

Staffordshire County Council, Children and Families Directorate

**Children's Community Support
Delivery Options**

August 2024

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Overview:

Document Purpose:

- Reviewing the current commissioning arrangements for the delivery of Children's Community Support. This includes reviewing the delivery, demand, statutory functions, efficiency, quality, service scale, finance and sustainability.
- Identify and evaluate potential delivery models for the service and assess financial implications and highlight any potential risk to the proposed models.
- To make recommendations to the Director of Children's Services and the Children & Families Senior Leadership Team (C&FSLT) and ultimately to Staffordshire County Council's Cabinet in relation to the future arrangements for Children's Community Care.

Background:

- Staffordshire County Council (SCC) has a legal duty to ensure Children's Community Care provision is in place to support children and young people with a range of disabilities, who require care and support at home and within the community.
- SCC currently commissions a range of providers from across Staffordshire to deliver Children's Home Care on behalf of the local authority. Providers support children and young people with a range of disabilities, including children and young people with physical and learning disabilities, autism and challenging behaviours. Some providers will be working with children and young people who have been assessed as having multiple needs. Providers provide a range of support within Staffordshire which are tailored to the specific needs of children, young people and families, this includes: preparing for independence, enablement and socialisation, community support, domiciliary care, and sitting and complex needs support.
- SCC wishes to develop and enhance, models of practice across a broader range of services.

There are several factors the Children and Families Management Team must consider in reviewing the current commissioning arrangements for Children's Community Support, which are outlined below.

- Current commissioning arrangements for Children's Community Support (including domiciliary care) expire on the 30th September 2025, with current contracts due to go out to tender during spring 2025.
- To ensure 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), the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970, and the Children & Families Act 2014.
- To ensure a range of market providers have the capacity to deliver quality care and support for the fluctuating needs that eligible children require, quickly and flexibly
- To ensure providers have the right skills, knowledge, and experience to provide high quality support and care which is focused on individual's needs and outcomes at the most cost-effective price.
- To realign existing contract delivery in order to avoid duplication and maximise opportunities from a range of providers.
- To ensure flexibility across all community support for children and young people with SEND.

Children's Community Care in Staffordshire:

Overview of Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities in Staffordshire:

- In Staffordshire there are around 17,000 Children and Young people with SEND living with their families who need support to remain at home, to avoid their needs, and access to other services, escalating. Approximately 6,000 of these children are known to us through the Education Health & Care Planning (EHCP) process and associated assessments
- There are approximately 550 Children/Young People in Staffordshire who have been assessed as being eligible for Social Care support by the Children with Disability Social care teams. Approximately 300 of these children are in receipt of 'paid for' support, the majority (200) manage their own care via a Direct Payment to their parents/carers, with around 163 children supported by agency delivered home care and 45 receiving Life skills and Independence support
- A fifth (21%) of the CYP currently accessing community support will turn 18 during the next 3 years.
- There are a range of needs of Children with SEND, with many Children/Young People having multiple and complex needs
- The services in scope for this Options Appraisal are the Life skills and Independence Programme and our commissioned agency delivered home care and community-based support

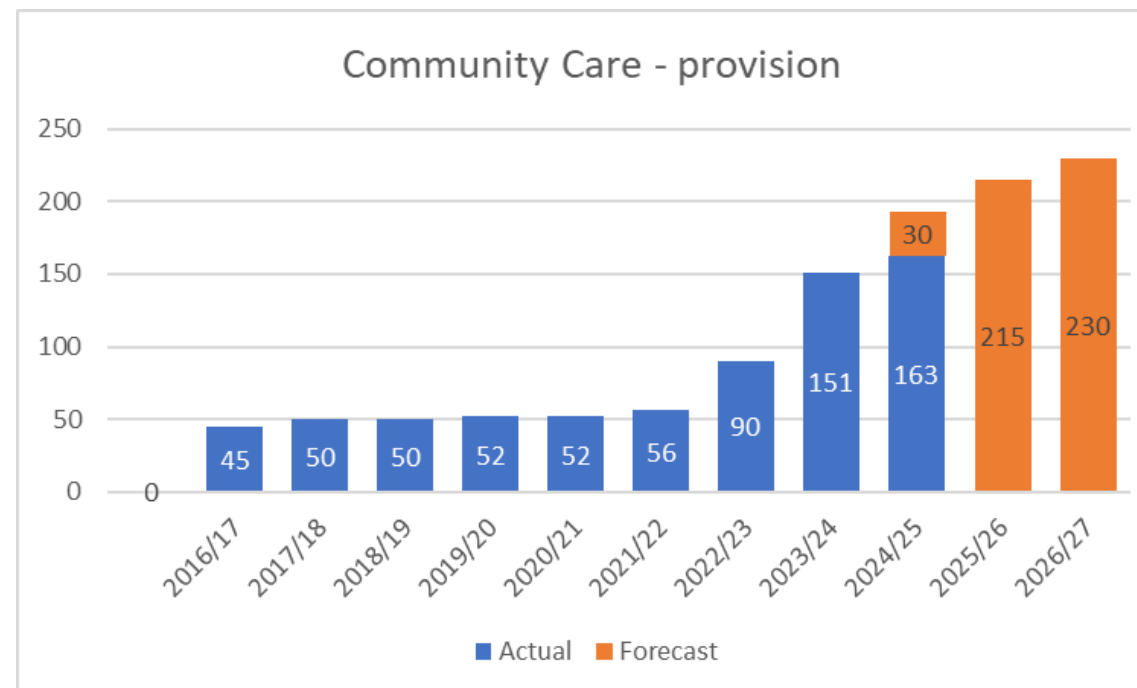
Overview of Current Commissioning Arrangements:

- Current commissioning arrangements for Children's Community Care and Short Breaks Life Skills expire on the 30th September 2025
- 28 providers are currently on the childrens community support framework.
- Currently where a child, young person or family is assessed by the Children Social Care Team as being eligible for community support, the appropriate case manager seeks the approval of the Team Manager to review the request at the Disability Resource Panel. Approved referrals are then sent by the Commissioning Brokerage to relevant providers based on Lot, geographical area and ranking. Once a package of care is agreed, commissioning link the provider to the social care staff to progress with the family and arrange purchase order.
- The Life skills and Independence Programme is accessible for any child with SEN by referral by any professional; no social work assessment is currently required to access this provision.
- The current arrangements for commissioning, has led to an inconsistency in the desired level of accessible, efficient, outcome focussed, flexible and high quality care services to meet the individual assessed needs.

Current Challenges:

- Sourcing and accessibility of appropriate support based on the varying needs. The fluctuation of children's situations and plans means that the existing provision limits opportunities and choice.
- Relatively low numbers of children requiring community care services – and the concentration of this demand at either end of the school day - makes it difficult to encourage providers to enter the market as it is difficult to provide assurances on volume and likely demand (and therefore income for the providers).
- Capacity within providers is stretched in certain in-demand hours
- Provider reluctance to take on care packages, particularly those requiring behavioural skills management and for community outings.
- Hours providers would prefer are often limited by block contracts and the tendency to favour larger/longer term packages of care.
- The current framework does not extend to attract providers for complex needs/care
- Expectations and understanding of children's levels of care needs is currently limited within organisations.

Demand:



- The significant rise in requests for community support continues to stretch capacity of framework providers.
- This trajectory indicates a steady increase at both the minimum and maximum potential when forecasting demand
- Reasons for this increased demand over time are;
- that some children with complex and life-limiting conditions are now living longer than they were even a few years ago as a result of improvements in medical science and research
- Capacity challenges in other childrens services is unable to support

Future Options For Children Community Care in Staffordshire:

- The total current average annual spend for Children’s Community Care is approximately £0.82M. This is calculated using the current arrangements for Children’s Community Support, however this will vary from year to year depending on the individual needs of children, young people and families.
- The total current budget available for the 1-1 Life Skills & Independence programme is £150,000
- The average rates for each of the contracts differ dependant on the level of need and involvement from providers.
- The total annual spend for both contracts will differ depending on the number of children, young people and families requiring support. It is challenging to provide an accurate projection of demand for this reason.

Total projected spend all provision in scope	£450,000 + £2,400,000= £2,850,000 (950k pa)	
Lot 1: Lifeskills and Independence Short Breaks	Up to a max £525,000	150k-175kpa
Statutory Support over remaining Lots	Up to a max combined £2,625,000	800k-875k pa

- This table demonstrates budget expenditure for community care from 2025 onwards. Split between the Statutory support and Lifeskills Programme.

Engagement:

Engagement with families who access these services has been completed via an online survey, social care feedback from families and commissioning discussions with families

We found-

- Awareness of the Lifeskills programme and/or Community Support services has increased but needs external promotion.
- The majority of families that had used the services felt that their child/young person had benefitted from them and that they provide an invaluable break for their family

The following **issues/barriers** to accessing the services were identified-

- Lack of awareness of services - information often difficult to find
- Eligibility – Several parents/carers stated that their child could not access services as they don’t have a formal diagnosis – this is a misconception and open access for 1-1 life skills and independence activities needs highlighting more clearly in promotional material. Similarly, many felt their child/young persons needs were too complex and they were unable to find support.
- Lack of suitable services especially in their local area.
- Greater partnership working with schools, and especially special schools, is needed.
- Parents/carers feeling overwhelmed – too much emphasis on families having to seek out services themselves, often at a time when they are already overwhelmed.
- There is a clear need to ensure parents/carers and practitioners have up-to date, relevant, easy access information surrounding these services and a clear route how to access. This would allow greater awareness of the services to families who would benefit. Parents now receive panel outcome letters to include them earlier in the agency process.
- Wider promotion of services on appropriate media outlets with our partners.
- Joint working across SCC Children and Families team, to ensure there is no duplication of services and greater enhancement of the current services making them accessible to CYP with complex needs

No:	Option:	Option Outline:	Strengths:	Opportunities:	Risks:	Cost per annum
1	Option One: Continue with current commissioned services i.e. framework and independence programme	Option one proposes the continuation of one contract, i.e. Children's Community Support Framework (inc domiciliary)	<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. ▪ 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"> ▪ 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 ▪ C/YP information on different systems i.e. Capita and CareDirector with no overall "vision" 	<p>Community Care = £800k</p> <p>Life Skills & Independence = £150K</p> <p>Total = c£950K</p>
2	Option Two: In House Delivery	Option two proposes that Children's Community Care is provided directly by SCC through the Children & Families System. This provides an increased opportunity for SCC to 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	<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, knowledge and experience in order to meet the specific needs of individual children, young people and families. ▪ Deliver services that meet the holistic needs of children, young people and families. ▪ Seek to improve services through innovation. 	<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 opposed to "time and task". ▪ Enables SCC to develop robust Quality Assurance and contract management. ▪ Allows SCC to access emergency support packages ▪ Local delivery of services 	<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 specialist specific services to meet the holistic care children, young people and families which would 	<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>

		towards agreed outcomes. This option suggests that the service would be fully integrated with the wider Children & Families System.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allows SCC more control over quality, cost and capacity within the marketplace. 		<p>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 	
3	Option Three: Extend the breadth of the current framework	<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. 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 	<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 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>
4	Option Four: Aligning children's community care with adult framework	<p>Option four proposes that the 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 	<p>18.66 (adult framework provider rate) x hours of care = £702K (figure IF all hours of care were delivered at framework rate)</p> <p>+ 1.1 Lifeskills budget of up to £150K</p>

					<p>high turnover of staff and increased pressure with stretched capacity</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. 	=£852k total
5	Option Five: One lead provider to deliver all services for children with SEND across a range of needs	Option five- Step up/down service all lots to be delivered by one lead provider.	<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
6	Option Six	Option six- A hybrid of Option 2 and 3 with Lifeskills in house and Statutory Support by agencies	<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>

Outcomes and Tests

1. The following outcomes and tests have been used to evaluate the options for community support

Outcomes	Tests	
Enables delivery of statutory duties and responsibilities	1	Promotes individual wellbeing, supports the provision of information and advice, and the identification of services, facilities, and resources already available within the community, which could be used to meet needs.
	2	Enables a flexible support system for all families where support can be increased/decreased as and when required.
	3	Supports all stakeholders - the NHS, SCC Adult Social Care and Children's and Families, to meet their statutory duties and responsibilities to children/young people with disabilities, in terms of assessment and support planning particularly in Preparing For Adulthood ensuring future cost saving.

Supports the delivery of Children System transformation principles	4	Encourages market stimulation to ensure capacity and choice within local organisations meets demand from SCC.
	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is flexible • Local – fits with corporate view of PBA, children stay within their localities/county • Works better for the child and their family and all practitioners • Designed against Demand, Co-produced with families.
	6	Encourages effective cost management whilst delivering high quality care.
Financially sustainable and value for money	7	Is cost-effective and financially sustainable in the long term
	8	Delivers process and financial efficiencies to drive performance improvements.
	9	Utilises local community support and allows families to connect with others in their local area both for support and to make the best use of existing community resources
Offer's social value by supporting to increase individual and community resilience	10	Provide a safe and high-quality system of support, that is flexible and equitable across the county.
	11	Offers opportunities for new entrants into the children with disability care market in Staffordshire, increasing our preventative offer, and reducing the need for more costly services/interventions, and especially avoidable admission to Local Authority Care
	12	Delivers innovation and creativity to work in more modern, effective, and lower cost ways.
Manages operational and reputational risk	13	Supports and enhances the delivery of council and NHS* agenda's and enablers e.g. "people helping people", "#doingourbit, #didyouknow, and encourages people to take responsibility for their own health and well-being, and plan for their future, so that we can ensure continuity of support for those who most need it.
	14	Considers the outcome of engagement with parents and carers of children with disabilities, and other stakeholders, whilst delivering value for money for Staffordshire residents.
	15	Supports Council's strategic priorities e.g. create more better paid jobs for Staffordshire residents, inspire healthy and independent living, access to employment, education and training opportunities, support more families and children to look after themselves, stay safe and well.

Evaluation Matrix

Scoring Methodology

Yes	Strong delivery against drivers/ tests
Partially	Partial delivery against driver/ tests
No	No or minimal delivery against drivers/ tests

Options	Enables delivery of statutory duties and responsibilities			Supports the delivery of Children with Disability transformation principles			Financially sustainable and value for money			Offer's social value by supporting to increase individual and community resilience			Manages operational and reputational risk			Outcome
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	
1	P	P	P	Y	P	Y	Y	Y	P	P	Y	P	Y	Y	P	
2	Y	P	Y	N	P	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	N	P	Y	Y	P	
3	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	Y	Y	Y	P	P	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	<i>Preferred option</i>
4	P	Y	P	N	P	P	P	P	P	P	N	N	P	P	N	
5	Y	P	Y	N	P	Y	Y	Y	Y	P	N	P	Y	Y	Y	
6	Y	Y	P	Y	P	Y	Y	Y	P	P	P	Y	Y	Y	Y	<i>Preferred option</i>

Recommendations:

- The above tests were discussed and evaluated between a panel of 3? professionals within SCC Social Care from C&F Commissioning Team, the adult Brokerage Service and a team manager for the Children's Disability Service.
- Scores from the evaluation matrix **indicate option 3- extending the breadth of the framework- is the preferred option**
- Detail surrounding definitions of 'care types/lots' is required in the service specification, to ensure accurate requests are made by practitioners resulting in accurate charges matching the care required.
- **Option 2- in house delivery- requires further investigation for future service delivery** as a significant number of strengths and opportunities were established over the course of the evaluation panel which is also reflected in the scoring of the evaluation matrix.