we hope to prevent, reduce, and delay carer, and family crises. Supporting people in this way advances Cambridgeshire’s strategic ambitions 4 and 7 for both unpaid carers of all ages and those they care for³.
- 1.5 The commissioned unpaid carers service that we are seeking to re-procure is a key part of the Council’s statutory offer for unpaid carers, as required by the Care Act 2014⁴, and can be accessed whether a carer has had a formal care act assessment or not. It delivers a

¹ Petrillo & Bennett (2023) “Value of unpaid care now exceeds that of the NHS budget” Available at [Value of unpaid care in England and Wales now exceeds that of NHS budget - the Centre for Care](#) (Accessed 03/11/23)

² [Carers UK](#)

³ [Economic Case for Local Investment in Unpaid Carers](#) (Accessed 19/12/23)

⁴ [Carers and the Law - Care Act 2014](#) (Accessed 03/01/24)

significant proportion of support to carers in the community. More information on the current service can be found in section 2.

- 1.6 In June 2023, Adults & Health Committee approved a new All-Age Carers Strategy. The strategy encompasses all unpaid carers, including adult carers, parent carers and young carers. It sets out key priorities, gathered through engagement with carers, professionals and partners working with carers. Unpaid carers are a priority for the council and the strategy has informed the specification of this carers service re-procurement. In this way, the council has built on feedback and learning from the current service provision.
- 1.7 The Council's Care Together programme has also contributed to increasing support for unpaid carers during 2023/24. Care Together has invested £30,000 with NHS partners from Ely Primary Care Network (who contributed £70,000) to jointly fund a social prescriber for unpaid carers for 3 years. These professionals will help identify and support unpaid carers in the community. Care Together has also invested £250k of seed funding in local voluntary organisations and groups to increase support for older people living at home. Several of the funded initiatives such as community hubs and memory cafes are benefitting older people who are also unpaid carers for their loved ones, by offering places they can go together and reducing social isolation.
- 1.8 The contracts for the current all-age carers service will expire on 31st July 2024 and the Council's Contract Procedure Rules together with the Public Contract Regulations 2015 require the service to be re-procured using a formal tender process.

2. Main Issues

Current provision

- 2.1 Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council currently have a joint all-age unpaid carers service which was commissioned in August 2020. The total value of this service over the 4 years of the contract is £5,906,952. The service is divided into 3 lots: adult carers, young carers, and carers for adults with mental health issues. The 3-lot structure reflects the specialisms and particular expertise required of the providers. It also allowed small and Voluntary Community Sector Organisations (VCSO) to bid competitively for the award.
- 2.2 The service is currently delivered by three providers:
 - **Adult Carers** is provided by Caring Together, a charity operating across Norfolk and Cambridgeshire and is based in St. Ives
 - **Young Carers** is provided by Centre 33, a charity operating across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough City is based in Cambridge
 - **Carers for Adults with Mental Health Needs** is provided by Making Space, a charity based in Cheshire with a local office in St. Neots. It operates across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough City
- 2.3 Together, the service offers a range of support to unpaid carers including:
 - Conversations to guide unpaid carers to advice, information, and the support available to make life easier for them

- Counselling, training and short breaks to enable carers to take a break, talk about their experience privately and develop approaches to enable them to balance their own needs as well as the needs of the “cared for” person
- Community support groups and place-based carer groups offering peer support
- Information and advice including a helpline which outlines carers rights and provides guidance on what support they can access and where
- Support with emergency planning through the provision of What if! Plans which help carers put an emergency plan in place to ensure the needs of the “cared for” person are met in the event of a crisis
- For young carers, an online offer of support groups and peer groups are provided

Current Service Activity

- 2.4 The current service has supported 1800 active users from April-September 2023 and supports, on average, 1459 active users at any one time. Of these active service users, 731 requested signposting to other services and support and 643 were supported to set up a What If! emergency plan. The high level of signposting demonstrates the value of early information and support to enable carers to continue in their caring role.

The service received 1300 new referrals during the same period, leading to a projection of 2600 new unpaid carer referrals over the course of this year.

- 2.5 During the existing contract term, exacerbated by the pandemic, the service faced an increase in demand. This led to an increase in waiting times for counselling and the development of What If! Emergency plans. To address this, in 2022 an additional £216,000 was invested in the service to increase capacity to meet demand. This appears to have been sufficient as there is currently no waiting list for emergency planning, or for carer breaks. The service triages carer referrals based on information received and prioritises accordingly.

Waiting times for counselling are improved but there are still occasional waits of up to 12 weeks. Further investment has been made into the service during 2023/24 to address this using Market Sustainability and Improvement funding (MSIF). This funding has also been incorporated into the budget for the new service.

Value for money and impact

- 2.6 The service delivers value for money by supporting carers to continue in their caring roles. Without the work of unpaid carers, the demand for long term social care would be much higher. To illustrate this, during April-September 2023, records suggest 32 “cared for” people avoided entry to residential care due to support from the service which enabled their carer to continue in their caring role. The cost to the Council of 32 residential care placements is £25,312 per week and £1,316,224 per year at current average CCC fee rates. This falls just below the annual budget of the service itself. It is estimated that a further 36 “cared for” individuals were able to remain at home and did not require admission to hospital over the same period, contributing to further cost avoidance across the health and social care system.
- 2.7 Feedback from local carers suggests the current service is having a positive impact and is

well regarded. This is evidenced through the Personal Social Services Survey of Adult Carers in England 2021-22 in which the views of local carers' are sought on their experiences of support. The current service has contributed to increased levels of support for local carers.

- 2.8 The [Personal Social Services Survey of Adult Carers in England 2021- 2022](#) reported that in Cambridgeshire progress made supporting unpaid carers includes:
- Carers reporting better knowledge and understanding of how to access information, advice, and support services
 - Carers feeling better supported in their caring role
 - Identification of a large number of previously hidden carers
 - Increased numbers of 'What If' plans⁵ being registered and activated
 - Carers having a strong voice through Healthwatch Partnership Boards
 - Timely access to advocacy and promotion of self-advocacy to enable carers to be confident to speak for themselves in future

The current service for young carers delivered by Centre 33 is ranked 5th amongst counties in the 2023 Schools Census in the identification of young carers.⁶

- 2.9 Feedback from carers themselves suggests that they find great benefits from the service. A carer following counselling support noted that before counselling they were on the brink of walking away from their caring role and the support received has left them feeling more positive and more empowered than before and they find they can now cope much better⁷.

A case study from work undertaken at one of the community hubs for carers run by the service highlights how a carer can use the information, advice and support offered to benefit their own and their "cared for" persons wellbeing⁸.

- 2.10 The positive impact and achievements of the current service has been integrated into the commissioning plans to ensure this progress is built upon. However, a review of the service and stakeholder feedback, along with the priorities identified in the All-Age Carers Strategy 2022-26, has indicated that there are areas of development which will be addressed through this re-procurement.

Commissioning Approach

- 2.11 The re-procurement of the all-age carers service provides an opportunity to progress the Council's ambitions to increase support for carers and address areas for improvement identified within the current contract. Central to the proposed commissioning approach are the key priorities identified in the new All-Age Carers Strategy 2022-2026. These include:
- Identification of and support for Parent carers
 - Identification of and support for young carers
 - Young carers to be supported when moving into adulthood
 - Support for carers at risk of domestic abuse

⁵ <https://www.caringtogether.org/support-for-carers/adult-carers/whatifplan/>

⁶ <https://centre33.org.uk/cambridgeshire-2023-schools-census>

⁷ [Carer feedback following counselling support Nov 2023.docx](#)

⁸ [Case Study - Carers Community Hub Oct 2023](#)

- Supporting the emotional and psychological wellbeing of all carers
- Joint working across health and social care for all carers
- Ensuring our webpages support easy access to information

2.12 Proposals for the new service draw upon the latest best practice guidance for adult carers published by The National Institute of Health and Care Excellence (NICE) Guidance for adult carers. The re-procurement will also seek to address some gaps identified by people with lived experience and ensure the service delivers against the new All-Age Carers Strategy by adding to the existing support offer.

Additions to the specification will include:

- **Increasing support for young adult carers to transition into adult service** - It is important that the adult carers and young adult carers providers work together to enable young carers to successfully make this transition in a way that best supports their needs.
- **Increasing awareness and signposting for carers in situations of domestic abuse/violence** - This can relate to both carer and “cared for” person. The council has ensured that carers and the “cared for” person can access safeguarding services regardless of statutory eligibility
- **Increasing support for adult carers caring for people with dementia and Alzheimer’s diagnoses** - With the success of improved health care, people are living longer and healthier lives, which in turn increases the number of elderly people living with Alzheimer’s and Dementia and those caring for them⁹.
- **Taking “Whole family” approaches with an intensive focus on high-risk young carers and services tailored to the needs, maturity, abilities, and choices of young carer** - It is important to understand the contribution of young carers in their family context so that support offered does not disrupt the family whilst supporting the young carer in a way that best supports their needs.

Linking to the Carer’s Strategy, key service outcomes will include:

Increase in the number of carers identified and offered early support
Improvements in carer’s psychological wellbeing
Increase in the proportion of carer’s who report having as much social contact as they want
Increase in carer satisfaction with support received
Young carers' education, employment and training outcomes match their non-caring peers
Increase in the number of young carers supported through transition into becoming an adult carer
More carers or cared for people experiencing domestic abuse are identified early and receive appropriate help or intervention
Carers and their families can find all the information they need independently as it is accessible, up to date and available in a form that is understood, regardless of social, economic or cultural background.

⁹ [Dementia & Alzheimer’s statistics - Alzheimer’s Disease International](#)

- 2.13 To ensure the new all-age carers service really does meet the needs and outcomes of local unpaid carers and their families, the service has been designed in collaboration with unpaid carers and people with lived experience of a caring role. This reflects the importance placed on the voices of experts-by-experience, carer groups, VCSOs and other partner organisations in shaping how we support carers.

A variety of approaches have been taken to engage with unpaid carers including survey questions, working with our established Carers Partnership Board and workshops with system partners and people with lived experience of caring.

It is expected that the service will develop and flex to support unpaid carers' needs through the life of the contract in line with delivery of the strategy. This will include more co-production and co-design working in partnership with people with lived experience and other partners organisations.

- 2.14 The All-Age Carers Strategy 2022 – 26 will be reviewed in Spring 2024 with a view to connecting its implementation with the plans held by local NHS partners to ensure a more joined up approach to support for unpaid carers. This will include consideration of how to better include unpaid carers in hospital discharge processes to ensure the transition from hospital to home is as seamless as possible. The carers service will be reviewed and updated as required as part of this process. This impending change will be noted in the tender documents and will be subject to contract change processes.

Service Performance Management

- 2.15 Unpaid carer support is a key strategy for public sector organisations and as such will come under CQC (Care Quality Commission) scrutiny. It is important the service can evidence how it supports unpaid carers and demonstrate responsiveness to their requirements, aligned to the Carers Strategy.
- 2.16 The overall outcome for this service is to ensure a range of support is available to unpaid carers to enable them to continue caring for their loved one in the community, and that young carers are supported to overcome the negative impacts of their caring roles while aspiring to the same future life opportunities as their peers.
- 2.17 To achieve this outcome and enable effective decision making in the future, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) will be developed with service providers and experts by experience. Aligned to NICE guidance for adult carers, the KPIs will have a greater focus on measuring outcomes and impact of the service. This will ensure the Council understands the impact of the service it commissions and its contribution to the Council's aspirations to improve support for unpaid carers.

Procurement Approach

- 2.18 It is proposed to re-procure the all-age carers service for Cambridgeshire County Council on a 3 plus 1-year contract term. This is the standard contract term required by the

Voluntary Sector Compact¹⁰ which the Council has signed, and the preferred contract length indicated by the local market. It will enable the successful provider to embed and develop the service. There is an expectation that the service delivered will be continuously developed over time so that services are modified to meet the changing needs of unpaid carers.

- 2.19 The service will be re-procured in 3 lots - Adult Carers, Children and Young Carers and Carers for Adults with Mental Health needs. All Lots will work to the same principles and ethos. This will ensure the provision commissioned by the Council is tailored to the specific needs of different carers. For example, engaging and supporting young carers requires a different specialism and skillset to supporting adult carers.
- 2.20 The local market is small, and SME dominated. However, there are no issues with its sustainability, strength, and quality. Our current providers are local, specialist and experienced in working in Cambridgeshire. Soft market testing indicated that a few organisations in bordering counties may also consider bidding for the award.
- 2.21 In keeping with the commitment made within the All-Age Carers Strategy to involve people with lived experience, unpaid carers will be invited to participate in the procurement. They will be included in setting an evaluation question which they will evaluate.
- 2.22 All bidders will be required to demonstrate how their proposed service solution will deliver social value. Responses will be evaluated, and delivery of commitments monitored. Bidders' social value offer will be weighted at 10% and evaluated by the Social Value Portal.

Contract value

- 2.23 The proposed contract value is £6,315,616 over the 3+1-year contract term and is broken down as below.

	Total per annum	MSIF funding Year 1 (8 months pro-rata)	Value over 3 years + 12 months
Lot 1 Adult Carers	£1,078,504	£30,888	£4,344,904
Lot 2 Children and Young Adult Carers	£355,700	£30,888	£1,453,688
Lot 3 Adults Mental Health	£121,534	£30,888	£517,024
Total	£1,555,738	£92,664	£6,315,616

- 2.24 This is £408,664 (over the contract term) higher than the existing service budget to fund the delivery of innovations and additional requirements included in the specification in response

¹⁰ [HM Government - The Compact](#) (Accessed 14/12/23)

to stakeholder feedback (as outlined in paragraphs 2.12 and 2.17). This increase is being funded from the budget allocation for unpaid carers and additional funding from the Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund.

Feedback from adult social care providers following engagement by Commissioning and Contract Managers along with indicative market feedback suggests this resource envelope is sufficient to deliver the requirement.

Future investment in Carer's Services

2.25 As implementation of the Carer's Strategy progresses, a longer-term commissioning plan will be developed with experts-by-experience to understand what else may be required to support unpaid carers in Cambridgeshire. This may include further investment in the All-Age Carers service during its 3+1-year term. The Council will continue to explore other funding avenues to increase support for unpaid carers, including MSIF funding if made available in 2025/26. The Council is also seeking to invest in digital support for unpaid carers through an Accelerated Reform fund (ARF) bid with system partners.

2.26 Alternative procurement options considered and excluded include:

2.26.1 In-house provision for the all-age carers service: This option is not recommended.

We have considered delivering this service inhouse, but a cost comparison demonstrates VCSO providers deliver better value for money compared to an equivalent inhouse service (see Confidential Annex A). In summary, a reduction in service provision would be required to remain within budget if the service were delivered inhouse. Alternatively, additional investment would be required to maintain the same level of service provision, creating a budgetary pressure for the Council.

The local VCSO market also contains providers with the specific expertise, infrastructure and capability to deliver the range of activities to support unpaid carers in Cambridgeshire. The council does not currently have the capability or infrastructure required to deliver this service in-house currently even if costs were neutral. However, we can look to develop these skills and attributes over time.

2.26.2 Doing nothing and allow the contract to expire: This option is not recommended.

The service is a critical part of the Council's approach to meeting its statutory duties to support carers and plays a key role in helping to manage demand for long term adult social care. To allow the current service to expire without a replacement would create a substantial gap in support for unpaid carers leaving approximately 6000 unpaid carers per year without support. This option would likely result in significant increases in carer breakdown.

It is difficult to accurately forecast the cost of this option but as per 2.6, without the service in place the council would be likely to incur additional residential care fees of £1.3m, almost the value of the service annually. Furthermore, of the 1459 active service users at any given time, if 10% (n=146) of informal caring arrangements broke down and required new

homecare packages, (based on the current average homecare package costs of £335 per person per week as of October 2023) that would cost the Council in the region of a further £2.54m pa. If that was increased to 20% of service users, the cost would be c.£5.086m.

2.27 The key milestones for the procurement are set out below:

Specifications and consultation	Mid-December 2023
Tender Go Live	9 th February 2024
Tender return	11 – 15 th March 2024
Evaluation	18 th March – 5 th April 2024
Moderation	8 th -12 th April 2024
Decision to award/standstill period	Mid – end April 2024
Implementation and mobilisation	1 st week of May 2024
Contract Go Live	1 st August 2024

2.28 Should it be decided not to approve the procurement as outlined in this report, it will be necessary to extend the contracts of current service providers beyond the contract expiry date of 31/07/2024 for a further 6 months to 31/01/2025. This will need approval from Adults and Health Committee. This will ensure the local authority continues to deliver its statutory duty to Cambridgeshire carers while alternative solutions are found.

3. Alignment with ambitions

3.1 Net zero carbon emissions for Cambridgeshire by 2045, and our communities and natural environment are supported to adapt and thrive as the climate changes

Method questions will include a question that supports the councils net zero carbon emissions for Cambridgeshire 2045 ambitions.

3.2 Travel across the county is safer and more environmentally sustainable

There are no significant implications for this ambition.

3.3 Health inequalities are reduced

There are no significant implications for this ambition.

3.4 People enjoy healthy, safe, and independent lives through timely support that is most suited to their needs

The report above sets out the implications for this ambition in [1.4], [1.5], [1.7], [2.4], [2.6] and [2.9]

3.5 Helping people out of poverty and income inequality

The following bullet point sets out details of implications identified by officers:

Unpaid carers are likely to reduce the hours they work or may even leave work entirely

because of the demands of their caring role. This can result in unpaid carers being pushed into poverty while providing care and enabling their loved one to remain at home in their community. The carers service offers information and advice to help unpaid carers understand what support they can access and how they can access it including the financial support and benefits they may be entitled to. This is in line with the current budget allocated for the support of carers.

- 3.6 Places and communities prosper because they have a resilient and inclusive economy, access to good quality public services and social justice is prioritised

There are no significant implications for this ambition.

- 3.7 Children and young people have opportunities to thrive

The report above sets out the implications for this ambition in [1.4], [2.2], [2.3], [2.8] and [2.12]

4. Significant Implications

- 4.1 Resource Implications

The report above sets out details of significant implications in [2.23]

- 4.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications

The report sets out details of significant implications in [1.8], [2.18], [2.19] and [2.22]

- 4.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications

The following bullet point sets out details of significant implications identified by officers:

The priorities within the service are in alignment with duties placed on local authorities by the Care Act (2014) and Children and Families Act (2014) in respect of assessment and support planning for carers and wider duties around information and advice and market shaping within the Care Act (2014).

- 4.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

The public sector equality duty has been considered as part of the service development and an EQIA (Equality Impact Assessment) has been completed

- 4.5 Engagement and Communications Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

- 4.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement

There are no significant implications within this category.

- 4.7 Public Health Implications

The following bullet point sets out details of significant implications identified by officers:

It is important to recognise the contribution that unpaid carers make to supporting the health and wellbeing of those that they care for. The all-age carers' service includes actions relating to supporting unpaid carers in these areas to improve health outcomes for those that they care for.

4.8 Climate Change and Environment Implications on Priority Areas (See further guidance in Appendix 2):

4.8.1 Implication 1: Energy efficient, low carbon buildings.

Positive/neutral/negative Status: Neutral

Explanation: No change

4.8.2 Implication 2: Low carbon transport.

Positive/neutral/negative Status: Neutral

Explanation: No change

4.8.3 Implication 3: Green spaces, peatland, afforestation, habitats, and land management.

Positive/neutral/negative Status: Neutral

Explanation: No change

4.8.4 Implication 4: Waste Management and Tackling Plastic Pollution.

Positive/neutral/negative Status: Neutral

Explanation: No change

4.8.5 Implication 5: Water use, availability, and management:

Positive/neutral/negative Status: Neutral

Explanation: No change

4.8.6 Implication 6: Air Pollution.

Positive/neutral/negative Status: Neutral

Explanation: No change

4.8.7 Implication 7: Resilience of our services and infrastructure and supporting vulnerable people to cope with climate change.

Positive/neutral/negative Status: Neutral

Explanation: No change

5. Source documents guidance

5.1 Source documents - None

Have the resource implications been cleared by Finance? Yes

Name of Financial Officer: Justine Hartley

Have the procurement/contractual/ Council Contract Procedure Rules implications been cleared by the Head of Procurement and Commercial? Yes

Name of Officer: Clare Ellis

Has the impact on statutory, legal and risk implications been cleared by the Council's Monitoring Officer or Pathfinder Legal? Yes

Name of Legal Officer: Karen White – Pathfinder Legal

Have the equality and diversity implications been cleared by your EqIA Super User?

Yes

Name of Officer: Charlotte Knight

Have any engagement and communication implications been cleared by Communications?
Yes

Name of Officer: Simon Cobby

Have any localism and Local Member involvement issues been cleared by your Service
Contact? Yes

Name of Officer: Will Patten

Have any Public Health implications been cleared by Public Health? Yes

Name of Officer: Emily Smith

If a key decision, have any Climate Change and Environment implications been cleared by
the Climate Change Officer? Yes

Name of Officer: Emily Bolton

Appendix 1

Calculations for value of unpaid carer contribution in Cambridgeshire

Formula:

There are 5 million carers in England and Wales and their contribution has an estimated
value of £162B

This means the contribution of each unpaid carer nationally is valued at an estimated
£32,400

There are 52,236 self-identified unpaid carers in Cambridgeshire according to the 2021
Census returns

$£32,400 \times 52,236 = £1,692,446,40$ estimated total value of contribution of self-identified
unpaid carers in Cambridgeshire.

