

Cabinet Meeting on Insert Date

Intensive support for Staffordshire Children with Disabilities



Councillor Mark Sutton, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People said,

"Insert quote agreed with relevant Cabinet Member(s) and Communications Team. Contact Paula Wright or Paul Dutton for assistance."

Report Summary:

The Council has a legal duty to ensure Children's Community Support (including Domiciliary Care) provision is provided to support children and young people with a range of disabilities who have been assessed by a suitably qualified Social Worker as being eligible for a personal care service within the family home and local community.

The Council currently commission a Children's Community Support (including domiciliary care) service through a Flexible Framework of 28 providers, these arrangements will automatically expire on the 30th September 2024.

Cabinet are therefore asked to consider the options, detailed within this report regarding a new Children's Community Support Service from 1st October 2025.

Following the options appraisal carried out by Commissioners, Cabinet are asked to endorse the recommendation for the Council to commission a new Children's Community Support Service from 1st October 2025, based on option 3. This proposal advocates the benefits of developing these arrangements, to provide more flexible, responsive support that draws on children and families' existing strengths, and focuses on development, independence, preparedness for adulthood, and cost effectiveness.

Cabinet – Wednesday 20 November 2024

Children’s Community Support (including domiciliary care)

Recommendation(s) of Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

I recommend that Cabinet:

- a. Support the open tender approach and implementation of a Flexible Framework in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations (PCR) 2015 (including delegated approval to relevant officers to award contracts) to secure the required provision (Children’s Community Support, including Domiciliary Care) at optimal Value for Money commencing from 1 October 2025;
- b. Approval is granted for the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People to make a delegated decision to extend the contract as per for Contract Particulars for the extension periods after the initial term of the contract. The initial term of the contract will be for two years, from 1 October 2025 to 30 September 2027, with two potential extension periods of 12 months (to 30 September 2028) and 12 months (to 30 September 2029);
- c. That delegated authority for alternative approval of ‘high’ volumes of call-off contracts will be sought as per D13.5 of the Council’s Procurement Regulations
- d. Endorse the option to recommission the new Children’s Community Support Service from 1 October 2025, based on option 3.

Local Member Interest:

N/A

Report of the Director for Children and Families**Reasons for Recommendations:**

1. Ability to better meet the needs of Children and Young People within the existing financial envelope.
2. Allowing for different levels of support within one contracting arrangement.
3. Access to a wide range of providers with various specialisms ensuring we can respond appropriately to the needs of Children and Young People and fulfil our statutory duties.
4. The current arrangements for Children's Community Support expire on the 30 September 2025.

Background

5. In Staffordshire there are around 17,000 Children and Young people with SEND living with their families who need support to remain together at home, in the family unit. It is recognised that early help and support is vital to help families stay together and sustain their own caring responsibilities.
6. 7,000 of these Children and Young People have an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) maintained by Staffordshire County Council ('the Council') and around 550 have been assessed as needing support from the Children with Disability Social Care teams.
7. As of August 2024, 208 of these Children and Young People access support via the Childrens Community Support Flexible Framework (including domiciliary care), 163 receiving statutory support.
8. Children and Young People who receive this support have a range of needs, this includes physical and learning Disabilities, autism and have behaviours that challenge.
9. The Council's involvement with families and children needs to be reliable, relevant and reduce the possibility of an escalation of needs leading to intense provision.

Statutory Duties

10. The Council's legal duties in relation to Community Support (including Domiciliary Care) are set out in;
 - a. Section 17 & 20 of the Children Act 1989
 - b. The Chronically Sick & Disabled Persons Act 1970
 - c. The Children & Families Act 2014
 - d. The SEND Code of Practice 2014
 - e. The Breaks for Carers of Disabled Children Regulations 2011

11. The Council must ensure appropriate provision is in place to support Children and Young People with a range of disabilities, who have been assessed by Childrens Social Care, as being eligible for personal care services within the family home and their local community

Current arrangements

12. The current Children's Community Support Flexible Framework ('the Framework') has 28 Providers who provide tailored packages of support to eligible Children and Young People.

13. There are 4 different Framework 'Lot's' which can be categorised into different care types (see appendix 3 – Framework 'lots');
 - a. Lot 1. Life Skills and Independence – this is the only element of the Framework that does not require a social care assessment and is not a statutory service. This support provides a 'bridge' between the short breaks activities and statutory social care support of Lots 2,3 and 4.
 - b. Lot 2. Community & Home Care Support Socialisation
 - c. Lot 3. Sitting Service
 - d. Lot 4. Urgent & Complex Care

14. The Framework operates across the 8 districts of Staffordshire. Providers offer support in their chosen districts and according to their specialism, therefore not all Framework Providers support in each district and/or each 'Lot'.

15. The value of the current framework is circa £3m.

16. In 2023 the Framework was reopened with the view to create additional capacity and increase the volume of Framework providers. This was successful and means that the Council are no longer reliant on high cost off-contract providers. This supports the Councils ambition of ensuring packages of support are quality assured and value for money. Families also have choice due to the increased number of providers on the framework.

17. While the number of Children and Young People receiving the statutory element of support has increased by 207%, the spend has only increased by 20% with the cost per Child / Young Person decreasing from £12,343 to £4,547 PA. This reflects the reduction in off contract provision.
18. Offering early support from Lot 1. Life Skills and Independence have proven successful in preventing the need for intensive high-cost S17 support and allowing Children and Young People to transition to short break activities in their community.
19. The time taken to arrange provision from the date of initial referral has reduced from an average of 114 days to 2 days
20. The voice of families has been put at the heart of the service with the introduction of a complaints process and a family feedback survey.
21. Links have been nurtured with Adult Social Care to 'Prepare for Adulthood' with clarity of support, shared best practice and knowledge. 21% of our current Children and Young People accessing community support turn 18 in the next 3 years
22. This provision plays an extremely important part in helping reduce or prevent unplanned entry to care for Children and Young People in receipt of support, by helping families sustain their own caring responsibilities. It is recognised that early help and support is vital to help families stay together and the cost of this type of care is very much more effective than residential care

Rationale for proposed changes

23. Demand for this service has increased significantly over the last 3 years. In 2020-21, 56 Children and Young People were in receipt of home care and community support packages. This compares to 90 in 2022-23 an increase of 61%. A total of 130 was forecast for 2023/4 and 151 actual support packages were in place an increase of 68% year on year.
24. With 163 Children and Young People already receiving statutory element of support in 2024/5 an additional 30 support packages are forecast for the remainder of the year (above natural migration) – growth of 28% year on year (this exclude Lot 1 where 150 Children and Young People are forecast to receive this non statutory element of support). See Appendix 5 for Lot 1 budget.

25. Some of this growth is due to the improvement in medical interventions and health support which are enabling some Children and Young People with highly complex, life-limiting conditions to live longer than they would have done even a few years ago. This is reflected in the increase in Lot 4 provision. However, Lot 4 is also supporting many Children and Young People with complex needs and the proposed changes would offer more provision to support challenging behaviours, edge of care and complex care.
26. Over the last 12 months there has been a significant increase in the use of the Framework to meet the needs of Children and Young People with complex needs. Carers are now being utilised in other settings to help with overnight support, school attendance and intensive packages of support to keep families together and prevent children coming into care. The growing requests from outside the CDS teams means the framework needs to adapt to support services with the clear objective of earlier support and keeping families together.
27. Similarly the number of Children and Young People are increasing who require specialist support such as PEG feeding, catheter management, manual handling, tracheotomy support as well as a knowledge and training in a variety of medical conditions. More specialist care and nursing staff are required to support these families.
28. Due to the current specification, there are a limited number of Providers with care staff who are trained in complex care. The development of the new specification will incorporate these requirements meaning the Framework will be better equipped to support these Children and Young People.
29. Support for Children and Young People with behaviours that challenge has increased over the last 3 years, accelerated by the impact of the pandemic, with carers required to have breakaway, de-escalation and restraint training. Often Children and Young People require 2:1 support due to challenging behaviours. More work is being done to analyse the needs of these Children and Young People to determine how we can improve the support we offer them and how we can prepare adult services for the support they need to put in place for transition. The break clauses in the proposed contract will allow time to develop approaches around need.
30. Capacity in the social care sector continues to be a challenge. The impact of the pandemic has increased the void of skilled workers. This is further exacerbated in the childrens market due to the hours of care required (before and after school). Many providers have sought to

support in both adults and childrens markets as it enables carers to work throughout the day, supporting adults during school time and C/YP before and after school. However, the two markets are vastly different and there are many factors in childrens care that support workers from the adult market are not aware of or able to adjust to.

31. Some providers have sought to fill capacity by obtaining sponsorship licences. While this increases volume it does not always translate to increased skill and can result in lack of understanding, cultural differences, lack of drivers and poor local knowledge of areas. Frequent turnover of carers results in instability for families and migration between providers is high. It is recognised that any future changes by the government will also impact on capacity. Work to continue to grow the market will be ongoing and could include providing training to help support opening up this market
32. Recruitment of skilled staff remains a risk, particularly where wages are often poor which devalues such an important service. Consideration of development of more in-house provision would give opportunities for better involvement and ease of awareness of the service provided. This would also avoid any tendency to cherry pick the more financially lucrative work

Options Appraisal

33. Considering the data and evidence collated and the current market dynamics, the following options have been evaluated to develop the service from October 2025.
34. Each option was evaluated based on the following outcomes:
 - a. Enables delivery of statutory duties and responsibilities
 - b. Supports with the delivery of strategy objectives/priorities
 - c. Financially sustainable and value for money
 - d. Offers social value by supporting to increase individual and community resilience
 - e. Manages operational and reputational risk

No:	Option:	Strengths:	Opportunities:	Risks:	Cost per annum
1	<p>Option One: Continue with current commissioned services i.e. framework and independence programme in current format of care types</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continues to meet statutory duties for Children’s Community Care. ▪ SCC is compliant with appropriate requirements as outlined in guidance, regulation and legislation, including those set out in the Children Act 1989, Working Together to Safeguarding Children (2013) and the Children & Families Act 2014. ▪ Allows for moderate levels of access ▪ Has been effective in supporting some children and young people ▪ Creates an outcomes commissioning environment that can secure value for money through better relationships with other bodies: public, private and voluntary. ▪ Offers value for money in challenging market environments ▪ Promotes responsible commissioning in terms of addressing social, economic and environmental issues, equality and diversity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure the market has the right skills, knowledge, and experience to provide high quality support and care which is focused on outcomes as opposed to “time and task”. Deliver outcomes based, individual bespoke results ▪ Providers can excel in a specific area of the care market ▪ Providers can enter the market at different levels of involvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Does not meet the needs of all children’s/young persons. ▪ Cannot increase or decrease support easily, in line with the needs of the individual. ▪ May still require some packages sourced off the framework.(especially complex care) ▪ Relatively low numbers of children, young people and families requiring Community Support Services has made it difficult to encourage providers to enter the market as it is difficult to provide assurances on volumes and likely demand. ▪ More complex providers offer hours above the assessed need, as agencies block charge for 3-4 hours minimum, irrespective of the requirements of the care plan. ▪ Framework does not allow for additional providers to join in the same way as a DPS 	<p>Community Care = £800k</p> <p>Life Skills & independence = £150K</p> <p>Total = c£950K</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helps deliver a consistent shared understanding of Staffordshire's Vision, Values and Principles for delivering Children's Domiciliary Care. Ensure openness, transparency and value for money, at all times, through the application of consistent commissioning standards and approaches across the commissioning of children's care needs. Offer payment by results 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> C/YP information on different systems i.e. Capita and CareDirector with no overall "vision" 	
2	<p>Option Two: In House Delivery Children's Community Care is provided directly by SCC through the Children & Families System. This provides an increased opportunity for SCC to</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continues to meet statutory duties for Children's Home Care. Provides the Local Authority control to ensure fast and response services, which have a consistent level of quality. SCC is compliant with appropriate requirements as outlined in guidance, regulation, and legislation, including those set out in the Children Act 1989, Working Together to Safeguarding Children (2023) and the Children & Families Act 2014. Enables SCC to develop a workforce with specific skills, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Market facilitation in order to meet the holistic needs of children, young people and families. SCC can support the market to capture and share market intelligence in order to influence and support market development. Ensure the market has the right skills, knowledge and experience to provide high quality support and care which is focused on outcomes as 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relatively low numbers of children, young people and families requiring Community Support Services may make it difficult to develop an internal service delivery model which is sustainable. An internal delivery model may lead to increased staffing costs leading to the total spend on Children's Community Care increasing (because of the uncertain nature of demand). An internal service would lead to challenges in the delivery of 	<p>£650k (Not inclusive of additional costs if emergency /on call care staff required, or specialist training costs)</p> <p>+£150k 1-1 Life skills & Independence</p> <p>=£800K</p>

<p>maximise the resources available to Children's Community Care to ensure affordable, accessible, efficient, outcome focussed, flexible and high-quality care services to meet the individual assessed needs and demonstrate progress towards agreed outcomes. This option suggests that the service would be fully integrated with</p>	<p>knowledge and experience in order to meet the specific needs of individual children, young people and families.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Deliver services that meet the holistic needs of children, young people and families. ▪ Seek to improve services through innovation. ▪ Allows SCC more control over quality, cost and capacity within the marketplace. 	<p>opposed to "time and task".</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Enables SCC to develop robust Quality Assurance and contract management. ▪ Allows SCC to access emergency support packages ▪ Local delivery of services 	<p>specialist specific services to meet the holistic care children, young people and families which would normally be provided by specialist providers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ C/YP moving above tier 2 unnecessarily if integrated into SCC services. ▪ Could still become reliant on non-framework provision due to breadth of need in childrens market ▪ Difference of approach to ASC makes transition difficult for CYP 	
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	the wider Children & Families System.				
3	<p>Option Three: Expanding the existing step up/down service,</p> <p>To be delivered by a range of providers which includes complex care/needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continues to allow access at different levels of support but expands the Lots to be clearer • Access to a wider range of providers • Flexibility to step up/down support as required across all community support • More choice of service types to offer families • Potential cost saving by decreasing duplication of services • Ability to meet the needs of more children using less resources ▪ Enabling CYP with complex needs to access other family services (HAF/Aiming High) with support from framework much like a TA in school. ▪ Introduce more centre based providers – lower cost, stable support, increases independence, less intrusive for families. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourages more providers who can offer differing levels of support onto the framework, could also lead to providers wishing to ‘upskill’ carers to obtain more packages, enabling greater financial security • Opportunities for joint working across organisations as children step up and down the service <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Competitive costings as the number of providers who can offer support will be greater ▪ Providers can excel in a specific area of the care market ▪ Providers can enter the market at different levels of involvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could mean reduced volumes for agencies through more Lots. • Potential for framework to mask resource challenges in other services 	<p>Community Care = £800k</p> <p>Life Skills & independence = £150K</p> <p>Total = c£950K</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce overnight Lot – if required this would mean a fixed cost instead of additional costs. Introduce nursing Lot – again, a fixed cost via the framework Introduce emergency care – short intensive support to keep families together. Accessed by the AST teams – shorter notice period reflecting timeframe. Avoid emergency high cost off contract and/or longer term placement costs. Offers real choice to families 			
4	<p>Option Four: Aligning children's community care with adult framework, children's community support framework is an additional part of the adult's domiciliary care framework.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to a bigger market of providers, more choice for families Bigger pool of care staff, to meet growing demand Allows joint working across SCC children and adults, enabling fluidity when transitioning to adulthood (Preparing for Adulthood Pathway) Creates more competition within the all age care market, helping to drive down costs, whilst encouraging a high quality of service Consistency in regulatory body i.e.CQC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourages more providers to engage further with the delivery of children's care. Encourages current adult providers to 'upskill' current carers i.e. complex health children's packages Learning and development opportunities for carers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of continuity of care for our children's families due to the upskilling of the staff within each provider Difference of care offering for CYP compared to adults. Many staff prefer one or the other to suit personal circumstance/training/interest. Systemic quality issues identified in adults may filter into children's services due to factors such as a high turnover of staff and increased pressure with stretched capacity 	<p>17.89 (adult framework provider rate) x hours of care = £513K (figure IF all hours of care were delivered at framework rate) + 1.1 Lifeskills budget of up to £150K</p> <p>=£663k total</p>

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Currently, commissioning cycles with adults SCC not aligned. ▪ Already targeted ASC providers to join Childrens framework and only a handful are on both. Loss of quality childrens agencies. 	
5	<p>Option Five: One lead provider to deliver all services for children with SEND across a range of needs</p> <p>Step up/down service all lots to be delivered by one lead provider.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continues to allow access at different levels within the service. • Flexibility to step up/down support as required across all community support. • One singular point of contact for practitioners. • Continuity of care for children/young people and their families • Enables the delivery of a personalised bespoke service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ability to enhance quality by directly working with one singular organisation/provider ▪ Capital investment for one service that can utilise funding in a proactive way, ensuring quality services can be delivered in terms of the number of skilled staff working in the service ▪ Opportunity to enhance all staff skill set, within lead provider ▪ Enables SCC and families to build a strong rapport with the provider ▪ Allows SCC to establish key contract management and delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Potentially a significant financial risk for SCC and families supported by the service should there be quality concerns/provider breakdown ▪ Limits engagement with wider care markets ▪ Lack of market stimulation and growth ▪ Cost of management fee for one provider to coordinate all care and support ▪ Limits choice for families 	£750k

<p>6</p>	<p>Option Six A hybrid of Option 2 and 3 with Lifeskills in house and Statutory Support by agencies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One singular point of contact for practitioners for Life skills and Independence • Opportunity to expand Lifeskills & Independence beyond CDS into CIC, EHE and other C&F services for holistic approach. • Statutory provision includes all strengths of Option 3 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soft build into full in house service building capacity and learning. • Spreads risk. • SCC responsible for market development and build capacity in required/focused areas rather than dependent on provider locations. • Statutory provision includes all strengths of Option 3 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional resource required to deliver Lifeskills & Independence Programme. Recruitment across all districts may be a challenge and restrict accessibility to some families. • May weaken the link between short breaks and statutory support 	<p>Community Care = £800k</p> <p>Life Skills & independence = £130K</p> <p>Total = c£930K</p>
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Conclusion and Recommendations:

35. This paper has explored different options for how the proposed approach can be delivered, evaluating the strengths and opportunities, and challenges and risk for each option. Our recommendation is to take forward Option 3 'Recommission the Community Support Framework Expanding the existing step up/down service'.
36. Option 3 provides the best opportunity to take learning from the current service and make changes so that the new service will better address the needs of Children and Young People with SEND. This option also delivers a service model using best practice, ensures market competition for better value for money.

Strategic Implications

37. Staffordshire Joint Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Strategy (2021-2025)

Our highest priority is to ensure that children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) receive the support they need to achieve the best possible Outcomes in life. This strategy sets out our vision and future strategic aims for Staffordshire that places children's Outcomes at the forefront. These shared aims have been endorsed by all stakeholders. The SEND and Inclusion Partnership Group are responsible for setting the vision and direction of services that support CYP from 0-25 years with special educational needs and Disabilities.

- a. There are four priorities to focus on to help achieve the vision:
 - i. We communicate well with each other.
 - ii. We work in partnership to meet the needs of CYP.
 - iii. We ensure that the right support is available at the right time.
 - iv. We encourage communities to be inclusive.

38. Staffordshire County Council Strategic Plan 2022-26

The delivery of the outlined proposals supports the vision and outcomes of an innovative, ambitious and sustainable county, where everyone has the opportunity to prosper, be healthy and happy.

- a. Our three priority outcomes are that the people of Staffordshire will:
 - i. have access to more good jobs and share the benefit of economic growth
 - ii. live in thriving and sustainable communities
 - iii. be healthier and independent for longer

Legal Implications

39. This report is seeking to commence a procurement process for the purposes of procuring a new commissioned Childrens Community Support Service in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations (PCR) 2015.
40. Commissioners must consult and liaise with Legal for the purposes of preparation and drafting of the legal instruments underpinning the proposed arrangements.

Resource and Value for Money Implications

41. Resource and Value for Money Implications were considered in the 'Rationale for proposed changes' section of this report and Options Evaluation.

Climate Change Implications

42. The implications of climate change were considered as part of the Community Impact Assessment (Appendix 6: Community Impact Assessment).

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

2. Appendix 2: Current Provision
3. Appendix 3: Framework 'Lot's'
4. Appendix 4: CWD options appraisal V1
5. Appendix 5: Community Impact Assessment

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