

Children and Families Committee Adults and Health Committee

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| Date of Meeting: | 24 March 2022 28 March 2022 |
| Report Title: | All-Age Carers Strategy 2021-2025 |
| Report of: | Helen Charlesworth-May, Executive Director of Adults, Health and Integration |
| Report Reference No: | CF/48/21-22 AH/33/21-22 |
| Ward(s) Affected: | All |

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. This report seeks approval to publish the All-Age Carers Strategy 2021-2025. The report provides details on the service model for the All-Age Carers Hub for 2022 in preparation for the retendering activity in the Spring of 2022.
- 1.2. The All-Age Carers Strategy supports the delivery of the council's priority to be a council which empowers and cares about people.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. The All-Age Carers Strategy 2021-2025 is the overarching plan to ensure all carers receive the right support at the right time. The strategy has been co-produced with health, adult carers, young carers, working carers, and older carers. It provides the details that will shape all future services for carers in our borough. This report seeks approval to publish the strategy.
- 2.2. The report provides details of the approach used for consultation and engagement with carers for the strategy, and the voice of the carer.
- 2.3. The report provides details on the service model for the All-Age Carers Hub for 2022 in preparation for the retendering activity in the Spring of 2022.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. That the Children and Families Committee and Adults and Health Committee:
- 3.2. Note the details of the consultation and engagement completed for the All-Age Carers Strategy and All-Age Carers Hub.
- 3.3. Approve the publication of the All-Age Carers Strategy for 2021-2025 (Appendix 1).
- 3.4. Note the service model for the All-Age Carers Hub prior to recommissioning activity (Appendix 2).

4. Reasons for Recommendations

- 4.1. The All-Age Carers Strategy plays an important role in ensuring that the council meets its statutory duties under the Care Act 2014 and Children and Families Act 2014. The strategy supports the choice and control of carers, thereby increasing their independence and allowing the health and wellbeing of carers to thrive and develop.
- 4.2. The All-Age Carers Hub plays an integral and critical part of the early help and support offer for carers in Cheshire East. To date Cheshire East has 5,061 carers registered with the service.

5. Other Options Considered

- 5.1. There are over 40,000 hidden carers in Cheshire East. Carers are supporting people, often family members, who belong to groups sharing protected characteristics, including older people, but most notably, disabled people of all ages, including people with mental health needs. The carers strategy is intended generally to improve services or opportunities for carers and carers' experiences of services, including those sharing protected characteristics. The carers strategy is not expected to have any negative or adverse impact on anyone belonging to a group sharing protected characteristics.
- 5.2. Local authorities must promote wellbeing when carrying out any of their care and support functions in respect of a person. This may sometimes be referred to as 'the wellbeing principle' because it is a guiding principle that puts wellbeing at the heart of care and support. Services that councils provide impact on carers' daily lives, and as such the strategy will ensure those services and our voluntary, community and faith sector (VCFS) organisations reflect this.
- 5.3. Not publishing the strategy is not recommended. Carers and stakeholders have invested a lot of time in producing this strategy in order to achieve better outcomes.

6. Background

- 6.1. On the 27 September and 6 October 2021, both the Adults and Health Committee and the Children and Families Committee gave approval for

commissioners to start the consultation and engagement for the All-Age Carers Strategy. The committees also approved the recommissioning of the All-Age Carers Hub, with a requirement to review the proposed new model of service for 2022.

- 6.2. The level of consultation and engagement has been extensive, and has set the foundation of how the recommission of the new All-Age Carers Hub will form and develop.
- 6.3. The draft carers strategy is the product of extensive engagement with carers and stakeholders which began in October 2020 and has included a carers forum, a stakeholder group, a public survey, and an engagement and consultation event for young carers and young adult carers. We have met with over 1,500 people. Feedback and ideas from the different interest groups has shaped the priorities and proposed actions in the strategy.
- 6.4. The draft strategy identifies six priorities to be taken forward over the next five years:
 - **Health and Wellbeing** - We will work across the place to ensure a diverse offer is available for our carers of all ages to stay healthy, well, active and to have fun.
 - **Early Support for Carers** - We will work together to ensure access to co-ordinated services that provide the right support at the right time, across all sectors - social care, health and communities.
 - **Prevention – Carer breaks/Respite** - We will work with our providers and carers to look at how we can offer regular respite in different environments that are suitable to the carer and the cared for.
 - **Information/Access/Processes** - We will ensure that carers have access to good quality advice and support when they need it: a range of options are available to access information and advice to help build connections.
 - **Employment, Education and Training** - We will offer support for working carers through carer friendly employment, promoted in collaboration with the national Employers for Carers Network.
 - **Young Carers** - We will ensure that young carers are identified at the earliest possible opportunity, so they are able to learn, develop and thrive and to experience a positive childhood.
- 6.5. Several priorities detailed in the Corporate Plan 2020-2025 relate to carers. These include:
 - Reducing health inequalities across the borough

- Reducing the reliance on long term care by improving services closer to home and providing more extra care facilities, including dementia services
- A commitment to protect the most vulnerable people in our communities
- Increasing the life opportunities for young carers and adults.

Work is currently underway on developing the council's Digital Strategy, Rural Strategy and a new working carers policy.

6.6. The proposed All-Age Carers service model is not dissimilar from the current 'Hub and Spoke' model. It would continue to coordinate early help support for adults, parents, and young carers, with a single point of access at any stage of a carers' journey. It is being designed to reflect the voice of the carer and this will involve closer working relationships with social care and health. An outline of the service model and its pathways is attached within Appendix 2.

6.7. The proposed service is expected to provide many benefits. Below is a snapshot of some of the All-Age Carers Hub expected key activities for the new service:

- Single point of access
- Assessment and carers support package
- One to one support
- Closer working with our social care and health departments
- Crisis support
- 24/7 carers chat and helpline
- Peer support, networking
- Access to early help respite services
- Community based support e.g. coffee mornings or live web chats
- Online assessments via LiveWell
- Reduce hospital admissions
- Coordinated support from within our local hospitals
- Digital information and advice offer
- Emotional support
- Education, training
- Championing of carers rights
- Leading on the Carers Forum
- Leading on gaining carers champions in all settings.

6.8. There are some areas that commissioners will be strengthening within the model, this will be around the following:

- ensuring that information and advice for carers on the Cheshire East Live Well site is current

- strengthening the young carers offer, with clearer pathways with education settings and health, and co-producing a digital offer for young carers
- ensuring clearer pathways within hospitals that also include discharge to assess
- ensuring assessed access to early help respite support including offering crisis support.

Outcomes for carers will be tracked over time through the joining up of data from the provider, health, social care, schools, and education. This should enable a greater understanding to be reached of the effectiveness of carer provision.

- 6.9.** A key challenge for the new service will be to take account of the recommendations for young carers shared in the Ice Creates report and the Insight report on young carers throughout COVID-19. There will need to be more collaborative work with adults, health, and children and families' services to achieve the right outcomes.
- 6.10.** The recommission would take place via a competitive procurement process. Evaluation questions would test providers' abilities to deliver key aspects of service delivery such as the mobile response service to appropriate standards of quality. There would be a split of 60% quality and 40% price, with social value questions making up 10% of the tender marks. This would assess social and environmental impact. A presentation would also be required to a panel of carers with a mix of adult, parent and young carers and this element of the tendering activity will be worth 20%. This will ensure that the final step of this process truly reflects the voice of the carer.
- 6.11.** The successful provider would undertake work to ensure that use of the service is maximised across age ranges, geographies, and client groups where it is beneficial. This will include by undertaking actions with stakeholders (such as operational social care staff) e.g. conducting awareness sessions.

7. Consultation and Engagement

- 7.1.** COVID-19 has presented many challenges, especially for our carers. We needed to ensure, despite the pandemic, that we could hear the voice of our carers so we adapted our approach. As face to face meetings were not possible, we used other ways to ensure respondents could take part in the consultation in a safe way. Paper copies and easy read copies were made available as part of the consultation.
- 7.2.** The consultation was promoted across lots of communication channels including the vaccination programme for our unpaid carers via the All-Age Carers Hub. We linked in with other current consultation events and attended

operations team meetings to consult on the strategy. We have engaged and consulted with over 1,500 people. Our consultation activity included:

- All-Age carers survey which ran from 12 February to 31 March 2021. The [results](#) of this were shared with the committees at the meetings on 27 September and 6 October 2021.
- Twelve-week consultation on the strategy which ran from 15 November 2021 until 17 January 2022.
- Consultation with young carers from October 2021 to December 2021.
- Consultation with professionals from schools and education from October 2021 to January 2022.
- Graphic scribe of carers sharing their story and their message linked to COVID-19 in January 2022.

Key Messages

7.3. People were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with each of the priorities. The vast majority agreed with all the priorities and associated actions and commented on each of them.

7.4. The key messages that emerged from the priorities were:

- Improving communication between health and social care
- Improving access to services and support available for carers
- Identifying carers within all sectors including training and awareness
- GP intervention to support carers, improving the GP register for carers
- Supporting young carers in schools, colleges, and health
- Supporting young carers to be able to have a break and time away from their caring role
- Supporting the mental health and wellbeing of carers
- Working carers.
- More collaboration with LGBTQ+ awareness for carers and training for professionals.

7.5. Individuals and organisations were able to respond via email, telephone and in writing. We also shared the consultation on the strategy at the following consultation events:

- Autism
- Day Opportunities
- Assistive technology and charging Policy
- Dementia Strategy and steering group
- Live Well for Longer Strategy
- Rural Strategy (as part of the delivery plan).

8. Implications

8.1. Legal

8.1.1. The council has a responsibility to provide suitable services for all carers as set out within The Care Act 2014 and Children and Families Act 2014.

8.1.2. The courts have, as recently as 2020, clarified the common law duty of consultation upon public bodies, based on fairness, and the test for when a legitimate expectation will be established. The legal test for establishing a procedural or substantive legitimate expectation requires:

- an express promise, representation or assurance which is “*clear, unambiguous and devoid of relevant qualification*”; or
- a practice tantamount to such a promise.

8.1.3. The council has an established practice of consultation, and it is therefore important to do so in relation to 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.

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

8.1.5. 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.

8.2. Finance

8.2.1. 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.

8.2.2. 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 the Children’s and Families Directorate (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.

- 8.2.3. 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.
- 8.2.4. The budget for the full five years (including the 2 x 12 months extensions) would be £3,755,000.
- 8.2.5. As this is an externally procured service at the end of the contract there are no exit costs that will be needed to be funded (by either CEC or BCF).

8.3. Policy

- 8.3.1. 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.
- 8.3.2. 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.

8.4. Equality

- 8.4.1. An Equality Impact Assessment has been updated post consultation. 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.

8.5. Human Resources

- 8.5.1. There are no direct impacts on any employees within Cheshire East Council.
- 8.5.2. 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.

8.6. Risk Management

- 8.6.1. With Cheshire Clinical Commissioning Group ceasing to exist from 1 July 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.

8.6.2. The Carers Hub is funded via the Better Care Fund, which contributes to most of the budget.

8.6.3. 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.

8.6.4. 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.

8.7. Rural Communities

8.7.1. Services will need to be developed to improve access for all carers from rural communities, with an expectation of increased outreach services and an improved digital offer. The hub and spoke model of the All-Age Carers Service will support this by raising carer awareness and working much more closely with GP practices and social prescribers, ensuring all carers are registered as a carer with their practice. The live well fund will be reviewed to ensure that the rural communities can set up support groups for carers. The carers forum will play an integral role in reviewing services. We have also linked in with the review of the Rural Strategy.

8.8. Children and Young People/Cared for Children

8.8.1. The service will be developed with young carers with a focus on those on Child Protection and Child in Need Plans. Developing multi-agency support and a safeguarding approach will be part of the service development and will shape the future offer.

8.8.2. 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.

8.9. Public Health

8.9.1. Carers provide a huge role in supporting the cared for and their loved ones. Public Health offers the opportunity for carers and the public to obtain greater reassurance through knowing that they would be supported around their health and wellbeing programmes.

8.9.2. The wellbeing of our carers is paramount, and the All-Age Carers Service will offer information and advice, befriending, counselling services, reducing loneliness and isolation. Recently we have trialled the ‘take a break service’ during COVID-19. This has been a real success and we will be developing this further through our community respite offer. Young carers breaks and support are essential – they make a real difference to the health and wellbeing of young carers and young adult carers. Making friends in a similar situation, building confidence and learning about themselves outside of the caring role are all positive outcomes of breaks. This is one of the priorities embedded in the All-Age Carers Strategy and the All-Age Carers Service will be working closely with our young carers school and education services.

8.10. Climate Change

8.10.1 The recommission of the service will include social value questions including one specific to the environment. This will seek to minimise the environmental impact of the service. The service specification will also contain specific requirements relating to this such as in relation to efficient route planning and use of electric vehicles, promotion, and training in the digital environment.

| Access to Information | |
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| Appendices: | Appendix 1 – All Age Carers Strategy 2021-2025 Appendix 2 - Cheshire East Integrated Carers Model 2023 Appendix 3 – Cheshire East All Age Carers Survey Results Appendix 4 – ICE Creates and Cheshire East Council consultation and engagement report for young carers Appendix 5 – Insight report on young carers and the impact of Covid-19 Appendix 6 – Responses to consultation and engagement on the All Age Carers Strategy 2021-2025 Appendix 7 – Graphic Scribe of carers and COVID-19 |
| Background Papers: | Cheshire East Corporate Plan 2021-2025 |