

# KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – RECORD OF DECISION

**DECISION TAKEN BY:**

Clair Bell, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health

**DECISION NO:**

22/00019

For publication

Key decision: No

Title of Decision: Kara Contract Extension

**Decision:** As Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health, I agree to: Provide delegated authority to the Corporate Director Adult Social Care and Health to award a one-year contract extension, from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023, for the Kara Service.

**Reason(s) for decision:** In March 2020, Adult Social Care committed to purchasing 2,000 video care phones to support residents of Kent during the pandemic. This was named the Kara Service.

The Kara Service was initially due to achieve the following benefits:

**Continuity of care**

- Care workers are able to work remotely and maintain delivery of care to clients who might otherwise receive a lower level of care during the COVID-19 crisis

**Effective workforce**

- The workforce can be more effective in the crisis as they are able to deal with reduced capacity and use staff who are isolating to deliver virtual calls.
- Wellbeing of care workers improved as they are able to still care for their clients even when they are unable to carry out their usual visits.

**Maintain safety**

- Reduced infection risk to both service users and the workforce through a reduction in physical visits, whilst overall standards of care and patient safety maintained.
- Clients, their friends and family and care workers report feeling safer.

**Improved wellbeing**

- People are able to maintain contact with friends/family, with care services and arrange deliveries through the concierge service to help counter adverse effects on mental health during isolation and hospital admissions by reducing loneliness and improving wellbeing.

Over the past 20 months in which the Kara service has been running, the referrals into the service have remained steady with trends following the peaks of the pandemic and when government guidelines changed.

The Technology Enabled Care project is a key area of the Making a difference every day approach which is one of the main drivers of change within Adult Social Care. This project also aligns with

KCC's Strategic Reset Programme and will contribute towards the delivery of the key ambitions of the Authority.

Through the vision and direction of travel being set by the Making a difference every day approach, there is an ambition for Kent County Council to become 'Best in Class' in terms of its adoption and application of assistive technology to support people.

There have been significant developments in social and health care apps and wearables in recent years, and growth in the popularity and uptake of these devices. They provide people with convenience and control to integrate technology into their lives.

The implementation of the Kara project has helped the Adult Social Care Directorate, and some of the people it supports, to start to understand the possibilities of how technology can be utilised to provide people with greater choice and control and empower them to live their lives.

As Technology Enabled Care is a new concept in Kent, the Making a difference every day Programme Board have agreed to undertake an initial one year build and test. The build and test will provide the opportunity to harness and fully exploit the full benefits of Technology Enabled Care and help the Authority to understand its longer-term requirements for the future. The build and test is due to commence in March 2022 and end in March 2023.

The Adult Social Care Reform White Paper, released in December 2021, makes reference to 'Providing the Right Care, in the Right Place at the Right Time' and this includes the embracing technology across social care professionals as well as meeting care and support needs of people. Embedding technology and making it a trusted resource for social care professionals to use aligns with KCC Adult Social Care's current direction of travel with the Technology Enabled Care project.

**Financial Implications:** Unlike with the original implementation of the contract, there are no longer costs associated to the purchasing of the hardware as this is already owned by the Authority.

The cost of the one-year contract extension (1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023) on a like for like basis (2,000 licences for 1 year) is £545,667.

It is proposed that the funding for the project will be harnessed from the Better Care Fund.

**Legal Implications:** The Kara Service was developed to support people during the pandemic. This is an offer that in most instances has been provided to prevent isolation and in addition to other support already being provided for unmet eligible needs.

The original contract provided for two twelve months extensions. This will be the second and final extension. If extended, the contract will now end on 31 March 2023.

This extension is both legally compliant and in line with Public Contract Regulations 2015

**Equalities implications:** An Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA) for the Kara contract extension has been completed and can be found in the Authority's list of published EQIAs. Protected characteristics are not adversely impacted by the Kara provision, however, some people are digitally excluded or do not have the skills and confidence to utilise technology. Therefore, information, advice and guidance is provided to those individuals to support them.

Communication and engagement has also been undertaken through community groups and forums, engagement with local providers and partners as well as creating an online presence through the corporate website and social media platforms.

**Data Protection implications:** A data protection impact assessment was completed and has been

reviewed throughout the life of the project so far.

**Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:** Adult Social Care Cabinet Committee members had an opportunity to comment when the Proposed Record of Decision was published and no comments were received. An update will be provided to the Adult Social Care Cabinet Committee meeting on 31 March 2022.

**Any alternatives considered and rejected:**

Options

Multiple options have been considered and they are as follows:

1. Extend Contract in April 2022 like for like (2,000 licenses for 1 year)
2. Stop Kara Contract in April 2022
3. Extend Contract in April 2022 but with fewer Licenses
4. Extend contract but people using equipment are then charged

The preferred option agreed by the Making a difference every day Programme Board is to extend the existing terms of the contract in April 2022 like for like (2,000 licenses for 1 year) to align with the Technology Enabled Care project developments.

**Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer:** None

Clair Bell

16 March 2022

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signed

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date