

From: Richard Smith, Corporate Director Adult Social Care and Health

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

Subject: **Kara Contract Extension**

Non-Key decision: 22/00019

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of report: Adult Social Care Governance Directorate Management Team– 2 February 2022

Future Pathway of report: Adult Social Care Cabinet Committee – 31 March 2022

Electoral Division: All

Summary: This report sets out the impact of the Kara Service over the past 24 months, options for the future provision of the Kara Service including the preferred option decision and funding stream.

Recommendation(s): The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health is asked to provide delegated authority for 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.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Kara Service has been live since March 2020 and was initially introduced to support people through the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 1.2 Although initially provided as a response to the Covid-19 pandemic, there are benefits to people using the Kara Service as part of their daily routine with it moving into a resource for social care professionals to harness when meeting a person's unmet eligible needs.
- 1.3 The future vision for the Kara Service is for it to become part of the wider Technology Enabled Care offer, which is being tested in March 2022 for 1 year. Pending the outcome of the pilot, it is expected that a full countywide offer will be put in place in March 2023.
- 1.4 The current Kara contract is scheduled to come to an end on 31 March 2022 and therefore a decision on next steps needs to be taken prior to the contract end date.

2. Background

2.1 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.

2.2 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

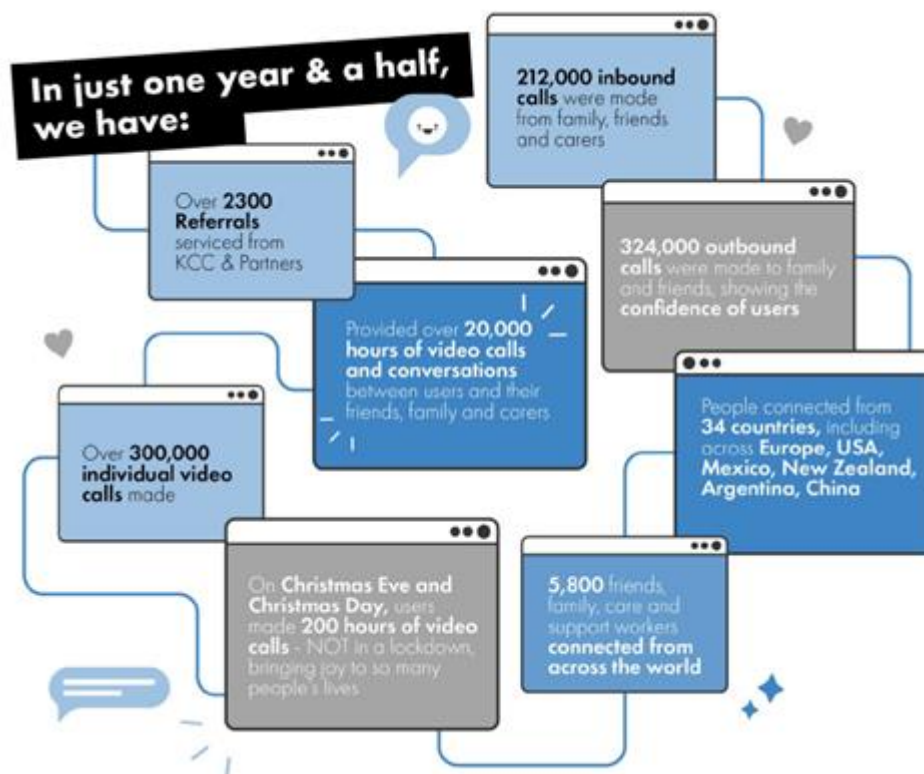
- Reduced infection risk to both residents and the workforce through a reduction in physical visits, whilst overall standards of care and patient safety maintained.
- Clients, their friends and family and care workers report feeling safer.

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.

2.3 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.

2.4 Key facts and figures over this period are displayed below



3. Technology Enabled Care

- 3.1 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.
- 3.2 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.
- 3.3 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.
- 3.4 The implementation of the Kara Service has helped the Adult Social Care and Health 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.
- 3.5 As Technology Enabled Care is a new concept in Kent, the Making a difference every day Programme Board has 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.

3.6 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.

4. Case Studies and Benefits

4.1 A presentation containing case studies and feedback on people's experiences of the Kara Service to date is attached as Appendix 1.

4.2 A full copy of the benefits report is attached as Appendix 2.

5. Options

5.1 Multiple options have been considered and they are as follows:

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

5.2 The preferred option agreed by the Making a difference every day Programme Board and Adult Social Care Governance Directorate Management Team is to extend the contract beyond 2022 to align with the Technology Enabled Care project developments. The preferred option being:

Option 1 - Extend Contract from 1 April 2022 like for like (2,000 devices for 1 year)

- Licenses and SIM only and not equipment - **£545,667 + VAT**

5.3 The reason for proceeding with options 1 in favour of options 2, 3 and 4 is as follows:

- The Covid-19 pandemic is still a risk to a significant number of people in Kent.
- The latest variant of the Covid-19 pandemic is causing high levels of sickness issues across health and social care and technology could be utilised to provide alternative forms of support in some instances.
- The Adult Social Care Reform White Paper 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.
- Recruitment and retention into care roles continues to be impacted across the country and therefore alternative methods need to be introduced to support people's unmet care and support needs.
- Adult Social Care are looking to continue to move forward with a 'Digital First' approach and looking to incorporate technology across the Social Care pathway so this is identified as a tried and trust tool for Practitioners to meet unmet eligible needs. Stopping the Kara Service

in its entirety without a replacement in place may undermine the culture change and awareness already realised to date.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 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.
- 6.2 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.
- 6.3 It is proposed that the funding for the project will be harnessed from the Better Care Fund.

7. Legal implications

- 7.1 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.
- 7.2 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.
- 7.3 This extension is both legally compliant and in line with Public Contract Regulations 2015

8. Equalities implications

- 8.1 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.
- 8.2 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.
- 8.3 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.

9. Data Protection Implications

- 9.1 A data protection impact assessment was completed and has been reviewed throughout the life of the project.

10. Conclusions

- 10.1 In conclusion, the Adult Social Care Making a difference every day Programme Board has identified their preferred option to '**Extend Contract from 1 April 2022 like for like (2,000 devices for 1 year)**'.
- 10.2 By ceasing the provision of the Kara Service it may undermine the culture change and engagement work completed to date and leave those people who are benefitting from the technology because of the impact of the pandemic isolated.
- 10.3 In the future, the Kara Service should not be seen as separate to the Technology Enabled Care project and in the longer-term, the offers must combine once the Technology Enabled Care build and test has been completed.

11. Recommendation

11.1 Recommendation: The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health is asked to provide delegated authority for 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.

12. Background Documents

None

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