

OPEN

Adults and Health Committee

17 November 2025

Adult Carers Service Redesign

Report of: Helen Charlesworth-May, Executive Director of Adults, Health and Integration

Report Reference No: AH/20/2025-26

Ward(s) Affected: All

For Decision

Purpose of Report

- 1 This report seeks approval to proceed with the re-design and recommission of the Cheshire East Adult Carers Service.

Executive Summary

- 2 This report outlines the current carers support delivery model, and the proposed approach to re-designing the carers service.
- 3 The existing service provides a varied package of support to assist informal carers in their caring role as well as enabling them to live fulfilling lives and maximise their individual wellbeing. The proposed redesign aims to strengthen the Cheshire East support offer for carers, enabling them to be supported throughout and beyond the time of their caring role, providing a holistic response to meeting their needs whether these be financial, social, emotional, psychological or physical.
- 4 This is a statutory service mandated under the Care Act 2014 and is aligned with the Cheshire East Plan (2025 – 2029), specifically Priority 2: 'Improving health and wellbeing'.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Adults and Health Committee is recommended to:

1. Approve the commencement of work to re-design and identify the most appropriate approach to recommission the Carers Service.

Background

- 5 Carers, also known as informal carers, family carers or unpaid carers, look after an adult in their life who would not be able to manage without their support. This could be looking after an ageing partner or relative, a disabled adult child, supporting an elderly neighbour or a loved one with substance use issues.
- 6 In the UK, around 11.9 million people provide unpaid care for a disabled, seriously ill or elderly loved one¹, saving the state £184 billion a year in 2021/22². Yet many carers feel invisible or may not even recognise themselves as a carer and face significant inequalities compared to those without caring responsibilities³.
- 7 In line with the council's Prevent, Reduce, Enable transformation programme, we are ambitious about transforming the way unpaid carers in Cheshire East can receive support to improve their quality of life, better health and wellbeing outcomes, and reduce caregiver strain. To achieve this, the intention is to complete a robust process to re-design a new extensive offer to support carers, which will include an appraisal of potential delivery models, such as procuring an external provider/s to deliver the service and insourcing all or part of the offer. The implementation of the recommended delivery model/commissioning approach will commence from Spring 2026, pending Committee approval in March. This is to fulfil the council's statutory responsibilities as outlined in the Care Act 2014.
- 8 We are also seeking to re-refresh the current Cheshire East All-Age Carers Strategy alongside the recommissioning process and will seek to align coproduction activity to ensure the voice of local carers drives the development of the new strategy vision and priorities. Further detail on plans and progress regarding the new strategy will be outlined in a committee paper to follow in 2026.
- 9 The current Carers Service contract has been extended for a period of 12 months and expires on 31 December 2026. The extension period enables the council to undertake robust coproduction with carers and other key stakeholders to decide what a new service should look like and the recommended approach to delivering that.
- 10 Cheshire East's Carers Hub is currently run by Making Space who, as of 31 June 2025, have 7,942 adult carers registered with them; 21,338 adult carers were referred to the service between January 2023 – June 2025, of which 12.5% (2,672) were new to the service.
- 11 Core functions of the current carers service include: information and advice; providing carer's assessments; one-to-one practical and emotional support over the telephone or face-to-face; facilitated group-based peer support and activities; dedicated carer breaks fund; individual carer grants through the

¹ Caring About Equality: Carers Week report 2025 (Online)

² Petrillo, Zhang and Bennett (2024). Valuing Carers 2021/22: the value of unpaid care in the UK (Online).

³ Caring About Equality: Carers Week report 2025 (Online)

Living Well Fund; identification of carers within the borough; training for carers and host events for carers, their families and professionals.

- 12 Providing a robust carers support offer is integral to reducing inequalities for adults providing unpaid care for a loved one, ensuring they have opportunities to enhance their wellbeing and can access the right support at the right time, enabling them to continue their caring role or ensure the right support is in place if they do not wish to be in a caring role. Supporting carers and preventing carer burnout also means fewer people will need access to formal care, whether that's for the carer or the cared for. This is beneficial on an economic and personal level both for the carer and cared for. Further background information, including the national and local picture, statutory responsibilities and local services for carers is outlined in **Appendix 1**.

Consultation and Engagement

- 13 Extensive engagement and coproduction will be undertaken throughout the commissioning process to ensure the recommendations for a future service reflect the needs and wishes of carers.
- 14 Local carers will have opportunities to be involved in several different ways and through different mediums, to ensure as many people as possible are able to express their views and wishes. A steering group of individuals with lived experience and a multidisciplinary project group will also be formed including representation from adult social care, community development team, health and the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS).
- 15 A four-phase engagement and coproduction plan has been developed:
- *Phase 1 –Needs analysis July – November 2025:* Review of current service performance and national evidence/guidelines, collating information about experiences of carers on a national and local level, comparing the Cheshire East offer with that of other Local Authority areas, and reviewing alternative delivery models. This phase is already underway.
 - *Phase 2 – Broader Stakeholder engagement October 2025 – January 2026:* Engagement with carers, their families, and professionals across social care, health, other public sector services and VCS through face to face and online events/workshops and an online survey. This aims to gather views on what works well currently, current challenges, gaps in service provision and their views and aspirations for a future offer.
 - *Phase 3 – Coproduction (1): Focused Co-design January – March 2026:* Commissioners will work with a smaller steering group of carers and staff across social care, health and the VCS, to complete an appraisal of options around the commissioning approach and service delivery model, and to codesign the recommended approach. Feedback gathered in phases 1 and 2 will also help to inform this process.

- *Phase 4 – Coproduction (2) Implementing the recommended option – April- Dec 2026:* Council officers will work with experts by experience (local carers) who are part of the steering group to co-design the new service model and implement the recommended delivery option, which may be through a tender process and/or developing services within the council.

16 Please refer to **Appendix 2** for further detail on the approach to engagement and coproduction.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 17 This is a mandatory adult social care service that meets local and national priorities and outcomes for unpaid carers across the adult social care and health landscape.
- 18 This report recommends re-designing and re-commissioning the Cheshire East Carers Service. This will allow the outcomes from the review, and codesign work with carers, to shape the development of the future offer. It will enable value for money and a better offer for carers to be achieved, as it aims to increase service reach and address existing gaps in service provision.
- 19 Additionally, the current contract has come to an end and there is a contract extension in place until December 2026, therefore, a competitive procurement or alternative delivery models, such as insourcing must be carried out to continue the service beyond this period.

Other Options Considered

- 20 A full options appraisal will be undertaken as part of the service re-design work, which will include exploring the options of insourcing the entire service or elements of the service.

Option	Impact	Risk
Do nothing	• Current contract would lapse without replacement. This would not be a viable option as it would mean not providing statutory support services for carers.	• Decline in carer wellbeing and increased likelihood of crisis situations where a carer is not able to cope/continue with their caring role. This also has implications for the wellbeing of the 'cared for' person. • Significant legal and reputational consequences for the council.

Implications and Comments

Monitoring Officer/Legal/Governance

- 21 The intention is to redesign the adult carers service to ensure an extensive offer is in place to support unpaid/informal carers. The council has statutory duties and powers to meet an adult's needs for care and support under sections 18 and 19 of the Care Act 2014 and a carer's needs for support under section 20 Care Act 2014.
- 22 The report outlines an approach to redesigning the service, which in due course will result in a report back to committee of a proposed model and commissioning approach for the delivery of appropriate services to support carers. Legal will support this process by advising on obligations under the Care Act and contract terms.

Section 151 Officer/Finance

- 23 The Carers Hub is currently funded from the Better Care Fund budget. The expectation is that the future offer will be met within this budget. The total annual value of a potential new carers service is still to be finalised; however it is not currently anticipated to exceed the current budget for this service (£751,000 per annum). Any potential increase in expenditure would have to be met through a reduction in spend in other adult social care areas and on the basis of a robust business case.
- 24 This is a statutory service that is fully funded by the BCF. There are no financial implications at this stage of the recommission on the council's existing Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

Human Resources

- 25 It is not anticipated that additional staff resources will be required for the recommission of the carers service.

Risk Management

- 26 If the recommendations of this report were not agreed, there would be no proposed service offer in place post December 2026 and the council would be breaching its statutory responsibilities. This also poses risks to the wellbeing of both carers and the cared for if support for carers is not in place. Additionally, there would be significant legal and reputational consequences for the council.

Impact on other Committees

- 27 A further report is tabled for Adults and Health committee in March 2026 which will include the outcome of engagement and coproduction work, including the recommended approach to commissioning a new service. A report will also be tabled for Children and Families Committee either for scrutiny or decision purposes, with regards to the support offer for parent

carers; this is pending outcome of engagement with Children and Families Services and the parent carer community regarding the future service model.

Policy

- 28 The activity outlined in this report supports the following aims and priorities within the Corporate Cheshire East Plan 2025 – 2029.

Commitment 1: Unlocking prosperity for all	Commitment 2: Improving health and wellbeing	Commitment 3: An effective and enabling council
• Supporting carers to make informed choices, contributing to long-term wellbeing and productivity. • Ensuring equitable access to services including seldom heard carers, therefore reducing health-related inequalities. • Reducing barriers to education, employment and participation in community life for unpaid/informal carers.	• Reducing health inequalities, and improving carer resilience/wellbeing through early intervention and prevention • Reducing/preventing crisis due to carer burnout • Supporting carers to thrive through access to timely and appropriate information, advice and support. • Strengthening partnerships to deliver joined up support for unpaid carers.	• Engagement and coproduction with residents/other stakeholders to shape services that meet local needs. • Digital solutions and face to face / community provision for those that need in- person support • Delivering value for money through efficient service delivery model.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- 29 An Equality Impact Assessment will be completed as part of the commissioning process, and will be informed by the stakeholder engagement and co-production work.

Other Implications

- 30 The current service is an all-age model supporting adult carers, parent carers and young carers. From 1 January 2026, all support for young carers will be delivered by the council and not part of the commissioned contract. A decision has not yet been made as to whether services specifically for parents caring for a disabled child (under 18 years) will continue to be part of the new carers service or whether alternative service delivery arrangements will be put in place by Children and Families Services. The views of parent carers and Children and Families professionals will be gathered as part of the

engagement and coproduction process to inform future commissioning intentions.

Consultation

Name of Consultee	Post held	Date sent	Date returned
<i>Statutory Officer (or deputy) :</i>			
Ashley Hughes	S151 Officer	13/10/25	21/10/25
Kevin O'Keefe	Interim Director of Law and Governance (Monitoring Officer)	13/10/25	17/10/25
<i>Legal and Finance</i>			
Rebecca Dearden	Senior Lawyer (Adults & Education)	29/09/25	10/10/25
David Hallworth	Principle Accountant	29/09/2025	13/10/25
<i>Other Consultees:</i>			
Sam Jones	Democratic Services Officer	29/09/2025	29/09/25
Curtis Vickers	Head of Service Integrated Commissioning	29/09/2025	06/10/25
Members of AHI DLT: Dan Coyne, Jill Broomhall, Alison Spender, Helen Charlesworth-May	Head of Service – People and Communities, Director of Adult Social Care Operations, Projects and Performance Manager, Exec Director	02/10/2025	06/10/25
<i>Executive Directors/Directors</i>			
Helen Charlesworth-May	Executive Director – Adults, Health and Integration	13/10/25	03/11/25
Hayley Doyle	Director of Commissioning – Adults, Health and Integration	13/10/2025	27/10/25

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Sharon Brissett, Project Manager Sharon.brissett@cheshireeast.gov.uk Alice Clark, Programme Lead alice.clark@cheshireeast.gov.uk
Appendices:	Appendix 1 - Carers In Cheshire East background information Appendix 2– Approach to co-production
Background Papers:	Carers Week Report 2025 Cheshire East Council All-Age Carers Strategy 2021-2025