



Report of: Director Adult Social Services

Meeting of:	Date:	Ward(s):
Executive	22/7/2021	

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SUBJECT: Procurement Strategy for Islington’s Carers Hub

1. Synopsis

- 1.1 This report seeks pre-tender approval for the procurement strategy in respect of carers support services in Islington in accordance with Rule 2.7 of the Council’s Procurement Rules.
- 1.2 The service will provide 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 procurement of the offer proposed will enable carers to be supported throughout and beyond the time of their caring role, responding to their multiple needs whether these be financial, social, emotional, psychological or physical.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To approve the procurement strategy for Islington’s Carers Hub as outlined in this report.
- 2.2 To delegate authority to award the contract to the Corporate Director of People in consultation with the Executive Member for Health and Social Care.

3. Background

- 3.1 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. Carers may look after an ageing partner, a disabled adult child, support an elderly neighbour or a friend with substance use issues.

Nationally, 6.8 million people provide unpaid care for a disabled, seriously-ill or older loved ones in the UK, saving the state £132 billion a year.¹ Despite it being a statutory requirement that carers receive the same level of focus as the cared for or service user, this is often not the case with the emphasis often still remaining on the cared for person.

We intend to procure a service provider who will run an extensive offer to support unpaid carers in their caring role. This is to fulfil the Council's statutory responsibilities as outlined in the Care Act 2014. The contract with the current provider (Age UK Islington) expires in February 2022.

Islington's Carers Hub is currently run by Age UK Islington who have 3200 carers registered with them and support 1200 carers per year. Core functions of their service include Information & Advice, Support Groups, and a Breaks fund while they also host events, provide carers assessments and training.

It is important to recognise and appreciate carers for the vital role they play in our society and ensure they feel valued. It is key that carers' interests are championed at a strategic level – we want to make Islington a carer friendly borough. It is a priority to focus on carers, ensuring they have opportunities to enhance their wellbeing and can access the right support at the right time. Supporting carers and preventing carer breakdown also means less people will need access to formal care – whether that be for the carer or for the cared for. This is beneficial on an economic level, but also on a personal level for both, carer and cared for. *Further background information, including 'Understanding Carers'; statutory responsibilities under the 'Care Act 2014' and 'Services for Carers' can be found in **Appendix 1**.*

Review of Carers' offer in Islington

Ahead of re-procuring the current carer service, the Adult Social Care commissioning team led a detailed review of the current provision for carers in the borough, both in terms of council support for carers, external support and the wider opportunities to make Islington a more carer friendly borough.

The review ensured the views and insights of Islington Carers were at the centre to ensure the recommendations for a future service reflect the needs and wishes of carers. A 4 –step engagement plan was created to maximise accessibility.

During Step 1 we gathered information about the experiences of carers on a national and local level, compared Islington's offer with that of other London boroughs and had conversations with a range of stakeholders. This was followed by engagement with Carers groups across the borough in Step 2. Step 3 was the distribution of an online survey, with support from Health Watch Islington and community groups to include the experiences of carers from Black and Asian Minority Ethnic group and carers who face digital exclusion. We completed our engagement with Step 4, which consisted of 4 open zoom sessions for Islington carers to share their ideas and experiences.

The following are the priorities that crystallised through the various engagement phases:

¹ Statistics taken from Carers UK

Efficient access to clear and concise information and advice was one of the top priorities for carers. Carers reflected that they were often not aware of support available and did not have the time, energy, access or resources to find the necessary information.

Carers highlighted the need of preventative support and care for themselves in the form of respite, breaks from caring, adequate financial support, mental health support, professional assistance for their cared for and peer to peer support.

Many respondents, especially to the survey, expressed a sense of being forgotten, unacknowledged and unappreciated for the hard work that they do and were disappointed by the lack of support that they received.

From our engagement, it is clear that a carers' service must be able to respond to diverse and changing needs and therefore needs to be dynamic, adaptable and innovative.

The objectives of this procurement are to

- Ensure the wellbeing of carers with a strength-based approach in mind
- Identify more carers and link them up with services
- Offer a variety of opportunities, support and services to meet differing needs
- Encourage greater partnership working in the borough for the benefit of carers

To achieve this approach, we will use an outcome focused service specification to focus the provision towards Carers' wellbeing rather than service outputs.

3.2 Estimated Value

The Carers Hub will continue to be funded through a pooled budget between LBI (91%) and NCL CCG (9%) via section 75 agreement.

The budget for this contract is estimated to be £2,450,000 for the life of the contract (3+2+2 years). The annual value of this contract will be £350,000.

The spend on this service in 2018-2019 was £332,000 and in 2019-2020 was £287,000.

Budgetary considerations

An adequately funded carers hub is important for a range of reasons. A reduction to the budget is likely to impact the effectiveness of this service and have a negative impact on the health and social care system. We are aware that there are many 'hidden' carers, a reduction in funding will preclude many currently hidden carers from being identified and offered support. Also maintaining this level of investment in carers demonstrates the council's commitment to carers and recognition of the vital role they play.

As noted above, Local Authorities have a statutory responsibility to assess and support people caring for loved ones. Recent review of Islington's offer for carers has found that Islington carers would benefit from more support.

In addition to the statutory requirement, providing adequate support to carers is key tool to achieving a healthy health and social care system. Supporting carers and preventing carer breakdown means that less people will need access to formal care – whether that be for the carer or for the cared for. This is beneficial on a personal level for both, carer and cared for but

also provides financial benefits, reducing or delaying the need for more costly statutory services.

The reprocured contract will extend the remit of the current Carers Hub to ensure greater value for money and improved outcomes for carers, building strengths and maximising independence within the existing budget envelope. Following the review of Islington’s carers offer, additional functions and duties will be added to the service specification. The hub will be expected to play a continued but more extensive role in undertaking carers’ assessments to ensure carers receive assessment and support in a timely way and also ensure we make best use of the resources across social care and the wider system.

Savings have not been built into this procurement strategy, efficiencies will be achieved through increasing the remit of the current offer. In previous years there has been an underspend on this budget but there is a clear need for a greater range of support for carers. In 2020/21 the budget was spent in full. As referred to above, supporting carers to continue their caring function prevents further pressure on the system and can be seen as a whole system cost avoidance.

3.3 Procurement Timetable

Engagement Work	October 2020 – January 2021
Procurement Strategy	February 2021
PDMT, CMB, Exec and Joint Board	May – June 2021
Coproduction work	February – September 2021
Service Specification	February – April 2021
Tender document development	April – July 2021
Publish Tender	August 2021
Evaluate and award	September – October 2021
Contract Start Date	1 st March 2022

3.4 Options appraisal

Procurement Option 1: In-house service delivery

Benchmarking

Nationally, the vast majority of carers’ services are externally commissioned and from the local authorities consulted for this project, no examples were identified of in-house provision. The impact of this option on quality and resident outcomes, therefore, is unknown.

Pros

- Ensures the services share Islington’s vision and take a strengths-based approach to transform outcomes.
- Ensures ‘good’ jobs for employees, with good T&Cs plus guaranteed opportunities for development/progression.

Cons

- Management capacity, expertise and specialisms could not be established quickly enough to maintain service quality and prevent disruption for residents.
- Cannot benefit to the same extent from the experience and connections of (largely) VCS

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enables full utilisation of the council's local knowledge and relationships to improve community participation. • Allows for improved integration with other services in ASC. • Council controls service strategy and retains flexibility to change it. • Ability to have greater control of social value. • Council retains full control to drive efficiencies/economies of scale. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • carer specialist providers within the borough, across London and nationally. • Would not be able to take advantage of benefits from social value. • Cannot benefit from the innovation offered by the specialist providers in this area. • In-house service delivery could alienate and stigmatise carers who have had negative experiences of the council or who may not wish to be perceived as council 'service users'. • It would require high set-up and staff costs.
Outcome	Not recommended

Procurement Option 2: Direct negotiation

Benchmarking
Our market engagement reflects an interest in providing the carers hub for Islington.

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-produce the service so it reflects both Islington's and the provider's vision. • Ability to have greater control of social value. • This approach may afford the council a greater control to drive efficiencies/economies of scale. • Opportunity to elicit additional or innovative offer via increased Social Value weighting for evaluation as per new Progressive Procurement Strategy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are numerous organisations that offer carers support so there is little need for a direct negotiation. • A direct negotiation would close off the possibility of unique approaches that we may not have considered. • Any benefits gained through social value would need to be shared or not Islington specific.
Outcome	Not recommended

Procurement Option 3: Re-procure with another borough

Benchmarking
Benchmarking did not identify an instance of two boroughs procuring their carers service together. It also did not indicate another local borough who wished to procure a similar offer to our proposed offer.
However, the pilot with Mobilise is currently being run in collaboration with the London Borough of Camden so there may be opportunities for continuing to deliver certain aspects of the offer in partnership with other boroughs.

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to share best practice and learning. • Opportunity to commission more specialist services and agree reciprocal arrangements for referral into these services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timescales for procurement do not match up with those of other boroughs. • Less direct influence on service design and configuration. • Reciprocal arrangements onerous to set up and maintain due to complexity.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential for increased value for money, achieved via economies of scale or wealth of resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other borough may not share our vision • It could be a disincentive for the market as it could be more complicated to mobilise.
Outcome	Not recommended

Procurement Option 4: Re-procure via competitive tender

Benchmarking This approach has been successfully adopted in Islington previously and by other boroughs.

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full transformation to a strengths-based approach leading to improved outcomes for residents. • Advertised procurement likely to deliver competitive prices. • Opportunity to invigorate this service area with new providers. • Management capacity, expertise and specialisms likely to be established quickly enough to maintain service quality and prevent disruption for residents. • Benefit from the experience and connections of VCS providers within the borough, across London and nationally. • Benefit from the innovation offered by the specialist providers in this area. • Carers may have had negative experiences of the council or not wish to be considered a 'service user'. Easier to offer support in less stigmatising ways through VCS organisation or organisation independent to the council • Likely to be awarded to a VSC with added value of existing open access services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared values/priorities reliant on developing strong relationships with providers. • Less control over the service model and quality, again relies on strong specification and relationships with the providers.
Outcome	<i>Recommended</i>

3.5 Key Considerations

Economic, social and environmental sustainability

Social benefits

The service will help people lead healthier, fulfilling lives in the community, reducing social isolation and maximising life opportunities and choices.

Social benefits of a carers hub will be in place with an emphasis on the following:

- Improving carers' wellbeing and choice through a strength based approach;

- Preventative/early intervention: if carers are supported in their role as care givers this will allow both, carer and cared for, to continue as they wish and reduce pressure on the social care system;
- Reducing social isolation of carers which will lead to improved mental health
- Including service users in service design and ongoing service development

In addition to the social benefits, the following opportunities for economic benefits in Islington exist:

Economic

- Support and promote employment opportunity in the borough and working with the Council's iWork service to provide opportunities to local residents, advertising on the Council's new Islington Working employment search site.
- The service will provide voluntary and employment opportunities for young carers and carers who wish to re-enter the workforce.
- Providers delivering sound employment practice and employment rights through: evidencing progression and training opportunities for staff; implementation of equality and diversity policies; enabling security of employment for the workforce.
- Maintaining offices in LBI and contributing to the local economy by paying council tax etc.
- Contributing to the Council's World of Work programme, to expose students in Islington to the career opportunities in the VCSE as well as health and social care sector.
- Prioritising the use of sub-regional suppliers where possible in any sub-contracting supply chain opportunities.

The following environmental opportunities for social value have been identified and will be reflected in the new contract:

Environmental

- Encouraging energy efficiency and water consumption in office spaces and meeting rooms used for the service
- Making best use of buildings which already exist
- Recycling
- Travel planning for employees, to minimise carbon emissions.

Social value will be achieved through the weighting in the award criteria. 20% of the tender return will be awarded on the providers commitments to social value. Bidders will be rewarded for any Social Value innovations that the Council deems relevant to its corporate objectives and the delivery of this contract.

London Living Wage

LLW will be a condition of this contract where permitted by law.

Best value

The service will implement a robust performance-monitoring framework so that value for money, quality, outcomes and cost effectiveness can be assessed. The monitoring framework will include activity levels, evidence of outcomes achieved, as measured against the desired service KPIs outcomes in the service specification and individual support plans. Expenditure

against the service budget will also be required. Regular contract monitoring reviews will take place and the provider will submit information on the service on a quarterly basis. This process allows for continuous improvement and service development. The service specification will include provisions to ensure the provider offers continuous improvement against delivery targets, and works with commissioners and service users to co-produce a service where innovations can be quickly implemented.

It is likely that TUPE will apply for this contract.

3.6 Evaluation

The tender will be conducted in one stage, known as the Open Procedure, as the tender is 'open' to all organisations who express an interest. The Open Procedure includes minimum requirements which organisations must meet before the rest of their tender is evaluated.

Tender Award Criteria	Total
Quality – made up of	70%
Proposed approach to service delivery	25%
Proposed approach to strategic partnerships and innovation	20%
Proposed approach to engagement and coproduction	15%
Proposed approach to quality management and performance outcomes	10%
Social Value	20%
Cost	10%
Total	100%

3.7 Business Risks

Inaccurate needs analysis

Due to the heightened difficulties of engaging with service users during Covid-19 and the related lockdown, a potential risk is that our needs analysis may have gaps, resulting in an insufficient service. To mitigate this, we tried to offer a variety of engagement methods; online survey, a telephone survey, four open engagement sessions via zoom at various times of the day (morning, lunch, afternoon and after working hours) and when we did not have the expected number of carers, we added a fourth engagement session. Moreover, we attended various carers groups in the borough virtually and worked closely with HealthWatch Islington to ensure we heard from a diverse range of voices in the borough. We also took feedback from Islington carers hub and other carers organisations who shared feedback and views of carers as well as drawing on other carer insights we already held ...

As we develop the service specification we will continue to engage carers to coproduce the specification with interested carers and discuss with stakeholders to ensure the outcomes we seek are in line with the needs and wishes of carers.

Lack of interest in offering an innovative service

A risk is a potential lack of interest or innovation in the market to suit the requirements of our new specification. To mitigate this we are currently engaging in conversation with various providers to gauge interest and hear about unique approaches in their work. We do not anticipate this being an issue.

Risks in transition to the new service delivery model

The transition to the new service will need to be carefully managed to ensure continuity of support and to manage any anxieties arising from any change in support provider and service location should there be a change.

Opportunities

Contribute to local economy

There will be a requirement for the service to have a base in the borough so it will be able to contribute to the local economy and provide employment opportunities for local residents. This will be assessed through the social value section of the award criteria.

Promoting Carers’ interests

The successful provider will be charged with providing a strategic carers champion function in the borough to ensure Carers voices are heard and interests are promoted. This will be assessed at the tender evaluation stage and through contract management when the contract is live.

Increase support offer for Carers

This procurement will ensure feedback from carers and the outcomes of the review to be embedded in the new service offer. It will achieve better value for money by expanding Islington’s offer for Carers.

3.8 The Employment Relations Act 1999 (Blacklist) Regulations 2010 explicitly prohibit the compilation, use, sale or supply of blacklists containing details of trade union members and their activities. Following a motion to full Council on 26 March 2013, all tenderers will be required to complete an anti-blacklisting declaration. Where an organisation is unable to declare that they have never blacklisted, they will be required to evidence that they have 'self-cleansed'. The Council will not award a contract to organisations found guilty of blacklisting unless they have demonstrated 'self-cleansing' and taken adequate measures to remedy past actions and prevent re-occurrences.

3.9 The following relevant information is required to be specifically approved by the Executive in accordance with rule 2.8 of the Procurement Rules:

Relevant information	Information/section in report
1 Nature of the service	We intend to procure a service provider who will run an extensive and innovative offer to support unpaid carers in their caring role in line with the local authorities’ responsibilities as outlined in the Care Act 2014. See paragraph 3.1
2 Estimated value	The estimated value per year is £350,000

	<p>The agreement is proposed to run for a period of 3 years with an optional extension of 2 +2 years.</p> <p>See paragraph 3.2</p>
3 Timetable	<p>PDMT, CMB, Exec and Joint Board May – June 2021</p> <p>Coproduction work February – September 2021</p> <p>Service Specification February – April 2021</p> <p>Tender document development April – July 2021</p> <p>Publish Tender August 2021</p> <p>Evaluate and award September – October 2021</p> <p>Contract Start Date 1st March 2022</p> <p>See paragraph 3.3</p>
4 Options appraisal for tender procedure including consideration of collaboration opportunities	<p>Re-procure via competitive tender. Details as described within the report.</p> <p>Please see paragraph 3.4</p>
5 Consideration of: Social benefit clauses; London Living Wage; Best value; TUPE, pensions and other staffing implications	<p>Details as described within the report.</p> <p>Please see paragraph 3.5</p>
6 Award criteria	<p>Quality 70%, Social Value 20% and Cost 10%</p> <p>See paragraph 3.6</p>
7 Any business risks associated with entering the contract	<p>Details as described within the report.</p> <p>Please see paragraph 3.7</p>
8 Any other relevant financial, legal or other considerations.	

4. Implications

4.1 Financial implications:

The Carers Hub is currently funded from the Carers Pooled budget to which both Islington Council and Islington CCG contribute. Islington Council contributes 91% and Islington CCG contributes 9% of the total expenditure budget.

The total annual value of the Carers Hub contract is anticipated to be £350,000. The current budget for this service is £350,000. Therefore the new contract will not create any budgetary pressures.

The expectation is that this tender will be met within this budget. If any additional pressures are incurred, management actions will need to be identified to cover this.

The value of this contract over the seven year period will be £2,450,000.

Payment of London Living Wage is a requirement of the contract and should not result in any additional costs.

4.2 Legal Implications:

The services being sought are to procure a service provider who will run an extensive offer to support unpaid carers in their caring role. The council has statutory duties and powers to meet needs for care and support under the Care Act 2014 (Sections 18-20). The council may enter into contracts for services for carers under section 1 of the Local Government (Contracts) Act 1997. The Corporate Director of People has authority to approve procurement strategies in relation to contracts for using revenue money over £2,000,000 of Islington Council spend where authorised to do so under the constitution or by a specific Executive decision (Procurement Rule 18.1.3)

The services being procured are subject to the light touch regime set out in Regulations 74 to 77 of the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (the Regulations). The threshold for application of this light touch regime is currently £663,540.00. The value of the proposed contract is above this threshold. It will therefore need to be advertised on the Find a Tender Service (FTS). There are no prescribed procurement processes under the light touch regime. Therefore the council may use its discretion as to how it conducts the procurement process provided that it: discharges its duty to comply with the Treaty principles of equal treatment, non-discrimination and fair competition; conducts the procurement in conformance with the information that it provides on the FTS advert; and ensures that the time limits that it imposes on suppliers, such as for responding to adverts is reasonable and proportionate. Following the procurement a contract award notice is required to be published on FTS.

In compliance with the requirements of the light touch regime in the Regulations and the council's Procurement Rules the proposal outlined in the report is to advertise a call for competition on FTS and procure the service using a competitive tender process. On completion of the procurement the contract may be awarded as required to the highest scoring tenderer subject to the tender providing value for money for the council.

4.3 Environmental Implications and contribution to achieving a net zero carbon Islington by 2030:

Report completed and sign off by energy services.

4.4 Resident Impact Assessment:

The council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it (section 149 Equality Act 2010). The council has a duty to have due regard to the need to remove or minimise disadvantages, take steps to meet needs, in particular steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, and encourage people to participate in public life. The council must have due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

A Resident Impact Assessment was completed on 26 February 2021. The main findings can be found below and the full document is attached as an appendix.

Expectations of the new carers' hub will centre around building strengths, ensuring wellbeing, and addressing inequalities. Inequalities may be due to being a carer or inequalities or due to the protected characteristics of some carers. The carers' hub will be tasked with working with partners to challenge and reduce discrimination, harassment and victimisation of disabled carers; and, by providing support for the caring role and for carers' own wellbeing including the provision of mental health support and assistance with their own disabilities or health conditions. Furthermore, the contract will require that the provider incorporate a broad range of ways for carers to access support, reducing discrimination caused as a result of inaccessibility to resources and support.

Moreover, the intention to procure a carers hub which offers core services, such as information and advice, Carers Assessments and financial support, alongside a responsibility for developing partnerships with other organisations that provide more specialised support, the contract will ensure a focus on an inclusive offer that considers and develops services that respond to the strengths and needs of carers with a range of protected characteristics. The contract will include a requirement to consider the negative impacts of discrimination, harassment and victimisation and to advance equality of opportunity.

5. Reason for recommendations

- 5.1 This report recommends re-commissioning Islington offer for Carers through an open competitive tender. This will allow the outcomes from the review and carers' feedback in particular to shape the development of the offer. It will enable value for money and a better offer for Carers to be achieved by increasing the scope of the service.

Additionally the current contract has come to an end and there is a contract extension in place until February 2022 so to comply with procurement requirements, a competitive procurement must be completed to continue the service beyond this time.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Carers in Islington background information

Appendix 2 Resident Impact Assessment (RIA)

Appendix 3 Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

Appendix 4 In-house cost modelling (Expemt)

Background papers: None

Final report clearance:

Signed by: Stephen Taylor

Director Adult Social Services

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