

From: Sue Chandler, Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services

Matt Dunkley CBE, Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education

To: Children, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee – 11 January 2022

Subject: Young Carers Overview – Commissioned Service

Key decision Overall service value exceeds £1m and/or affects more than two Electoral Divisions.

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of report: N/A

Future Pathway of report: N/A

Electoral Division: All

Summary:

- This report summarises the scope and activity of the Young Carers Service, commissioned on behalf of Integrated Children's Services (ICS), as requested at the CYPE Cabinet Committee in November 2021.

Recommendation(s):

The Children, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee is asked to **NOTE** the report.

1. Background

- 1.1. Following a competitive Procurement process, Kent County Councils Young Carers Contract commenced on the 1 May 2016 for a term of three years with the provision to further extend on a one year plus one year basis.
- 1.2. Kent's Young Carers Service is delivered by Imago and comprises two distinct elements: workforce development; and direct support for children and young people.
- 1.3. As a result of Covid-19, the Local Authority utilised section 72 (1) c of the Public Contract Regulations 2015 and the Procurement Policy Note, to further extend this contract by one year to 30 April 2022. The reasons for the extension included but were not limited to:
 - The inability of a new provider in the current circumstances to deliver an uninterrupted Young Carers provision. This may have resulted in an increase in young people requiring a higher level of support from internal service provision

- A reduced amount of support for Young Carers as a new provision mobilises.
- Loss of engagement with any new provider from young people who, by nature of the levels of complexity, can be difficult to engage, at a time when young people and their parents needed it more than ever.
- The loss of substantial additional social value provision delivered by both Imago, including elements of social prescribing that extends beyond the remit of the contract.
- Reputational risk whereby the Voluntary Sector Recovery Cell and the Children and Young People's Recovery Cell recognised that the Voluntary Sector were in a period of Recovery and Reset themselves and need assurances of continuation of funding and a reduction in tendering activity.

1.4. The total annual value of the contract is £325,484. Over the six years, payments to the value of £1,952,904 were made for this service.

2. Introduction

- 2.1. A young carer is someone aged 18 or under who helps look after a relative with a disability, illness, mental health condition, or drug or alcohol problem. A young carer probably looks after their parent(s), or cares for a brother or sister. Research shows us that caring responsibilities can significantly impact upon a child's health, education and development.
- 2.2. Under the amendments to the Children and Families Act, Local Authorities must take steps to ensure that all young carers under the age of 18, regardless of who they care for or how often they provide care, are in receipt of an assessment of their needs. The Children and Families Act seeks to ensure that a young carer is assessed for support and assessed again when their support needs have changed. The assessment should find out if the young carer is participating in, or wishes to participate in, education, training or recreation; and the extent and impact of the caring role which they undertake.
- 2.3. A Local Authority is expected to take 'reasonable steps' to identify which children in their area are young carers and if they have the need for support. The Local Authority must carry out a proportionate and appropriate 'Young Carer's Needs Assessment' if it appears that the young carer has the need for support. This assessment must be carried out in a manner which matches the needs and circumstances of the young carer to whom it relates.
- 2.4. Caring responsibilities can significantly impact upon a child's health and development. Many young carers experience: social isolation; a low level of school attendance; some educational difficulties; impaired development of their identity and potential; low self-esteem; emotional and physical neglect; as well as conflict between loyalty to their family and their wish to have their own needs met.
- 2.5. KCC has a comprehensive Young Carers Service delivered by Imago. The Kent Young Carers (KYC) provision has two distinct elements:

- Young Carers support: For young people aged 5-24 across Kent who have a caring responsibility for an adult or sibling. Young Carers are assessed to understand how best their needs can be met and through co-design a plan is developed and agreed with actions. Plans are in place to prevent inappropriate caring and minimise the negative impact of their caring role. The primary aim of the service is to ensure Kent's Young Carers have a voice and equal opportunity for education and employment whilst maximising their potential.
- Workforce Development: Free and flexible training to identify and support Young Carers who may be hidden or hard to reach.

2.6. The Young Carers Service has provided direct support to approximately 17,300 individual young carers across the county, since the service began May 2016. This support can take the form of young carers assessments, 1:1 support, access to a district young carer 'Chill Club', signposting and information.

2.7. Each district has a monthly 'Chill Club', many of which take place in KCC's Open Access buildings. Where possible Imago support young people with transportation to attend these clubs. This in part is achieved through the KCC free Young Carers Bus Pass, which Imago also support in addition to their contract.

2.8. Statistically Young Carers are more likely to be girls with 55% of the current cohort seen by Imago identifying as female. 87.6% of the cohort identify as white British, with 8% identifying as BAME.

2.9. There are over 10,000 known Young Carers in Kent. However, it is likely that many young carers remain hidden from services. research undertaken by the BBC in 2021 suggests that Kent may have as many as 30,000 hidden Young Carers. As an authority, KCC needs to identify and support young carers and ensure that all services are more 'carer aware'.

2.10. To help meet this, the workforce development element of the contract is in recognition that the identification and support for young carers needs to vary according to the type of care that is provided. Young carers are not a homogenous group. The contract ensures that the training covers a wide workforce (including schools, Early Help and Preventative Services, Adults Social Care, health professionals and the wider VCS). It raises awareness about young carers, the challenges they face and how best to support them.

3. Contract Management

3.1. The following activities are undertaken as preparation for contract monitoring meetings:

- i. Data analysis of KPIs looking at a county, area, and district level performance.
- ii. Qualitative information gathered from both the provider and an ICS prospective provides challenge and support in relation to the quality-of-service provision.

- iii. Narrative for the scorecard and case study analysis for the performance from the provider.
 - iv. Analysis of the Compliments, Comments and Complaints log, Social Value Log, Safeguarding Themes Log and Risk Log
- 3.2. The Contract Manger for the Young Carers Contract has day to day responsibility for the service and contract delivery across the county, dealing with all contractual and performance issues. Oversight of this role is provided by the Senior Commissioner and wider commissioning unit
- 3.3. This information is gathered to form a 'whole contract' picture of provision to inform the contract monitoring meetings. As the contract is performing at or above the anticipated levels, the contract monitoring meetings occur on a quarterly basis, with a monthly desk-based analysis of data and qualitative information.
- 3.4. In addition to contract monitoring, monthly highlight reports are prepared for the commissioning portfolio. This highlights any risks, themes and contract activity.

4. Covid-19

- 4.1. Imago continued to deliver their support to young carers throughout Covid-19 virtually and with assessments and support undertaken over the phone or, in some cases, on doorsteps or through windows with all the necessary safety precautions in place. Young carers are statistically the most likely to be digitally excluded and therefore, operating only a 'virtual offer' would not have been suitable on its own.
- 4.2. Throughout the pandemic, the service has continued to support positive wellbeing outcomes across the county. Following feedback from young carers that they were struggling to see support workers as frequently as they'd have liked, additional group work sessions via Zoom were offered. These sessions have a different content to the regular monthly workshops and enable a wider participation opportunity. The virtual sessions have been well received and attended by young carers.
- 4.3. To ensure that quality of provision and service development was maintained throughout lockdown, Imago worked with young carers to understand how they engaged with the online offer and how/if they would like to see it developed.
- 4.4. Whilst some young carers found it easier to engage online feeding back that "*I enjoy zoom and the workshops, it makes me calm and happy it's OK I still feel part of young carers'*", and "*...THE SERVICE... has been very supportive and helpful during the lockdown specially when I wasn't feeling myself and some of the zoom video calls helped*" (young carer).
- 4.5. Other young people really missed the ability to meet face to face '*I didn't like the zoom meetings and felt a bit lost not seeing my support workers face to face*' (young carer).
- 4.6. Feedback from young carers is shaping future provision and a hybrid model (a combination of online and face to face provision) of delivery is being rolled out.

Feedback from this will be used to help shape future specifications for the provision.

- 4.7. Despite the pandemic Young Carers Action Day was celebrated in a variety of ways across Kent Young Carers (KYC) with the young people. KYC had a positive media and social media presence on the day, with one young carer and their family being interviewed by BBC Southeast which was televised on 17 March 2021 and another young carer from Tunbridge Wells, being interviewed by BBC Radio Kent talking about her experience of being a young carer on 16 March 2021.
- 4.8. The overall impact across the service has been an increase in school attendances and access (when the restrictions and personal circumstances of the young carer allowed), a reduction in anxiety levels and improved mental health, increased family cohesion and wellbeing.

5. Voice of the Child

- 5.1. The Commissioning Team have worked with Imago to gauge the views of young people on what it means to be a young carer, what good support means to young people and the value of the service to users.
- 5.2. Children, young people and families who use this service also have their views heard through the Compliments, Comments and Complaints log (Triple 'C' log) This feedback from young carers is reviewed as part of the formal contract management process as the provider is asked to document this feedback and demonstrate how it has been used to develop their services.
- 5.3. Feedback on the log have led to the development of the Siblings Service and a Social Prescribing Service. Both services are funded externally to this contract (totalling £300,000 over the life of the contract) Imago are currently looking into further funding options to grow this provision.
- 5.4. The Sibling Service was developed in recognition of the work Imago were doing with a specific group of young people engaging in the Chill Clubs and raised some of the challenges of what it is like to be the brother or sister of someone who has disabilities. From this work, Imago sought external funding to be able to offer a provision to specifically support siblings in both Maidstone and Swale with further funding secured to extend to both Dover and Folkestone and Hythe. Feedback from this group has included *"It helps me remember that it's not all about my brother's illness"* (young carer using the sibling service)
- 5.5. The Social Prescribing service, which covers two districts (Ashford and Folkestone & Hythe) was developed in direct response to the feedback in the Triple C log. Young people were reporting that they needed additional support in achieving personal goals. Social prescribing provides a non-medical referral that links individuals to community resources. This service works to improve health and wellbeing, resilience and encourage self-management for long-term health conditions. Through working with the Social Prescribing Service, young people have voiced that they feel more able to set personal goals but that *"I know I have a long journey ahead of me, but I now feel that my future is within reach"* (Young carer from using Social Prescribing).

- 5.6. Feedback through the Triple C log is used to shape provision, develop best practice and understand district variances, whilst also providing commissioners with an understanding of the views and perspectives of various stakeholders. This information is then used as a key source of information for decision-making and service development. Evidence of this feedback can be found in Appendix 4 Triple 'C' log.
- 5.7. Imago as an organisation proactively engages in understanding children and young people, including the development of an annual [Impact report](#).. As part of understanding all of their provision as an organisation, Imago supports various forums to promote 'Youth Voice' this includes a Young Carers shadow board.
- 5.8. The Shadow board helps to provide opportunities for young people to play a central role in influencing policy, provision, and decision-making regarding the service. The intelligence from these forums is fed through to commissioners via contract management to help inform service development.
- 5.9. To demonstrate a small portion of this work Appendices 1 and 3 provide insight from young people who use this service.
- 5.10. All commissioned services are required to ensure that the voice of children and/or young people is captured throughout their organisations, including staff recruitment. Imago proactively engage in this by ensuring that young people are represented as part of their approach and wherever possible have a young person actively engaged in the recruitment and interview process.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1. The total annual value of the contract is £325,484. From 1 May 2016 to 30 April 2022 Kent County Council have spent £1,952,904 on the delivery of the young carers service.

7. Governance

- 7.1. Regular reporting on the effectiveness of this service is shared with the Director for Integrated Children's Services (Early Help Lead).
- 7.2. Robust arrangements are in place to ensure the effective delivery of the Young Carers Service, including contract and performance management that consider the need to ensure that children are effectively safeguarded, and that the service demonstrates best value for money.
- 7.3. At the [CYPE May 2018 Cabinet Committee](#), it was demonstrated that the contract management oversight included a Deep Dive into the contract performance and monitoring. Due to Covid 19, in 2020 this was undertaken as a desk-based exercise. During 2022, Commissioners are hopeful to reinstate a 'field based' approach to deep dives which will include (but not limited to) meeting with young carers, observing provision, meeting with staff, engaging with wider stakeholders who are linked to the service and comparing this with the information shared as part of contract oversight.

8. Conclusion

- 8.1. Overall, KCC has seen good performance against the contract, delivered by Imago, for Young Carers across the county. KCC will continue to contract manage Imago to ensure the service is of good quality and is delivered in a timely manner to meet the needs of children and young people who have a caring responsibility.
- 8.2. In line with the Decision taken by the Cabinet Member of Integrated Children's Services, Commissioners will commence a procurement to ensure a continuation of service delivery for Kent Young Carers.
- 8.3. Subject to a successful procurement process the new contract will commence 1 May 2022 for a period of three years, with the option to extend on a one year plus one year basis.
- 8.4. Key to shaping the new provision and provider selection will be Young Carers. This will include, but not limited to, specification development with stakeholders, young carers and subject experts with evaluation designed and undertaken with young people and a continued focus on the voice of children and young people in ongoing contract management.

Recommendation(s):

The Childrens, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee is asked to **NOTE** the report.

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