

Joint Procurement of All-Age Carer Services which includes Young Carer Services

To: Children and Young People Committee

Meeting Date: 16th January 2024

From: Executive Director: Children, Education and Families.

Electoral division(s): All

Key decision: No

Forward Plan ref: n/a

Executive Summary: Many children and young people are involved in caring for parents, siblings, or other relatives. They often carry out significant caring tasks and assume a level of responsibility that would usually be associated with an adult. Children with caring responsibilities are a concern whether they be in the classroom, attending their GP or living in a family receiving health and social care interventions. This service is being re-commissioned and procured to meet our statutory obligations to identify and assess young carers. The young carers service is a statutory service that identifies and assesses the impact of caring on the wellbeing of young carers.

Recommendation: The Committee is recommended to note the update provided on the joint procurement of the All Age Carer Service which includes the Young Carer Services.

Voting arrangements: No vote required.

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1. Creating a greener, fairer and more caring Cambridgeshire

- 1.1 The proposals in this report align to Ambition 7 in the [Strategic Framework 2023-28](#), children and young people have opportunities to thrive. Supporting young carers to overcome the negative impact of their caring roles through a whole family approach while aspiring to the same future life opportunities as their peers.

2. Background

The Legislation

- 2.1 Cambridgeshire County Council has a statutory requirement under the Children and Families Act 2014 and the Care Act 2014 to identify Young Carers needing support and offer Young Carers needs assessments and transition assessments to Young Carers at 18 moving into adulthood.
- 2.2 Young carers are defined by Section 96 of the Children and Families Act 2014 as;
- “...a person under 18 who provides or intends to provide care for another person (of any age, except where that care is provided for payment, pursuant to a contract or as voluntary work).”*
- 2.3 Section 96(12) of the Children and Families Act 2014 requires local authorities to take reasonable steps to identify the extent to which there are young carers within their area who have needs for support.
- 2.4 The Act also places a duty on local authorities to offer an assessment where it appears that a child is involved in providing care. The assessment must consider whether the care being provided by the child is inappropriate and how the child’s caring responsibility affects their wellbeing, education and development. Cambridgeshire offers ‘whole family approaches’ to assessment and subsequent support of Young Carers.
- 2.5 The legislation is aligned with similar provision in the Care Act 2014 requiring local authorities to consider the needs of young carers if during an assessment of an adult with care needs it appears that a child providing care.
- 2.6 The Care Act 2014, sections 58 to 66¹, places a duty on local authorities to assess Young Carers before they turn 18, so that they have the information they need to plan for their future. This is referred to as a transition assessment.

The All-Age Carers Strategy

- 2.7 In June 2023, Adults & Health Committee approved the *All-Age Carers Strategy 2022 - 2026*. The strategy encompasses all carers, including adult carers, parent carers and young carers. It sets out seven strategic intentions, gathered through engagement with adult and young carers, professionals and organisations working with carers. Carers are a priority for the council. This is reflected in the All-Age Carer Strategy and the service specifications.

¹ http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/23/pdfs/ukpga_20140023_en.pdf

- 2.8 The recommissioning and procurement of three services, Adult Carer Services, Carers for Adults with Mental Health needs and Young Carers services have been designed to deliver the strategic intentions set out in All-Age Carers Strategy 2022- 26. The priorities from the strategy that relate to young carers are set out as service specific requirements and are highlighted in section 3.1

Current Provision

- 2.9 Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council currently have a joint all-age carers service which was set up in August 2020. The service is currently delivered by three providers. *Caring Together* provides the adults service, *Centre 33* delivers the Young Carers services and *Making Space* provides the adults' mental health service. The contract for the current all age carers service expires on 31st July 2024. The Council's Contract Procedure Rules together with the Public Contract Regulations 2015 require the service to be retendered. This report sets out the proposed approach to procuring all age carer services which includes young carer services.
- 2.10 Cambridgeshire was named in the top five counties for identifying young carers by the 2023 Schools Census. This is due the service delivered by *Centre 33*. Demand on the young carers services has increased year on year with 22% increase referrals from year 1 to year 3 of the current contract. This adds significant pressure as we know early identification, assessment and support prevents the long-term negative impact of caring.
- 2.11 According to the 2021 census, there are 3,805 young people under 25 years old in Cambridgeshire providing unpaid care. However, the actual number of Young Carers is significantly higher than the Census data suggests as in Spring 2023, the School Census identified 4,984 Cambridgeshire pupils as young carers.

The Impact of Caring Responsibility on Children and Young People

- 2.12 There is a robust evidence base that shows inappropriate caring responsibilities can significantly impact on the lives, education, health and development of children and young people². For example:
- (a) In 2020, the National Institute for Health Research found that young adult carers have lower earnings, high unemployment and worse health than other young people. Researchers estimate the economic costs of these missed life opportunities for young adults carers cost the UK £1 billion every year ([Missed life opportunities for young adult carers cost the UK £1bn every year \(nihr.ac.uk\)](https://www.nihr.ac.uk/news/missed-life-opportunities-for-young-adult-carers-cost-the-uk-1bn-every-year/)).
 - (b) UCL research published in May 2023 showed that young adult carers are 38% less likely to obtain a degree level qualification compared to other young people. This inequality is magnified for young people who spend more hours caring. [Urgent support needed as UCL research shows young carers 38% less likely to get a degree - News & Media - Latest News, Views & Opinions | Carers Trust](https://www.carers-trust.org/news-and-media/latest-news-views-opinions/urgent-support-needed-as-ucl-research-shows-young-carers-38-less-likely-to-get-a-degree/)

² Office National Statistics 2011 Census Data; The Children's Society (2013) Hidden from View: The experiences of Young Carers in England; Carers Trust (2016) <https://professionals.carers.org/young-adult-carer-mental-health>

- (c) In November 2023 an all-party Parliamentary group published its findings on how caring affects the short- and long-term life opportunities of young carers and young adult carers in the UK. Key findings include young carers have a higher prevalence of anxiety, depression, and self-harm than non-carers. They have less time to participate in leisure activities which can affect their mental wellbeing and social skills. Young carers are more likely to live in financially disadvantaged families. 57% of young carers said they are always or usually worrying about the cost of living and things becoming more expensive. [appg-for-young-carers-and-young-adults-carers-reportlr.pdf](#)).
- (d) There is some emerging evidence locally of young carers with multiple caring responsibilities i.e., caring for more than one member of their family e.g., a sibling and an adult. This will be monitored in the new contract to identify these young carers.

3. Main Issues

Commissioning Approach

- 3.1 The re-commissioning of the all-age carers service is led by Adult Commissioners with support from Children's Commissioners on the Young Carers services. Central to the proposed commissioning approach are the key strategic intentions from the All-Age Carers strategy 2022 - 24. These include:
- Reaching and identifying young carers – Young Carers told us that they would like to be identified as young carers as early as possible, and that during Primary school is usually the best time.
 - Reaching and identifying parent carers – this is about a whole family approach.
 - Young carers to be supported when moving into adulthood – to ensure they have choices regarding the next stages of their lives, be it further education or employment. To meet the Care Act duties, this will include a transitions assessment for those aged 16 to 18.
 - Support carers at risk of domestic abuse
 - Supporting the emotion and psychological wellbeing of all carers
 - Joint working across health and social care for all carers
 - Ensuring easy access to information
- 3.2 Young carers told us that it can be difficult moving from children's services to adult services. In June 2023, the current provider of young carer services, Centre 33, started piloting a 'transition service' for young adult carers aged 16 to 25 funded by CCC's Cultivate Cambs and external funding. An evaluation of this services is due in 2025. Initial findings will be shared in June 2024 so that learning and practices can be applied to this contract.
- 3.3 To ensure the new all-age carers service meets the needs and wishes of local carers and their families, and young carers, the services have been designed in collaboration with carers and people with lived experience of fulfilling a caring role. Building on the engagement undertaken as part of the All-Age Carers Strategy development, Children's Commissioners have had:

- Focus groups with young carers looking at their feedback on the strategy, the priorities that matter to them and identifying options for support at different stages in a young carer's life; for example, at initial identification, and transitional support. This feedback has helped shape the service specification for the new young carer service.
- Young carers designed a survey aimed at primary age and secondary school age young carers. Their questions included: their experience of being identified as a young carer, what on-going support they would like and how they would prefer it to be delivered.

3.4 The new service will continue to take a 'whole family' approach with an intensive focus on high-risk young carers and services tailored the needs, maturity, ability and choices of young carers. It will:

- Work in partnership with education settings, Targeted Support service, and Public Health, especially Drug and Alcohol Misuse services for families and Health services.
- Ensure education settings are aware of the need to identify and offer the right support to enable young carers attendance and attainment.
- Provide a digital offer that meets the needs of young carers.
- Capacity building i.e., providing training to professionals on early identification and non-specialist support to young carers.
- Assessment of caring responsibilities and impact on young carers lives, advocating on their behalf for better family support while also creating a support plan for the young carer.

3.5 The proposed budget for the All-Age Carer service is set out below. Balancing the financial constraint of the young carers budget against economic fluctuations and rising demand will be a challenge for providers especially small and medium-sized enterprises (SME's) and voluntary organisations. All have been affected by increases in the cost of living and are having to benchmark salaries against other comparable organisations to ensure a fair wage that attracts and retains staff. This will require careful planning, efficient resource allocation and diligent monitoring of expenditure.

Figure 1: Lot structure and contract value

	Value per annum	MSIF funding Year 1 (8 months pro-rata)	Value over 3 years + 12 months
Lot 1 Adult Carers	£1,078,504	£92,664	£4,406,680
Lot 2 Young Carers	£355,700		£1,422,800
Lot 3 Adults Mental Health	£121,534		£486,136
Total	£1,555,738		£6,315,616

Procurement Approach

3.6 The procurement of Cambridgeshire’s all-age carers service will be for a 3 + 1 year contract term. This is the preferred contract length indicated by the local market and enables the successful provider to embed the service with Cambridgeshire schools. There is an expectation that the procured service may be subject to variation and modified to meet the changing needs of young carers over its term to enable it to better deliver the priorities of the All-Age Carers strategy.

3.7 Cambridgeshire’s services will be procured in 3 lots to reflect the different needs and specialism:

Lot 1: Adult Carers

Lot 2: Young Carers

Lot 3: Carers for Adults with Mental Health needs.

3.8 The timetable for the procurement is set out below:

Specifications and consultation	Mid-December 2023
Tender Goes 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 start date	1 st August 2024

3.9 Adult Commissioners will be asking the Adults and Health Committee on the 25th of January 2024 to approve the procurement approach and delegate responsibility for award and executing contracts for the all-age carers services.

3.10 The tender process comprises of a selection questionnaire that bidders must meet in order to proceed to the tender evaluate stage. Bidders will also be required to demonstrate how their proposed service will deliver social value. This too will be evaluated. The evaluation criteria and the weighing of questions (method statements), social value and price had not been decided at the time of writing this report.

4. Alternative Options Considered

4.1 Alternative procurement options considered and excluded are:

(a) Do nothing and the allow the contract to expire. This option is not recommended as we have statutory duties to identify and assess young carers.

(b) To bring young carers services In-house. This would cost considerably more, increase organisational overhead and is an area where we do not currently have the expertise although it could be developed over time.

- (c) To jointly commission and procure services with Peterborough City Council. This option was not recommended as the needs, demands and requirements of Cambridgeshire carers differs from Peterborough's.

5. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

- 5.1 The option to tender for a Cambridgeshire all-age carer service was the recommended approach and generated interest from the provider market.
- 5.2 The young carers service is a statutory service. There is robust evidence that shows inappropriate caring responsibilities can significantly impact on the lives, education, health, and friendships of young people. At the same time young carers have told us they find their caring role rewarding. This service will help young carer achieve the right balance tailoring services to their needs, maturity, abilities, and the choices of young carers themselves.

6. Significant Implications

6.1 Finance Implications

Please see section 3.5

6.2 Legal Implications

There are no significant implications.

6.3 Risk Implications

There are no significant implications.

6.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

There are no significant implications.

6.5 Climate Change and Environment Implications (Key decisions only)

There are no significant implications.