

Children and Families Committee

Date of Meeting:	6 October 2021
Report Title:	All Age Carers Hub and Strategy
Report of:	Nichola Thompson, Director of Commissioning
Report Reference No:	AH/09/21-22 and AH/10/21-22
Ward(s) Affected:	All

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1.** The Care Act 2014 and Children's and Families Act 2014 sets out the duty for the Council and partners to provide services for carers regardless of their age. In response, the Council published its the All Age Carers Strategy 2016-18. Leading from the actions within the strategy the Council commissioned the All Age Integrated Carers Hub in April 2018.
- 1.2.** The report provides details on the journey so far for carers services in Cheshire East, the initial results of consultation and engagement that has already taken place, as well as plans for further engagement and consultation for the Carers Strategy.
- 1.3.** The contract for the All Age Integrated Carers Hub will end on 31 December 2022. This report recommends the joint re-commissioning of the All Age Carers Hub with Cheshire Clinical Commissioning Group and seeks permission to procure the service.
- 1.4.** The Council's current All Age Carers Strategy 2016-18 needs to be reviewed to reflect up-to-date local information, analysis, demand, customer experiences and service gaps. This report outlines the review and refresh of the Council's All Age Carers Strategy 2021-25 and seeks approval to go out to wider public consultation and engagement.
- 1.5.** The key milestones for the successful delivery of the project are aligned to the 6 stages of the commissioning cycle (see Appendix 1).

2. Recommendations

- 2.1.** That the Adults and Health Committee and Children and Families Committee:
- 2.2.** Approve the draft carers strategy as outlined in Appendix 2 for the basis of consultation.
- 2.3.** Following consultation of the strategy, note that the final version of the All Age Carers Strategy will be presented for approval to the Adults and Health Committee, and Children and Families Committee.
- 2.4.** Approve the recommissioning of the All Age Carers Hub contract which ends in December 2022, with Cheshire West and Chester Local Authority, and Cheshire Clinical Commissioning Group.
- 2.5.** Delegates authority to the Director of Commissioning to award the jointly commissioned All Age Carers Hub contract.

3. Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1.** To meet our obligations to the Care Act 2014 and Children's and Families Act 2014, and the Council Corporate Plan 2021-25 we need continue to review, consult and progress with the All Age Carers Strategy and the re-commissioning of the All Age Carers Hub.
- 3.2.** The All Age Carers Hub model has been working well in Cheshire East, however from our survey with carers in February 2021 there is still a need to continue with this journey, to improve the single point of contact for all carers in Cheshire East and this would be well served by the re-commissioning of the All Age Carers Hub.
- 3.3.** That the All Age Carers Hub is approved for recommissioning prior to the final version of the All Age Carers Strategy being submitted to committee for approval to publish.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1.** Decommissioning - although the Council has a statutory obligation to provide services for carers, we also recognise the valuable contribution carers make to the local community and the support to the social care and health system. Providing access to information, advice and guidance at an early stage prevents carer breakdown and longer-term impacts on carers. Although there would be an immediate financial saving, the subsequent demand on the social and health care would outstrip any initial savings.

5. Background

- 5.1. The Care Act 2014, Children and Families Act 2014 sets out the Council's responsibility for carers and the need to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for carers.
- 5.2. The above legislation provides a coherent framework for young carers and requires the Council to offer children and young people the right to 'young carer's assessment' and introduces the 'whole family' approach to assessment and support. It requires the Council to consider the needs of young carers who are providing or intending to provide care. Additionally, the act requires Adults and Children's Departments to work together to avoid and reduce multi-assessment and allow departments to combine assessments and the right to transition assessment.
- 5.3. We are required to provide statutory information for the Children's Commissioner including Young Carers Data, in 2015-16 the Young Carers Data Collection Document only recorded a figure of 13 young people that had received a young carer's assessment by the Council.
- 5.4. The Council carried out a whole system redesign of services to carers in 2017, this involved engagement and consultation with all carers. Carers told the Council that they needed a single point of access, 24/7 helpline and help much earlier support to prevent carers breakdown. Children and Families Services identified the need to provide an individual young carer's assessment and provide better tailored support for young carers. These comments and concerns were fed into the Cheshire East Carers Strategy 2018. In response to the feedback, the Council in partnership with the Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG), tendered for an organisation that would provide the Cheshire East All Age Carers Hub.
- 5.5. The current All Age Carers Hub contract is jointly commissioned across the Council and NHS Cheshire CCG via the Better Care Fund (NHS 2006 Act, s75). The service was commissioned in 2018, a service descriptor which includes the aim, description and outputs forms part of the legal agreement. The service supports the delivery of the four Better Care Fund metrics with a primary focus on reducing non-elective admissions and reducing the number of people admitted to residential care. There is annual monitoring of the performance of the All Age Carers Hub through the Better Care Fund End of Year report which is presented to the Health and Wellbeing Board.
- 5.6. The integration of carers service through an 'Hub and Spoke' model would coordinate early help support for adult, parent, and young carers, and has provided a single point of access at any stage of a carers journey. It also provided other many benefits, below is a snapshot of some of the All Age Carers Hub key activities:
 - Single point of access
 - 24/7 Carers Helpline

- Peer Support, networking
- Access to early help services e.g. Living Well Fund and Take a Break, Crisis support
- Community based support
- Online assessments via Live Well
- Reduce hospital admissions.

- 5.7.** The contract was awarded to nCompass in partnership with the Alzheimer's Society and was available for all carers in Cheshire East from 1 April 2018 to 31 December 2022.
- 5.8.** Since this date the service has continued to develop its service to respond to carers needs and feedback. A key achievement was changing the adult's statutory carers assessment in February 2020, moving to an online assessment accessible via the Council Live Well website. In March 2020 the online assessment system also included young carers. This process change means that carers in Cheshire East receive a single point of access/assessment from the first point of contact. Equally it also reduces double counting and for the Council provides a better reflection of the number of young carers the Council was supporting, which previously was not reflected on the LiquidLogic case management system.
- 5.9.** There has been a significant change to the whole approach of carers assessments, which now focus on the personalised outcomes for the individual rather than just a means of accessing services. The Hub have incorporated the Council's statutory assessment with their own assessment which includes wellbeing outcomes. Therefore, as well as being assessed for carers support, it looks at different ways that caring affects a carers life and the services that can support the carer. The assessment includes the physical, mental and emotional wellbeing and this is at the heart of this assessment. A review of the outcomes is carried out at 3 months and the carer's wellbeing is reassessed; this is followed with an annual review.
- 5.10.** The pandemic has amplified the importance of the caring role, and its significant function on the health and social care system. The report '*Caring behind closed doors: 6 months on*' (2020) produced by Carers UK, promotes the crucial part carers play on the system and the health and wellbeing inequalities many carers face. During the pandemic there was a need to shift services to vertical platforms, providing a big challenge to the All Age Carers Hub. The All Age Carers Hub combined its effort by increasing the digital platform access, wellbeing telephone calls and home visits where appropriate.
- 5.11.** The All Age Carers Hub worked with the People Helping People service to ensure no carer was left struggling at this difficult time. Initially in March 2020 we saw a decrease to the number of referrals to the service, but this

has now increased by 110% in the number of referrals for support comparing Quarter 1 to Quarter 4 (2020/21).

5.12. The All Age Carers Hub played a key part in acting as the single point of access for vaccines to carers. It ensured all carers gained registration and assessment. It ensured all carers were listed on the GP Carers Register.

5.13. To date Cheshire East has 5061 carers registered with the service. The key highlights of the performance in 2020/21 are:

- 1644 adult carers referred to the Carers Hub for information, advice and/or support services – 71% of these were new referrals that had not previously registered with the Hub.
- 538 adult carers awarded a Living Well fund to enable them to take a break from their caring role.
- 589 statutory adult carers assessments completed.
- 310 carers have taken up the offer of an Emergency Card to let others know they are a carer if they are in an accident / taken ill.
- 186 wellbeing calls by volunteers to carers, not able to engage with the online groups, through the CHAT line (not previously offered before the pandemic).
- 78% increase in referrals from Council teams following early identification through People Helping People and online briefing sessions run by the Hub.
- Carers' outcomes remained positive in 2020-21, carers outcomes are assessed at the start of their journey and then reviewed 3 months on. From these assessments we can see that on average 97% of adult carers felt their ability to manage their caring role had improved following support from the Carers Hub. 96% of carers reported increased choice, control and independence; 95% felt engaged, involved and that they have a voice; and 98% reported improved emotional wellbeing.
- 147 young carers were referred to the Young Carers service and 84% were new referrals not previously known to the Hub.
- 111 young carers accessed the Living Well Fund grant to enable them to take a break from their caring role.
- 99 statutory young carers assessments were completed.
- 45 young carers group support sessions held (majority over Zoom) with an average of 30 young carers attending each session by Quarter 4.

- In 2020-21, the Carers Hub changed the method they use to assess young carers outcomes and now use the Positive and Negative Outcomes of Caring (PANOC-YC20) tool. This tool highlights that young carers can experience both positive and negative impacts of caring. 100% of young carers felt their positive outlook had improved and 100% had improved relationships, self-esteem, and resilience. 58% felt that the emotional impact of their caring role had been reduced.

5.14. The refreshed All Age Carers Strategy for 2021-25 aims to support the shift in social care and health transformation, providing key messages for specific markets and carers. It will start with asking the following questions:

- Who are our carers – demographics?
- What support and services are in place at the moment, and what is not available and should be?
- What carers tell us, including the accessibility and quality of services for carers and what they tell us is needed?
- What support and services the Council think people will need in the future?

5.15. The draft All Age Carers Strategy has been developed jointly by the local authority with NHS Cheshire CCG to ensure that it developed in line with the recently published White Paper ‘Integration and Innovation: Working Together to Improve Health and Social Care for All’ and is therefore acknowledges Health and Social Care integration developments. Its development is part of the recommissioning activity that is undertaken by the Council, with the results of the coproduction, engagement and consultation influencing the service specification for the All Age Carers Hub.

5.16. With the delivery of health and social care services focusing on how they achieve integrated ways of delivering services, it is more important than ever to have a clear offer and vision for carers’ services, which builds on the aspirations and statutory frameworks of The Care Act (2014) and Children and Families Act 2014; and prepare for the implementation of the White Paper ‘Working together to improve health and social care for all’ in 2022.

5.17. The initial formal consultation and engagement process will shape the development of the draft All Age Carers Strategy.

6. Consultation and Engagement

6.1. Consultation, engagement is a continual process for commissioning as it provides the intelligence that inform the strategy, policy, quality assurance and performance of all our services. Equally, carers are affected by the

decision the council makes on services to the cared for individual. Therefore, carers have been consulted and engaged with on several services, strategies and policies. These include the following:

- Carers Survey (February 2021) – included within Appendix 4
- Survey for carers - Living Well Fund (2020)
- Day Opportunities
- Assistive technology charging policy
- Dementia Strategy
- Autism consultation
- Cheshire East Carers Forum

6.2. The next steps are to gain further feedback from carers, partner agencies, and professionals that will shape the strategy and future of the All Age Carers Hub service. However, with the current restrictions and uncertainty of the Covid-19 pandemic, the proposed consultation and engagement will include:

- Publication of the draft Cheshire Strategy on the Council website along with an online survey and questionnaire to receive comments.
- Communication will include social media campaigns with a press release to make residents aware of the Council's consultation and engagement process.
- Communication to all contracted providers on the Commissioning Intentions.
- Virtual online Market Place events for providers, advertised by the Chest Procurement Portal for wider markets to attend.
- Virtual service development events with carers, advertised by social media, the Council website and with current existing routes for example, Carers Forum, Parent Carers Forum, Older People Engagement Network.
- All relevant stakeholders will be notified including partners, members, and town/parish councils.
- Briefings to networks such as Health and Wellbeing Boards, and Children and Young People's Trusts of the development and results.

6.3. The Cheshire East Carers Forum aims to be a voice to inform service providers of the needs of carers and their families.

- 6.4.** The Cheshire East Carers Forum will facilitate two-way communication between carers and services used by all carers and their families in Cheshire East. The forum will work to provide feedback on services, offer constructive challenge to current services and input into decision making and planning for future service provision.

7. Implications

7.1. Legal

- 7.1.1.** The Council has a responsibility to provide suitable services for all carers as set out within The Care Act 2014 and Children's and Families Act 2014.
- 7.1.2.** There is an expectation enshrined in case law that any local authority making decisions affecting the public will do so fairly and in a way that cannot be said to be an abuse of power.
- 7.1.3.** It is therefore important to test the fairness of the Council's proposed strategy in relation to All Age Carers by way of consultation on any changes which potentially have the effect of withdrawing existing benefits or advantages available to carers. Such consultation will involve those directly affected by such changes as well as any relevant representative groups. The responses to the consultation will need to be conscientiously taken into account when Council decision makers make any future decision in adopting the strategy.
- 7.1.4.** Consultation approach is outlined in 6.2 of this report and will be conducted with adherence to the following:
- (a) the consultation must take place at a time when the proposals are still at a formative stage.
 - (b) the proposer must give sufficient reasons for any proposal to permit of intelligent consideration and response.
 - (c) adequate time must be given for consideration and response.
 - (d) the product of the consultation must be conscientiously taken into account in finalising the proposals
- 7.1.5.** It should be noted that failure to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) or breach of a duty to consult would risk the Council being subjected to legal challenge by way of judicial review.
- 7.1.6.** A legal collaboration agreement will be developed with all partners prior to the commencement of the commissioning and procurement activity, to clearly define the roles and responsibilities of each of the partners in relation to the procurement process and subsequent contract management.

7.1.7. Any procurement would need to be carried out in accordance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and the Public Contract Regulations 2015.

7.1.8. Any service contract will contain suitable provisions to allow the Council to terminate the contract in event of funding from the Better Care Fund ceasing.

7.2. Finance

7.2.1. The commissioning of an All Age Carers Hub service would offer an opportunity to ensure value for money, improved outcomes for carers by aligning services and creating consistency across Cheshire for residents.

7.2.2. Cheshire East Council spends £751,000 per annum on the All Age Carers Hub. This includes £661,631 from the Better Care Fund (BCF) and £89,369 from Children's and Families Services (CEC base budget). The BCF is a Pooled Budget operated in partnership with colleagues from Cheshire CCG. Funding is confirmed through the Comprehensive Spending Review and the NHS 5-year Plan. The current direction of travel is for increased integration and further extension of these shared financial arrangements.

7.2.3. The new contract would be for a 3-year period (1 January 2023 to 31 December 2026) with a possible 2 x 12 months extension period.

7.2.4. The budget for the full five years (including the 2 x 12 months extensions) would be £3,755,000.

7.3. Policy

7.3.1. The All Age Carers Strategy will contribute towards the vision of the Corporate Plan 2021-2025 to be an open, fair, and green Council and help to deliver the priority to be a Council which empowers and cares about people. The All Age Carers Strategy enables the Council to be open and transparent about our commissioning intentions based on capacity, demand, engagement and coproduction in partnership with key stakeholders, and importantly with local residents and people who use carers services and those who may use them in the future.

7.3.2. The All Age Carers Hub and Strategy will comply with any of the new legislation requirements of the Build Back, Better: Our Plan for Health and Social Care, September 2021, HM Government.

7.4. Equality

7.4.1. An Equality Impact Assessment has been started and a copy is attached in this report in Appendix 3.

- 7.4.2. The EIA will develop further during consultation and engagement with carers.
- 7.4.3. Inequalities identified will be actioned and addressed through the recommissioning activity and included as performance measures for the service to adhere to via the service specification and contract.

7.5. Human Resources

- 7.5.1. There is no direct impact on any employees within Cheshire East Council.
- 7.5.2. All employees of the current provider/s will be eligible for TUPE, and during the tender all applicants will be provided with a full list of eligible employees.

7.6. Risk Management

- 7.6.1. There is a potential risk that the governance timeline will not meet key deadlines and will slow the commissioning process down. Early progression and decision making will mitigate this as outlined in the project key milestones in Appendix 1.
- 7.6.2. With Cheshire Clinical Commissioning Group ceasing to exist from 31 March 2022, work is in progress to finalise/formalise a new structure for commissioning services in 2022. Although this may present some risks it will be mitigated by working in close partnership with representatives from the NHS Cheshire Clinical Commissioning Group, who will provide regular updates.
- 7.6.3. The Carers Hub is funded via the Better Care Fund, which contributes to most of the budget.
- 7.6.4. The Department of Health and Social Care published the White Paper 'Integration and innovation: working together to improve health and social care for all' (2021). The White paper set out the legislative proposals for a health and care Bill. The White Paper refers to the Better Care Fund it sets out a technical change to separate the fund from the process for setting the NHS Mandate.
- 7.6.5. The Better Care Fund planning and policy guidance for 2021/22 hasn't been released, the funding envelope for the Better Care Fund has been identified nationally and the local allocations have been set for 2021/22. In recent years the funding has only been guaranteed from year to year, the local allocations for Cheshire East haven't been released for 2022/23.

7.6.6. We have commissioned services to be delivered over multiple years with only an upfront guarantee that the current year's funding can be met from the Better Care Fund/Improved Better Care Fund. There is a risk that the Better Care Fund won't continue into 2022/23 and future years, typically the risk is highlighted and recorded through the corporate risk register. The All Age Carers Hub in Cheshire East was commissioned in 2018 over multiple years until 2022, at the time of the service being commissioned it wasn't known whether the funding would be guaranteed for the life of the contract from the Better Care Fund. Part of the ongoing mitigation of the risk is for the Better Care Fund Governance Group to receive ongoing updates about the All Age Carers Hub commission.

7.6.7. The service contract will include suitable termination provisions so that in the unlikely event that the Better Care Fund ceases, the Council can seek to terminate the contract for the All Age Carers Hub.

7.7. Rural Communities

7.7.1. There are no direct implications for rural communities and the service would be developed to improve access.

7.7.2. There is a review with Cheshire West and Chester Council that could align some services within the All Age Carers Hub would improve access to carers living in rural communities across Cheshire. It would remove the postcode lottery, especially for those individual living on the boundaries of the two Councils.

7.8. Children and Young People/Cared for Children

7.8.1. The service will be developed with young carers with a focus on those on Child Protection and Child in Need Plans.

7.8.2. Developing the multi-agency support and safeguarding approach will be part of the service development and shape the future offer.

7.8.3. A key development is to align the service with education settings. This will improve the identification of young carers to support at the earliest opportunity.

7.9. Public Health

7.9.1. Supporting carers early with appropriate services reduces health and wellbeing inequalities. The future service will continue to focus on prevention and wider determinates on their health, this could be by signposting individuals to Public Health lifestyle and support programmes.

7.10. Climate Change

7.10.1. The recommissioning of the service will include expectations around Social Value, this includes social, economic and environmental impacts. The service provider will need to demonstrate their impact on the environment throughout the life of the contract. This will be included as part of the service specification and monitored by quarterly performance measures. Targets around recycling, carbon reduction with the use of electric vehicles, employing people within the community it serves and offering services virtually or on a Place based locality will be measured continually.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer/s:	Elizabeth Smith (All Age Carers Hub recommissioning) Senior Commissioning Manager Liz.Smith@cheshireeast.gov.uk Jill Stenton (All Age Carers Strategy) Senior Commissioning Manager Jill.Stenton@cheshireeast.gov.uk
Appendices:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Key Milestones and Commissioning Cycle2. All Age Carers Strategy3. Equality Impact Assessment4. Carers Survey
Background Papers:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Cheshire East Council Corporate Plan2. Care Act 20143. Children and Families Act 20144. Caring behind closed doors: 6 months on: Carers UK 2020.5. Working together to improve health and social care for all – White Paper, February 20216. Build Back, Better: Our Plan for Health and Social Care, HM Government, September 2021