

EQIA Submission – ID Number

Section A

EQIA Title

Kent Community Warden Service recommended service model post public consultation

Responsible Officer

Deborah Kapaj - GT EW

Type of Activity

Service Change

Service Change

Service Redesign

Service Redesign

Project/Programme

No

Commissioning/Procurement

No

Strategy/Policy

No

Details of other Service Activity

Agreed budget reduction implementation

Accountability and Responsibility

Directorate

Growth Environment and Transport

Responsible Service

Community Safety/Growth and Communities

Responsible Head of Service

Stephanie Holt-Castle - GT GC

Responsible Director

Stephanie Holt-Castle - GT GC

Aims and Objectives

Due to KCC's significant financial pressures, KCC took a budget decision in February 2023, which included a reduction of the base budget for the Kent Community Warden Service (KCWS), this service budget is to be reduced by £1m by 2024/25.

To achieve the savings, significant reductions to staffing levels will be required with a corresponding review and redesign of the operational service. The service had already been considering a geographical allocation policy to ensure resources are targeted where need and impact will be greatest. Now that the budget has been reduced, this Initial work has been further informed by the public consultation held 12 July to 3 October 2023.

This significant reduction to the budget will reduce resource and capacity to support communities, with negative impacts more significant for the elderly, people with a disability or long-term impairment and carers, most of whom are female and the main service users and are also some of the most vulnerable* residents within our communities.

(* Residents may be additionally vulnerable due to disability or long-term impairment, those who are elderly and living alone, being socially and/or digitally isolated, be more at risk of being targeted or becoming victims of scams/rogue traders or experience financial challenges, all of which can negatively impact health and mental wellbeing, with a higher likelihood of these residents needing additional support from the public or voluntary sector service, including health, social care, police and the district, town or parish councils.)

Service

Wardens currently provide a proactive and visible service within Kent's communities. There are many ways in which they help to improve residents' quality of life and allow communities to thrive. They help residents to feel safe. They support the elderly and vulnerable, and work with communities to foster a sense of cohesion and wellbeing.

Working with partners, they put in place preventative and early intervention measures to deliver solutions to help Kent's residents and communities' flourish.

KCWS currently operates with six teams, each covering two of the 12 Kent districts. The service structure and operations has been based on a workforce of 70 uniformed staff which includes six team leaders (TL) and 64 wardens.

Proposals for change

Staff and partner feedback from pre-consultation engagement helped develop a proposed option to take forward for formal public consultation.

The proposed option was made up of the following:

- Retain the service's wide remit (variety of ways it supports residents and communities).
- Retain its community-based proactive approach.
- Retain a presence in all 12 districts that:
 - o Reduces the number of uniformed wardens (70 to 38) and management posts (3 to 1), and retains the Business Coordinator .
 - o Sets a minimum team size for each of the six teams, that will each cover two districts.
 - o Enhances team size and thereby district coverage for districts with higher evidenced need.
 - o Allocates wardens to specific wards in each district where they will focus/target their work (i.e. coverage of a whole district will no longer be possible.)
- Adopt a Geographical Allocation Policy (GAP - see Appendix 1) which will use data and indicators of need to identify:
 - o Districts with higher need, informing which teams will be enhanced beyond the minimum of 1 Team Leader and 3 wardens.
 - o Then, along with partner information (see Appendix 1), identify wards with highest need in each district to be prioritised for warden allocation.

Indicators proposed for use in the GAP reflect the protected characteristics which will be impacted most significantly using current service user data and public consultation feedback high % of people who: are over 65, over 65 and living alone, have a disability or long term impairment, or provide 50+ hours of unpaid care per week. The various indicators also identify a number of relevant disadvantages, issues, vulnerabilities and barriers. These are outlined in full in the decision paper.

Equality & Diversity aims and objectives

Only 20% of consultees provided comment on the equality impact assessment. Themes from those comments were focused on concerns of impact for elderly and vulnerable, those with a disability, with physical or mental health concerns, those in rural areas, deprived residents, carers and young people/children.

To confirm if the protected characteristics data collected in the public consultation broadly reflects the data

already collected by the service or reflects the Kent demographic (2021 census).

The elderly, people with a disability or long-term impairment and carers, most of whom are female represent the majority of service users. The public consultation data shows these groups were reached and responded.

To confirm the protected characteristics that may be more negatively impacted by a change to the service.

The impact on elderly, people with a disability or long-term impairment and carers, most of whom are female should not be under estimated. All these groups will be impacted by the changes to the service due to reduced staffing levels.

In summary, the impact has been assessed as moderate to severe:

Over 65's – high to severe

Disabled - high

Females – high to severe

Carers – moderate to high

These groups have been prioritised in the selection of needs data being used to develop the Geographic Allocation Policy.

To identify how negative impacts on specific groups can be avoided or mitigated.

The current service provided coverage across Kent, but even now is a relatively small size, and capacity means there is more demand than can be met. Reducing warden numbers by half means the negative impacts cannot be avoided nor mitigated. Instead, the recommended model seeks to direct the resources available to those areas of highest need, which will leave some communities with very minimal or no warden support.

Working alongside other public and voluntary sector organisations the aim will be to work more effectively in partnership to ensure that best value is achieved from the collective resources available.

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To identify any positive impacts that could be achieved from the service change.

No positive impacts identified.

To identify any other data that should be considered within the Geographic Allocation Policy to mitigate negative equality impacts.

It should be noted that Digital Exclusion is considered a form of social inequality and the physical presence of a warden in the community is positive for digitally excluded residents as it enables them to connect in person and access services through the warden. Reducing or removing this physical presence in the community is likely to be an added barrier to accessing support in the future in the areas identified with a lesser need.

Digital exclusion data was considered in discussion with Kent Analytics for inclusion in the model. However,

this data would heavily overlap with indicators for older people and deprivation (barriers to accessing services) already included in the GAP analysis.

CONCLUSION: A negative impact (ranging from moderate to severe) on elderly(over 65's), people with a disability or long-term impairment and carers, the majority of whom are female cannot be avoided nor sufficiently mitigated through a Geographical Allocation Policy (GAP). Any existing support, which cannot be continued by the service will be managed through handovers to other agencies as needed.

Section B – Evidence

Do you have data related to the protected groups of the people impacted by this activity?

Yes

It is possible to get the data in a timely and cost effective way?

Yes

Is there national evidence/data that you can use?

Yes

Have you consulted with stakeholders?

Yes

Who have you involved, consulted and engaged with?

Stakeholder engagement prior to launch of public consultation

27 February 2023 – Service wide meeting with all Kent Community Warden Service staff. Workshop sessions were held with staff to begin gathering views on what the service should look like going forward, and what needs to be considered if any changes are made.

15 Mar 23 – 6 Apr 23 – Staff Hub. A private area on Let's Talk Kent was launched to which all KCWS staff were invited so that they could: respond to a survey; submit questions; and submit feedback. The survey was designed to seek quantitative and qualitative information to help shape proposed options for a public consultation.

5 Apr 23 – 2 May 23 – Partner hub and 1:1 meetings. During this pre-election period a private area on Let's Talk was launched with a limited number of stakeholders invited to respond to a survey regarding the future of KCWS to help shape proposed options to take to public consultation. Those invited included; Chief Executives and Community Safety Leads for the 12 district councils, Kent Police, Kent Fire and Rescue Service (KFRS), Adult Social Care, Trading Standards, Kent Resilience Team and the Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC). One to one meetings were offered to District and Borough Council Chief Executives to discuss and collect views. Meetings were held with; KFRS, KALC and the following districts: Folkestone and Hythe, Sevenoaks, Tunbridge Wells and Tonbridge and Malling.

Public consultation (held between 12 July and 3 October 2023)

The consultation was promoted within KCC and externally via social media, email, press releases and articles.

Promotional material (posters and postcards) were available at KCC libraries and at Gateways to raise awareness and direct public online to find out the details of the changes proposed and how to tell us their views. Contact details for requesting hardcopy and easy read materials were also made available, as well as being able to request alternative formats and languages.

Community warden teams were provided with postcards and posters to use in community venues they have relationships with. They also had hard copy and easy read consultation documents for the service users that wardens work with who may not have access to a computer or require, so that they can also submit their views.

Wardens often work with vulnerable* people and those that are hard to reach. They have also worked with refugees. They were asked to support this consultation by facilitating the groups to be aware of, understand and respond to the consultation.

Efforts were made to engage through KCC staff groups and the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector (VCSEs) etc to target areas of limited data. This did not identify any additional significant impacts

The public consultation received a good level of response, this table shows the breakdown by type of respondent.

RESPONDING AS...

Number of consultees in total (1,357) and %

Yourself (as an individual)

1,004 74%

On behalf of someone who uses the Community Warden service

52 4%

A partner agency (e.g. Kent Police, Kent Fire and Rescue Service, Health services / provider)

39 3%

A representative of a local community group or residents' association

33 2%

On behalf of a Parish / Town / Borough / District Council in an official capacity

41 3%

A Parish / Town / Borough / District / County Councillor

29 2%

On behalf of a charity or voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE)

48 4%

A Kent Community Warden service member of staff

12 1%

A KCC employee

50 4%

An educational establishment, such as a school or college

7 1%

On behalf of a local business

10 1%

Other

24 2%

Prefer not to say / blank

8 1%

Has there been a previous Equality Analysis (EQIA) in the last 3 years?

Yes

Do you have evidence that can help you understand the potential impact of your activity?

Yes

Section C – Impact

Who may be impacted by the activity?

Service Users/clients

Service users/clients

Staff

Staff/Volunteers

Residents/Communities/Citizens

Residents/communities/citizens

Are there any positive impacts for all or any of the protected groups as a result of the activity that you are doing?

Yes

Details of Positive Impacts

The updated geographical allocation policy would ensure the wardens, albeit fewer in number, are better targeted to areas where they are needed most.

Negative impacts and Mitigating Actions

19.Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Age

Are there negative impacts for age?

Yes

Details of negative impacts for Age

66% of KCWS's service users are 65 or over. 46% are 75 or over. 31% of public consultation responses were from those aged 75 or over, this lower percentage is likely due to the wider audience that responded with over 20% of responses from organisations, KCC employees or partner agencies and other local councils.

Although only 1% of young people age 16-24 are identified as service users, the public consultation received no responses from this age group. There were several VSCE organisations that represent children and young people that were targeted to promote and/or respond to the consultation.

A significant reduction in the number of wardens will be a significant reduction in the overall number of residents in Kent that can be supported by the service and the impact on elderly residents cannot be avoided.

The KCC EqIA risk matrix tool estimates risk using the scale of impact, the likelihood and the number of

people affected. In this case, the potential impact is moderate to significant, likely (due to the size of proposed reduction to the service) and would impact a large number of people aged 65 and over, making it a high to severe impact. Confirmed by over 500 consultation responses from people aged over 65.

Older people are identified as one of eight groups more likely to be digitally excluded than others. Mature and older people (age 56+) are a socio-demographic group highlighted as being more at risk of digital exclusion. This represents 147,780 households (21.9%) in the KCC area, with areas in the east of the County more likely to be digitally excluded compared to the west of the County. (Digital Exclusion In Kent June 2021 - Kent Analytics report)

These residents may not like new technology and prefer information by post or in person and are likely to be more significantly impacted by the withdrawal or reduction of the physical presence of the warden service in their community compared to those who prefer to access services and information online. Comments received during the public consultation indicate the value of a presence in the community and at meetings/hubs and knowing alternative ways to contact were needed. It must be noted that some residents, due to age-related hearing loss may be prevented from accessing services by telephone.

A lack of digital access (combined with age and age-related disability), whether due to a lack of technology, skills or confidence, creates a significant barrier to accessing services online, by email or social media, in addition the barriers to using the telephone will leave some residents unable to access services without the assistance of family, friends or other agency staff if these residents lose access to a community warden.

Mitigating Actions for Age

Indicators recommended for use in the geographical allocation policy include identifying areas to allocate a warden based on high % of people who are over 65, the level of Homecare clients and over 65 and living alone. Ensuring the limited resources is targeted toward this group.

Where a warden can no longer continue supporting an existing community / existing service user, strategies will be developed with local partners (parish and district councils, community services) providing a handover and contact details of remaining local services for the resident**.

It is only after the recommended indicators and partner information to consider within the GAP has been agreed, that the processes of finalising the data modelling steps can be done, followed by partner discussions to identify wards with highest need in each district to be prioritised for warden allocation. This can only realistically be progressed after the staff consultation and is expected to take a number of months (i.e. sudden service changes will be avoided). This timeline will allow Team Leaders to manage handovers first of all for the impact of the staff reductions, and then any staff moves to new communities. Team Leader posts will remain constants throughout these changes. Not only will they support the coordination of identifying alternative support (which will vary due to varying assets in each district), but their contact details will be available to those losing their warden support during that time of transition, whilst the alternative support beds in.

The Community Wardens will retain their broad remit, but the service acknowledges that the Securing Kent's Future strategy has been introduced since the proposals were developed and New Models of Care and Support has been prioritised. As such Community Wardens will continue to take referrals from ASCH in the designated wards and where capacity and time allow, beyond those areas.

**This will take into account the needs of the resident such as any disabilities or digital exclusion considerations requiring alternative communication methods, finding appropriate solutions as wardens are accustomed to do.

Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions – Age

Team Leader

20. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Disability

Are there negative impacts for Disability?

Yes

Details of Negative Impacts for Disability

30% of service users surveyed identify as being disabled. 23% of public consultation respondents identified as being disabled with 5% identified as having sensory disability (hearing and/or sight loss), meaning they face additional barriers when communicating, including use of the telephone and/or accessing/understanding written information.

A significant reduction in the number of wardens will be a significant reduction in the overall number of residents in Kent that can be supported by the service and this cannot be avoided.

The KCC EqIA risk matrix tool estimates risk using the scale of impact, the likelihood and the number of people affected. In this case, the potential impact is moderate to significant, likely (due to the size of proposed reduction to the service) and would impact many people (247 consultation responses, although fewer in this group compared to age), making it a high to severe impact.

Disabled people are identified as one of eight groups more likely to be digitally excluded than others and where deafness of speech impairment is relevant, may also be unable to use the telephone to communicate and access support.

Mitigating actions for Disability

Indicators proposed for use in the geographical allocation model include identifying areas to allocate a warden based on a high percentage of people with a disability or long term impairment, high % of people who are over 65, the level of Homecare clients, high % of those over 65 living alone and indicators of low wellbeing.

Where a warden can no longer continue supporting an existing community / existing service user, strategies will be developed with local partners (parish and district councils, community services) providing a handover and contact details of remaining local services for the resident. Where need is identified by the Community Warden, refer to Adult Social Care and Health to assess care needs. Further detail of timescales and arrangements for handovers will be as previously described in the mitigations for age.

The Community Wardens will retain their broad remit, but the service acknowledges that the Securing Kent's Future strategy has been introduced since the proposals were developed and New Models of Care and Support has been prioritised. As such Community Wardens will continue to take referrals from ASCH in the designated wards and where capacity and time allow, beyond those areas.

Comments received during the public consultation indicate the value of a presence in the community and at meetings/hubs and knowing alternative ways to contact were needed. It must be noted that some residents, due to deafness including age-related hearing loss or speech impairment cannot access services by telephone.

Responsible Officer for Disability

Team Leader

21. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Sex

Are there negative impacts for Sex

Yes

Details of negative impacts for Sex

63% of service users surveyed are female. 52% of respondents of the public consultation were female.

A significant reduction in the number of wardens will be a significant reduction in the overall number of residents in Kent that can be supported by the service and this cannot be avoided.

The KCC EqIA risk matrix tool estimates risk using the scale of impact, the likelihood and the number of people affected. In this case, the potential impact is moderate to significant, and also likely (due to the size of proposed reduction to the service) and would impact a large number of people in this group (326 females responded to the consultation), making it a high to severe impact.

Mitigating actions for Sex

Indicators proposed for use in the geographical allocation model include identifying areas to allocate a warden based on high % of people who are over 65, and over 65 and living alone. Sex has not been given its own indicator but the age and sex profile in Kent shows that as age increases there is a greater ratio of females to males. This suggests the age indicators will reflect the higher proportion of females the wardens currently support and will support in the future due to a focus on supporting the elderly.

Where a warden can no longer continue supporting an existing community / existing service user, strategies will be developed with local partners (parish and district councils, community services) providing a handover and contact details of remaining local services for the resident. Where need is identified by the Community Warden, refer to Adult Social Care and Health to assess care needs. Further detail of timescales and arrangements for handovers will be as previously described in the mitigations for age.

The Community Wardens will retain their broad remit, but the service acknowledges that the Securing Kent's Future strategy has been introduced since the proposals were developed and New Models of Care and Support has been prioritised. As such Community Wardens will continue to take referrals from ASCH in the designated wards and where capacity and time allow, beyond those areas.

footnote 2 https://www.kent.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0019/14725/Mid-year-population-estimates-age-and-gender.pdf

Responsible Officer for Sex

Team Leader

22. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender

Are there negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender

No

Negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender

Not Applicable

Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender

Not Applicable

Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender

Not Applicable

23. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Race

Are there negative impacts for Race

No

Negative impacts for Race

Not Applicable

Mitigating actions for Race

Not Applicable

Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Race

Not Applicable

24. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Religion and belief

Are there negative impacts for Religion and belief

No
Negative impacts for Religion and belief
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Religion and belief
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Religion and Belief
Not Applicable
25. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Are there negative impacts for Sexual Orientation
No
Negative impacts for Sexual Orientation
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Not Applicable
26. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Are there negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity
No
Negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Not Applicable
27. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Are there negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
No
Negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Not Applicable
28. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities
Are there negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities
Yes
Negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities
17% of service users surveyed identify as a carer. 16% of the respondents identified as a carers in the public consultation, which corresponds to the service user demographic.
A significant reduction in the number of wardens will be a significant reduction in the overall number of residents in Kent that can be supported by the service and this cannot be avoided.
The KCC EqIA risk matrix tool estimates risk using the scale of impact, the likelihood and the number of people affected. In this case, the potential impact is moderate to significant, and also likely (due to the proposed size of reduction to the service). Although 167 carers responded to the public consultation, the service supports fewer in this group (than age, sex or disability groupings), making it a medium to high impact.
Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities
Indicators proposed for use in the geographical allocation model include identifying areas to allocate a

warden based on % of lone parent households with dependent children and % of people providing 50+ hours of unpaid care per week. These indicators will support the targeting of the service toward this group.

Where a warden can no longer continue supporting an existing community / existing service user, strategies will be developed with local partners (parish and district councils, community services) providing a handover and contact details of remaining local services for the resident. Where need is identified by the Community Warden, refer to Adult Social Care and Health to assess the carer's needs. Further detail of timescales and arrangements for handovers will be as previously described in the mitigations for age.

The Community Wardens will retain their broad remit, but the service acknowledges that the Securing Kent's Future strategy has been introduced since the proposals were developed and New Models of Care and Support has been prioritised. As such Community Wardens will continue to take referrals from ASCH in the designated wards and where capacity and time allow, beyond those areas.

Responsible Officer for Carer's responsibilities

Team Leader
