

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 – 16 November 2021**

Decision: **21/00101 - Young Carers - procurement of a new service**

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

**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Past Pathway of report:** N/A

**Future Pathway of report:** Cabinet Member Decision

**Electoral Division:** All

**Summary:** This report provides the Children, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee with the background and rationale regarding the proposal to re-procure a service that supports young carers and the develop the skills of the wider workforce in the recognition and support of young carers.

The procurement process will include engagement with children and young people, wider stakeholders and the market to fully scope a new service that is both flexible and responsive for the needs of children and young people whilst meeting KCC's statutory requirements for young carers assessments.

**Recommendation(s):**

The Children, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee is asked to **CONSIDER** and **ENDORSE**, or **MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS** to the Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services on the proposed decision (attached as Appendix A) to:

A) Commence formal procurement activity to tender for a service, award a contract and develop robust contract management for oversight of the contract performance.  
and

B) Delegate authority for the Corporate Director Children, Young People and Education in consultation with the Cabinet Member to award a contract following a competitive tender process.

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1. Kent County Council (KCC) has a comprehensive Young Carers Service delivered by Imago.
- 1.2. The contract, which commenced on the 1 May 2016 was for a period of three years. The contract had an annual value of £325,500. The original contract had capacity to be extended on a one year plus one year basis.
- 1.3. The contract performed well and targets were consistently met by the provider. Under the existing terms of the contract, it was fully extended, giving an end date of 30 April 2021.
- 1.4. As a result of Covid-19, the Government issued temporary guidance to address the award or issue of contracts to providers directly in instances of extreme urgency (regulation 32(2)(c)). This resulted in agreement to award a direct contract to Imago for 12 months to 30 April 2022.
- 1.5. The total funding for the Young Carers Service since the 2016 procurement (including all extensions) is £1,962,039. This includes a mobilisation payment at the beginning of the contract.

## **2. Scope of the current contract**

- 2.1. Kent Young Carers Support Service comprises two distinct elements: workforce development; and direct support for Children and Young People. Support can take the form of young carers assessments, 1:1 support, access to a district young carer 'Chill Club', signposting and information
- 2.2. A Young Carer is any young person aged 18 or under who helps look after a relative with a disability, illness, mental health condition, or drug and/or alcohol problem.
- 2.3. A large proportion of Young Carers look after their parent(s), or care for a brother or sister.
- 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. Local Authorities have a statutory responsibility (under the amendments to the Children and Families Act) to ensure that all Young Carers under the age of 18 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 if support needs have changed.

- 2.6. Assessments should find out both the extent and impact of any caring role, whilst also gaining an understanding of any participation, or wishes to participate in education, training or recreation
- 2.7. The identification of Young Carers and their support needs form a central feature of the requirement for the Local Authority to carry out proportionate and appropriate 'Young Carer's Needs Assessment'. Assessments must be carried out in a manner which matches the needs and circumstances of the Young Carer.
- 2.8. Young Carers are not a homogenous group. Needs vary and as such the workforce development element of the contract is recognition that both the identification and support for Young Carers needs to vary according to the type of care that is provided.
- 2.9. The current contract has been successful with demonstrable positive outcomes for young people. Whilst the scope of any new service will be developed in partnership with stakeholders it is anticipated that the two main focus points (assessments and workforce development) of the current specification will remain.

### **3. Commissioning Approach**

- 3.1. Development of the Specification will be in partnership with key stakeholders including Children and Young People, the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS), education leads, the Kent and Medway Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and the wider market.
- 3.2. A Prior Information Notice will be advertised on the Kent Business Portal requesting feedback on the proposed delivery model and scope of provision.
- 3.3. Part of any Invitation to Tender will include but not be limited to:
  - The requirement for a community focused approach that is based in a robust local knowledge.
  - An ability to flex the model of provision between both face-to-face delivery and a virtual offer to not only protect against any further lockdowns but also match delivery to the needs of children and young people.
  - The ability to integrate a model of social prescribing into delivery.
  - A track record in embedding the voice of children and young people in the development of provision
  - Delivery of support needs to be flexible and must include evenings and/or weekends.

## 4. Options Appraisal

4.1. The following table sets out the options considered, along with the advantages and risks of each option:

Option	Advantages	Risks
<p><b>1. Do nothing: The contract ends and KCC do not meet their statutory obligations for Young Carer Assessments.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual saving of £325,500</li> <li>• Programmes of support in some localities may be picked up by the wider VCS.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fragmented approach to delivery continues.</li> <li>• KCC fail in their statutory obligations for Young Carers Assessments.</li> <li>• Already pressured VCS organisations across the county are placed under more pressure for their support without the financial support of the local authority.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Create a new service In-House: KCC to deliver countywide via new Team.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A procurement process will not be required.</li> <li>• Shorter timescale for implementation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TUPE of staff from the existing provider into KCC headcount.</li> <li>• Flexibility of an external provider lost.</li> <li>• KCC has not previously delivered this service, there is a lack of expertise and direct experience.</li> <li>• Wider partners may not wish to engage with the LA for workforce development</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. Externally commission a new service.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to work with partners to develop a new provision</li> <li>• Providers are already set up to deliver the whole range of support to Young Carers.</li> <li>• Providers benefit from long-standing community relationships which supports uptake of provision.</li> <li>• Robust contract management will be in place to monitor performance.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A procurement process will be required.</li> <li>• Longer timescale for implementation.</li> <li>• TUPE implications would apply in specific circumstances</li> </ul>

4.2. Based on the above options appraisal the recommended option is **Option 3, Externally commission a new service.**

- 4.3. Stakeholder engagement and co-production will be a key part of building a new model, with children and young people and providers sharing their knowledge and experiences. This will be used to inform the development of the specification.
- 4.4. Commissioners expect the contract term to be three years with the option to extend for a further two individual years. There will be a requirement to include flexibility within this term to make delivery is fit for purpose. Commissioners will work with the market to understand the best approach to incorporate a strong review process to assess how the contract should develop to meet need and if the next year will be managed in the same way (this is in addition to usual contract termination clauses)

## **5. Timescales**

- 5.1. Should the recommended option be agreed, informal market engagement will commence in December 2021.
- 5.2. Specification development and publication of a notification on the Kent Business Portal can commence on publication of the formal decision.
- 5.3. A procurement process can be implemented to ensure that there is no gap in provision, enabling a new service to be in place from 1 May 2022.

## **6. Financial Implications**

- 6.1. This service will be funded from within the existing revenue KCC base budget reported against the Early Help and Preventative Services Key Service in the Budget Book.
- 6.2. The funding available is £325,500 per annum. This equates to £1,627,500 over the term of the contract and extensions.
- 6.3. Future financial pressures are expected to be limited to pay inflation. Due to the size and nature of the contract no direct financial savings have been identified in relation to this proposal. Financial risks associated with this proposal are expected to be low: potential costs will be managed through the tender process and ongoing contract management for the commissioned service.

## **7. Legal implications**

- 7.1. The Children and Families Act legislates that Local Authorities make sure all Young Carers under the age of 18 are in receipt of an assessment of their needs.
- 7.2. 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 both the extent and impact of their caring role, whilst also gaining an understanding of any participation, or wishes to participate in education, training or recreation.

## **8. Equalities implications**

- 8.1. If the recommendation to procure a new service without a gap in provision is agreed, none of the protected characteristics would be adversely impacted. EqIA screening has been completed and found a full action plan was not required. This will continue to be developed and reviewed as this procurement progresses.

[EqIA Young Carers](#)

## **9. Other corporate implications**

- 9.1. By supporting Young Carers to improve outcomes, there will be a reduction in escalation to crisis point, therefore reducing impact on the front door and other services.

## **10. Governance**

- 10.1. Accountability of the service sits with the Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education. Responsibility sits with the Director for Integrated Children's Services (West).

## **11. Conclusions**

- 11.1. Those who have accessed the service have told us that they find the Young Carers Service invaluable in helping to support their needs in being a Young Carer.
- 11.2. The current contract has enabled a consistent coherent approach to support, working to engage with Young Carers in a variety of ways to help support their needs.
- 11.3. The new service will be developed in partnership with those who use the service and key stakeholders and will be underpinned by the two main focus points of current contract (Young Carer assessments and Workforce development).
- 11.4. The proposed procurement will be completed in time to ensure no gap in service provision.

## **12. Recommendation(s):**

- 12.1. The Children, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee is asked to CONSIDER and ENDORSE, or MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS to the Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services on the proposed decision (attached as Appendix A) to:

A) Commence formal procurement activity to tender for a service, award a contract and develop internal provision for ownership and oversight of the activity.

and

B) Delegate authority for the Corporate Director Children, Young People and Education in consultation with the Cabinet Member to award a contract following a competitive tender process.

### 13. Background Documents

None

### 14. Contact details

**Report Author(s):** Christy Holden  
**Job title:** Head of Strategic Commissioning (Children and Young People's Services)  
**Telephone number:** 03000 415356  
**Email address:**  
Christy.holden@kent.gov.uk

**Relevant Director:** Stuart Collins  
**Job title:** Director Integrated Children Services (Early Help Lead)  
**Telephone number:** 03000 410519  
**Email address:**  
stuart.collins@kent.gov.uk

Helen Cook  
Senior Commissioner  
Helen.cook@kent.gov.uk