

Report to Cabinet

4 December 2024

Subject:	Authority to procure a Sandwell Carers Support Service
Cabinet Member:	Cabinet Member for Adult Services, Health, and Wellbeing, Councillor Jackie Taylor
Director:	Director for Adult Social Care Rashpal Bishop
Key Decision:	Yes
Contact Officer:	Commissioning Manager, Susan Eagle Susan_eagle@sandwell.gov.uk Operations Manager, Justin Haywood Justin_hayood@sandwell.gov.uk

1 Recommendations

For the reasons set out in the report, it is recommended that:

- 1.1 approval is given to commence a legally compliant tendering process to procure an all-age Carer Support Service in Sandwell;
- 1.2 the Director for Adult Social Care is authorised to award a contract for an all-age Carer Support Service in Sandwell, for a 5-year period;
- 1.3 authorisation is given for the Council to award and enter a new Contract with the successful bidder, on terms agreed with the Director of Adult Social Care, for the provision of a Carer Support Service;

- 1.4 the Monitoring Officer, Director of Law and Governance, or their designated representative, is given authority to execute any documents necessary to give effect to the proposals for the provision of a Carer Support Service;
- 1.5 approval is given for an exemption to rules 8.10 and 8.11 of the Council's Contract Procedure Rules 2022/23, or subsequent amendment, to allow the Director of Adult Social Care to award contracts to the successful tenderer if the required minimum number of tenders are not received; and
- 1.6 Cabinet approve Variations to the Contract up to a maximum of 10% of the Contract value, should they be necessitated, and that authority to approve such Variations be delegated to the appropriate Chief Officer in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member.

2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 The Care Act 2014 placed a duty on all Councils to consider the needs of carers on equal footing to the person receiving care and support.
- 2.2 There is a clear focus in the Act on promoting carers' wellbeing, taking account of the impact caring has on all aspects of their lives. It is therefore a statutory requirement that every Council has a robust offer to identify carers and support them appropriately.
- 2.3 Each Council's carers offer is central to the Care Quality Commission's (CQC) Review, they are tasked with assessing the customer journey via implementation of the Care Act 2014.
- 2.4 Sandwell Trends reported that 30,000 usual residents aged 5 and upwards provided more than 50 hours of care a week. It is estimated by ADASS that the cost to provide this care nationally would be over 1 billion pounds to the Government in their latest survey.
- 2.5 The aim is to procure a Carers Support Service in Sandwell that will provide a visible and accessible place where carers can access information, advice, and support in line with the Care Act 2014.
- 2.6 The new service will enable carers to live well and enable support to be easily accessible, thus improving outcomes for Sandwell carers.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Council Plan?

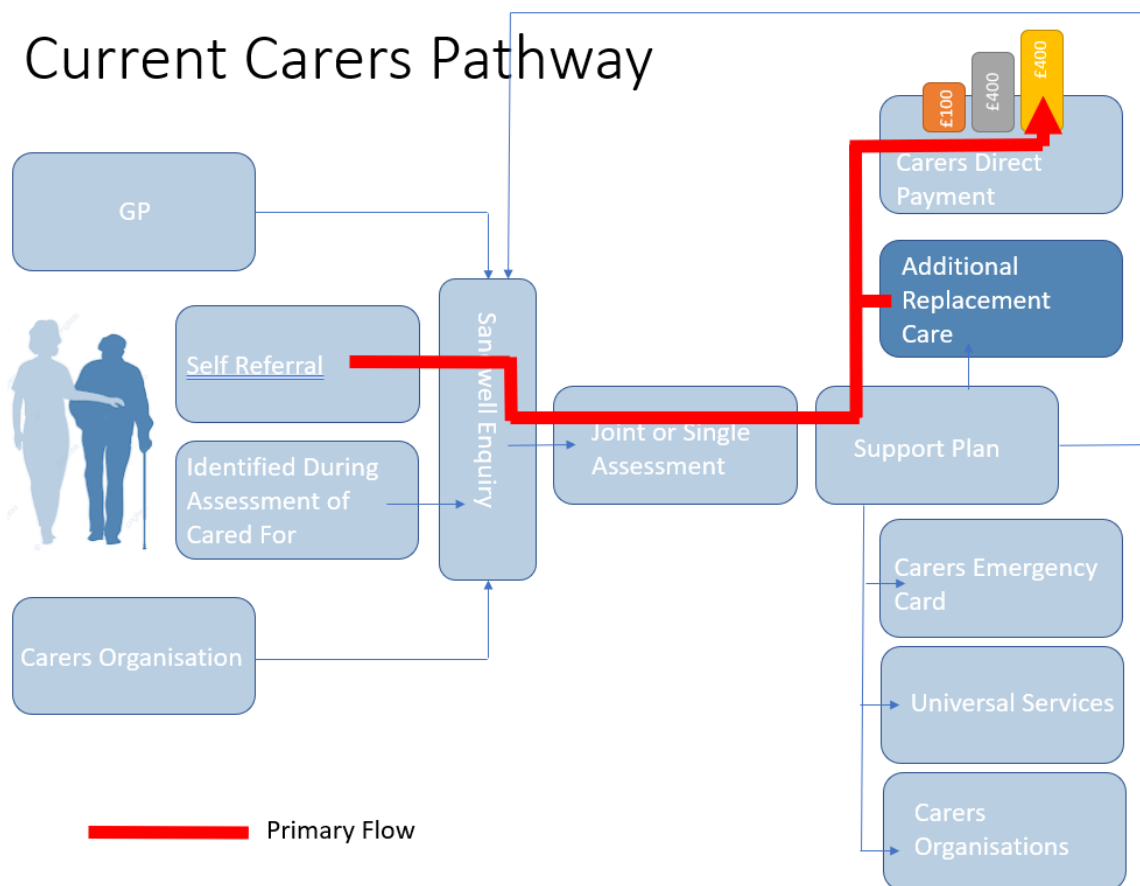
Growing Up in Sandwell	The service will offer information, advice, or guidance to all carers, including parent carers and young carers signposting to specialist services when appropriate.
Thriving Economy in Sandwell	The new service will offer local job opportunities and work with partners in health, public and voluntary sectors to ensure services and businesses are utilised locally.
Healthy in Sandwell	<p>The service will offer information, advice, guidance, targeted campaigns, partnership working with statutory and voluntary agencies to ensure carers health and wellbeing needs are met.</p> <p>The service will support prevention of hospital admissions, or carer breakdown.</p> <p>The service will develop and maintain a carers register enabling them to proactively support people and offer support early to keep them well.</p>
One Council One Team	The service will be required to work with Sandwell residents and a variety of teams in the Council to support carers in Sandwell. Collaboration and partnership is key across all sectors.

4 Context and Key Issues

Current flow and pathway

- 4.1 The current flow for Carers is mainly self-referral through Enquiry and this tends to result in a Carers Assessment and approval of a Carers Direct Payment of up to £400 a year. The number of people, and the costs of these Direct Payments has increased every year since 2015. The figure below shows the current pathway:

Current Carers Pathway



- 4.2 It is intended that the new Carers Support Service will be a single point of contact for carers, and triage carers to the right support prior to, or instead of, the Carers Assessment process. No one will be refused a Carers Assessment if they request one. A 'No wrong door' approach will be used.
- 4.3 If a carer is not in crisis, then the Carers Support Service will assess and plan appropriate support before referring the carer to the relevant community-based services, until an assessment is required. Thus, utilising all the carer support that is on offer.
- 4.4 This approach will support Sandwell to fulfil its statutory duty and enable people to access quality information, advice, and guidance instead of a waiting list as the first option. The proposed service will improve the customer journey for carers ensuring practical advice and support is made available in a timely manner. This revised approach will significantly improve the offer for carers. Carers will be directed to the support required that will help them to continue in their caring role and whilst also enabling them to continue with their own life goals.

4.5 The new service will be aligned to the CQC Statements to ensure quality outcomes. The key functions are depicted in the following framework adapted from The Carers Quality Framework -National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTI). A full list of proposed functions can be found in the appendices and are based on the engagement feedback.



4.6 The new service will not duplicate any current services, instead it will deliver the services identified in stakeholder engagement and deliver the Joint Carers Strategy whilst meeting statutory obligations. Key functions will include:

- Single point of access
- A wellbeing assessment
- Triage to right support.
- Offer Information, advice, guidance.
- Signpost to specialist support such as parent carer, young carer, and culturally specific services already established.
- Deliver campaigns to find hidden carers and promote carers wellbeing.
- Develop a carers register and proactively contact carers.
- Offer carers cafés across Sandwell for interaction and support.
- Work with health and voluntary sector partners.
- Have a presence in local hospitals.

This list is not exhaustive.

Co-production and engagement

- 4.7 There has been a range of engagement activities between November 2023 and May 2024. This covered a full 12-week engagement period with internal and external stakeholders, ranging from surveys to face to face focus groups.
- 4.8 Over 200 people took part in the engagement. A small group of carers will continue to co-produce the service functions and specification with commissioners. A full report is attached in the appendices.

Key findings from the engagement activity:

- 4.9 Of the 157 survey respondents:
- 92% supported the need for the service.
 - 96% of 153 respondents of this question, said they would use the new service.
 - Respondents wanted a single point of contact for the right information, advice and support, navigation, peer support, and training.
 - The top 3 priorities included information and advice, support for mental wellbeing and respite/ a break from caring role.
 - The engagement revealed that carers want an accessible service in their local town. It is therefore envisaged that the service will have an office base but also use existing assets and established venues to deliver the service across the six towns in the borough, ensuring equity in access.
- 4.10 Commissioners have also considered comments from the Bi-annual Department of Health and Social Care Survey for carers, which described carers need for prompt and appropriate information, advice, and support.

Benchmarking

- 4.11 Commissioners have liaised with colleagues in the West Midlands region to review and understand existing models for carer support. Five Councils completed a benchmarking questionnaire devised by Sandwell Commissioners.

- 4.12 The intelligence from the engagement and national research has been used to design the functions of the new service.
- 4.13 The proposed functions have been scoped and shared with Adult Social Care Staff for discussion and approval. The functions will now be shared confidentially with a closed group of carers before final development of the specification.

5 Alternative Options

- 5.1 Option 1 - Do nothing cannot be considered as an option due to the council's obligation to meet carers needs under the Care Act 2014.
- 5.2 Option 2 - is to deliver the services in-house. The Council do not have the specialist knowledge or capacity needed. This may require more training, recruitment and costs and a delay in sourcing provision. Option 2 was therefore discounted.
- 5.3 Option 3 - is to retain the current commissioned community-based carers services and develop an overarching carers support service that will operate across the six towns of Sandwell. The service will support delivery of the Joint Carers Strategy and Care Act 2014, and an improved customer journey to support better outcomes for Sandwell carers. This is the preferred option.

6 Implications

<p>Resources:</p>	<p>A budget of £1.5m is available to approach the market for the contract life of 5 years, this may be distributed by the provider as £300,000 per annum. This is funded through the Better Care Fund.</p> <p>Benchmarking with four other West Midlands local authorities has shown that they pay the same or more for carer support services than Sandwell. However, most have long established carers centres. Coventry is a common comparator for Sandwell using the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) information. Coventry have confirmed that their spend on carer support services is more than £300,000 per annum.</p>
--------------------------	---

	<p>Sandwell also commission targeted carer support such as Young Carers from the Voluntary Sector. There are 8 grant funded organisations delivering to a range of carers across Sandwell. This support equates to £86,000 per annum.</p> <p>Sandwell's new service will focus on the core elements as detailed in this report. This service is expected to reduce pressure on social care, whilst improving support to carers. The service will be encouraged to income generate, for example a project to support carers in the workplace could be the subject of a bid to the National Lottery.</p>
<p>Legal and Governance:</p>	<p>The proposed procurement will enable the Council to meet its statutory duty under S1 the Care Act 2014.</p> <p>The value of the proposed procurement will be above the threshold at which the relevant provisions of the Public Contract Regulations 2015 apply. Therefore, the tender process and contract award will need to comply with The Public Contract Regulations 2015 and the Council's Contract Procedure Rules which were approved in January 2024.</p> <p>This proposed procurement outlined within this report is a compliant route to market and would comply with the rules referred to above. Officers should ensure that the Council's Best Value duties are met by ensuring tender documents incorporate robust key performance indicators and contract management mechanisms.</p> <p>The Council's Contract Procedure Rules require the Cabinet Member to approve the commencement of the procurement and the award of contracts for the estimated value of the service and this paper seeks this authority.</p> <p>A Data Privacy Impact Assessment (DPIA) has also been completed.</p>
<p>Risk:</p>	<p>The risks have been recorded in a Risk Register and will be monitored on a regular basis, with risks being escalated as required. Based on the information</p>

	<p>provided, it is the officers' opinion that for the risks that have been identified, arrangements are in place to manage and mitigate these risks effectively.</p> <p>As this a new service, there are low risks presented in term of an exit strategy or TUPE.</p>
Equality:	<p>An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been completed and reviewed by the EIA Team. The EIA has shown no adverse impacts or issues of concern for people with protected characteristics in line with the Equality Act 2010 and PSED Duties.</p> <p>At this stage of the project, it is expected that there will be no adverse impact on stakeholders and their protected characteristics. It is envisaged that the impacts are more likely to be positive due to the continuation of the services, and the new service model with additional services will enable carers to have access to timely support and advice. The service will be required to ensure access is equitable and work with carers from communities that are represented in Sandwell.</p>
Health and Wellbeing:	<p>The provision of a carers service will support the health and wellbeing of people who utilise the service, there are no implications.</p>
Social Value:	<p>Bidders will be required to evidence social value to Sandwell. This will include local benefits such as utilisation of service, increased employment, and volunteers from Sandwell.</p>
Climate Change:	<p>The contract will require a local office base and use of online and telephone-based information, advice, and guidance to reduce car use, which benefits the environment. The contract will require the use of online or telephone meetings to liaise with professionals, to reduce carbon footprint. This will be requested in the bid under social value.</p>
Corporate Parenting:	<p>This service will be universal and will benefit anyone requiring carer support or advice.</p>

7. Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Engagement Report
- Appendix 2 – Survey of Adult Carers summary
- Appendix 3 – Equality Impact Assessment

The following Appendices are assessed as exempt from disclosure under Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) on the basis it is considered that information contained within these documents relates to the financial or business affairs of the Council or third parties, and if disclosed one or more parties may be prejudiced including the Council in discharging its statutory obligations to secure best value in the competitive procurement of goods and services.

- Appendix 4 – Data Protection Impact Assessment
- Appendix 5 – Risk Register

8. Background Papers

A separate Cabinet Member briefing was delivered 01 October 2024.