

TITLE OF REPORT: **Caregivers Services Recommission**

REPORT OF: **Dale Owens, Strategic Director, Integrated Adults and Social Care services**

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek approval to procure a new all-age Caregiver service in Gateshead, jointly commissioned by Gateshead Council and the Integrated Care Board (ICB), with the Council leading procurement.

Background

2. Gateshead Carers Services contracts are due to end on 31 August 2024. The Council and the Integrated Care Board (ICB) currently commission three distinct specialist services, within an overarching contract: 1. Young Carer Service 2. Adult Carer Service 3. Carer Relief Service.
3. Existing services are contracted to deliver a range of support including around awareness raising, statutory carer assessments, information, advice and guidance, administration of a Carer Wellbeing Fund, mental health and wellbeing support, and replacement care.
4. Gateshead Council and the ICB intend to jointly commission a new service to support all-age Caregiver populations within Gateshead including Young Carers, Young Adult Carers, and Adult Caregivers.
5. Following a review of current services and an engagement programme, which gathered insights from around 500 all age Caregivers and professionals, a new model has been developed that meets Caregivers' needs, supports the strategic goals of the Gateshead system, and works closely with wider services. Further details of the results of the engagement programme can be found in the Appendix.
6. Future Caregivers services must complement the new strategic direction of Gateshead Council in foregrounding locality-based and community-led support. Partners across the Gateshead system should be empowered to understand the needs of Caregivers and deliver accessible, timely support, in a way that suits the individual. A revised approach to delivering Caregivers services is required to do this, where support is tailored according to need, and Caregivers are valued as experts by experience and supported to share this knowledge with others.
7. The new service will deliver outcomes shaped by local need and are reflective of the strategic priorities outlined in the Adult Caregivers Strategy (2024-9), Thrive Agenda and Community-Led Support. The proposals are cognisant of national

guidelines such as NICE and CQC frameworks on best practice when supporting Caregivers, and policy supporting Young Carers such as No Wrong Door.

8. The proposed model reflects key principles to improving the experience of Caregivers in Gateshead:
 - Prevention as a priority, with a tiered offer according to need.
 - A whole-system approach to supporting caregivers, which prioritises partnerships and maximises future investments across health and social care.
 - Community-led support at the heart of the model.
 - Inclusivity and a recognition of Caregivers with intersecting needs.
 - A service that promotes positive transitions and opportunities across the life course.
9. In line with the Adult Caregivers Strategy 2024-9, the proposal promotes the sustainable investment in Caregivers across the wider system through improving recognition of Caregivers and their rights, the development of new mental health and peer support services, and the integration of community-led approaches to care and support.

Further detail of the model and associated costs can be found in the appendix 1.

Proposal

10. A tender exercise will commence on 17 May 2024 and end on 19 July 2024. Gateshead Council will lead the procurement exercise.
11. Approval was granted at Cabinet in December 2023 (Minute C90 2023/24) for the Service Director, Corporate Commissioning and Procurement to award the contracts following a tender process in accordance with the Contract Procedure Rules.
12. New services will commence from 1 September 2024.

Recommendations

13. It is recommended that Cabinet:
 - (i) Endorses the service model and associated costings to support the implementation of new Caregivers services in Gateshead.
 - (ii) Approves the project to progress to the next procurement stage.
 - (iii) Notes that contracts will be awarded by the Service Director, Corporate Commissioning and Improvement, following the tender process in accordance with the Contract Procedure Rules and the approval given by Cabinet in December 2023.

For the following reasons:

- (i) To enable the delivery of a new Caregivers service from 1 September 2024, when existing contracts will expire.

- (ii) To meet local need and align services to strategic priorities across the local health and social care system.
- (iii) To enable an integrated commissioning approach across Health and Social Care, which prevents duplication of funding and resources, and maximises existing infrastructure.

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Policy Context

1. Gateshead Council has committed to making Gateshead a place where everyone Thrives. This proposal supports delivery of the Council’s Thrive pledges in the following ways:

<p>Putting people and families at the heart of everything we do</p>	<p>The service review identified gaps in the experience of Young Adult Caregivers and a disjointed approach to supporting carers across children’s and adult services. The proposed model brings all-age Caregiver services together to champion a whole-family approach to supporting Caregivers, as set out by the Care Act (2014). New service models promote positive transitions across the life course.</p>
<p>Tackling inequalities, so people have a fair chance</p>	<p>Through established research, we know that Caregivers who have intersecting needs can face additional barriers to accessing suitable support. For example, those from minoritised ethnic backgrounds, Caregivers who identify as LGBTQ+, Caregivers with additional needs, and those who experience severe financial hardship. The model recognises the importance of creating an inclusive service and proposes a ringfenced budget to fund a post which is dedicated to reaching Caregivers with intersecting needs, or who may experience barriers accessing services.</p> <p>The review of existing Caregiver services highlighted a significant proportion of Caregivers have their own care or support needs. The new model proposes a tiered approach to supporting Caregivers, where those with higher needs can be supported suitably and those with lower needs can access timely information and advice.</p>
<p>Supporting our communities to support themselves and each other</p>	<p>A review of current Caregiver services demonstrated opportunities to better harness community-led support, through activity such as peer-led support groups and volunteering roles. This is key to the development of the new models, e.g., through the volunteer-led Sitting Service, and reflects the new strategic direction of Gateshead Council in foregrounding locality-based and community-led support.</p>
<p>Investing in our economy to provide sustainable opportunities for employment, innovation, and growth</p>	<p>Caregivers can experience difficulties with accessing flexible employment and volunteering opportunities to fit around their caring responsibilities. Caregivers lack accessible training and skills opportunities in Gateshead, and have requested opportunities to learn about how to care safely, and better understand the condition of the cared-for person.</p> <p>The proposed model provide opportunities for Young Adult Caregivers to develop Life Skills to support their transition to adulthood.</p> <p>The development of volunteering opportunities is also key to this model, through the establishment of a volunteer-led Sitting Service. This will promote pre-employment opportunities and support development for those considering careers in care.</p>

<p>Working together and fighting for a better future for Gateshead</p>	<p>The engagement programme highlighted an inconsistent approach to supporting caregivers across the system, and a lottery of professionals being equipped with the understanding and tools to help direct caregivers and make every contact count.</p> <p>The new model proposes a whole-system approach to supporting caregivers, which prioritises partnerships and maximises future investments across health and social care.</p> <p>The Adult Caregivers Strategy Action Plan commits to raising awareness across key stakeholders within the Gateshead System, including across Childrens and Adults Social Care, Primary Care, Secondary Care and the Voluntary and Community Sector. Providers of future Caregivers services will be key to this work.</p>
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2. The proposed future caregivers model strives to meet the strategic priorities identified within the Adult Caregivers Strategy (2024-9):
 - Information and Advice.
 - Valuing Caregivers.
 - Money and Finances.
 - Employment and Education.
 - Health of Caregivers.

3. This work also supports the delivery of the Integrated Adults and Social Care Strategy 2023-28 which commits to:
 - Publishing a Caregivers Strategy which reflects the priorities of Caregivers.
 - Review the Carers Assessment process to ensure it is fair, consistent and meets the needs of Caregivers.
 - Strengthen the link between Adult Carers and Young Carers through joint working with Childrens' and Adults Services.

4. Nationally, the Care Act (2014) places responsibility on the Council to:
 - Promote wellbeing.
 - Prevent, reduce and delay need for support, including the needs of carers.
 - Carry out carer's assessments.
 - Meet carers' eligible needs.
 - Provide information and advice in relation to their caring role and own needs.

NHS partners are required to co-operate with local authorities in delivering Care Act functions.

5. The Children and Families Act (2014) gives Young Carers and parent carers in England a right to an assessment of their own needs. The Care Act (2014) and the Children and Families Act should work together to make sure the needs of the whole family are met and inappropriate or excessive caring by Young Carers is prevented or reduced.

6. For the purposes of transition, a Young Carer is defined as 'a person under 18 who provides or intends to provide care for an adult' (Care Act 2014, section 63(6)). The Care Act places a duty on local authorities to conduct transition assessments for Young Carers where there is a likely need for care and support after they turns 18 and where a transition assessment would be of "Significant benefit".

Background

7. Gateshead should be a place where Caregivers are recognised, valued, and supported to thrive, both in their caring role and as individuals. The proposal outlines the development of an all-age service that supports Caregivers through the life course with a flexible, accessible offer that reflects their needs, as outlined in the results of the engagement programme.

All Age Caregivers Service Model

8. The new all age Caregivers model includes several core areas of delivery to address the gaps and opportunities identified through the service review and engagement programme. The engagement programme gathered insights from around 500 caregivers and professionals. The core emergent themes formed the basis of the model, and a selection of illustrative quotes can be found throughout this section.
9. Engagement methods included a combination of focus groups, 1-1 interviews, a review of secondary data (including surveys, interview, and focus group data), and a desk-based literature search.

Transitions

10. Current service models do not effectively support young people transitioning to adult services. This was a key theme in the feedback from Young Adult Carers:

“I went on a trip with young carers across the country and most of them were from services up to 25 years old. We should have that here. It’s not fair we have to leave at 18. Our service should represent the same as everywhere else. I want it to be up to 25. The adult service here doesn’t suit me...”
11. Through the development of an all-age service which promotes positive transitions through a distinct offer for 16–25-year-olds, young people will be:
 - Supported to access information and advice around education, employment, and the conditions of the cared-for person.
 - Supported to consider the choices available to them in relation to the caring role, and to minimise inappropriate caring.
 - Signposted to relevant national resources such as the Action for Children text service.
 - Offered Life Skills workshops.
 - Offered social activities tailored to their age group.
12. The Provider will work closely with child and adult services to improve the transitions experience for Young Adult Carers and achieve improved outcomes such as confidence and self-esteem, communication skills and independent living skills.

Social and Emotional Needs

13. Having a space away from the caring role is essential for young people to develop socially and emotionally.

14. Young Carers spoke of the significance of these opportunities at the Expert Panel evening:

“I’ve made some many friends...I have a break when I come to the groups. It gives us time to yourself and to work on yourself. A chance to focus on yourself. I can work on my physical health. My mental health. We need to get some time off from caring.” (Young Carer)

15. The provider will build on existing good practice to provide opportunities for regular short breaks for Young Carers through access to youth-focused activities such as trips, leisure activities, sports and physical activity and creative workshops.

Information, Advice & Guidance

16. The importance of timely access to information, advice and guidance has emerged consistently through the engagement work with both Caregivers and Professionals:

“I would like to see a one stop shop where information and advice could be sought and answered promptly and confidentially.” (Adult Caregiver).

17. Providing suitable advice and guidance to Caregivers is also a statutory duty within the Care Act (2014).

18. The proposed model offers a first point of contact for Caregivers in Gateshead to triage enquiries and deliver support according to need.

- Information will be available through a range of accessible formats, for example in person, via phone and online.
- Service will build on existing community-based infrastructure. For example, the delivery of drop-in sessions in Locality Hubs across Gateshead. This will widen the geographical reach, improve access, and maximise the short time a Caregiver has available to engage with the service.
- Young Carers and their families will have access to age-appropriate resources.
- Providers will work with partners across the system to cascade relevant information on Caring. This will ensure relevant services are clear on the offer to Caregivers and present a consistent message which champions the rights of Caregivers.

Education, Skills & Training Development

19. Caregivers want access to skills and training opportunities that enhance their caring role and support them to care safely, yet in the Survey of Adult Carers ([2021-2](#)), less than 1% of Caregivers in Gateshead reported accessing training to support their role.

20. A training offer will be developed on caring-related topics that complement the lived experience of Caregivers and promotes personal development. This can be delivered in-house or through external organisations on topics such as First Aid, Managing Stress and Anxiety, Safeguarding and Infection Control. This offer will be available to Volunteers and Caregivers.

21. Providers will support all-age Caregivers to understand the diagnoses of the cared-for person and where appropriate make referrals to specialist organisations or develop partnerships to improve joint working. For example, the delivery of information sessions on specific themes, such as supporting an individual with long-term mental health needs.
22. Life Skills workshops will be available for Young Adult Caregivers to support their transition into adult services – an issue raised by the Young Carers Expert Panel:

“We want activities for our age group like rock climbing, fitness, games, and essential life skills. Something like how to cook health meals for the person we care for. This would help us look after them better”.

Statutory Assessment

23. The Carer’s Trust ([2023](#)) estimate that 19 million people in the UK have provided unpaid care in their lifetime, yet 73% of those surveyed did not identify themselves as a carer. The Provider will promote and deliver statutory assessments for Caregivers across the life course including Young Carers Assessments, Transition Assessments, Parent Needs Assessments and Carer Assessments. This will improve recognition among Caregivers of their role and their entitlement to support.

Recognition and respect are prominent themes among caregivers:

“There needs to be publicity about what young carers are. People talk down to me and they don’t understand what I do. I don’t feel listened to.” (Young Adult Carer)

“I wish people in schools understood carers more. They need to be told, both the children and the staff because they are often not careful about the language they use and what they say about it. I have to explain my story every time. I need more support in school.” (Young Carer)

24. Improving access to assessments will increase our understanding of the Caregiver population and their support needs in Gateshead and provide a mechanism to signpost eligible Caregivers to resources such as Short Breaks and Respite, Direct Payments, and information and advice to support the caring role.
25. Provider-delivered assessments will improve Caregivers’ satisfaction of the assessment process and opportunities to develop the relationship between the Provider, Caregiver, and their family.
26. The Provider will be encouraged to utilise local community sites, such as the Locality Hubs, to undertake assessments face-to-face where the Caregiver may need additional support, in a venue accessible to them.

Mental Health & Wellbeing

27. Improving the mental health and wellbeing of Caregivers is a key priority, with over 50% of respondents to the Survey of Adult Carers ([2021-2](#)) in Gateshead reporting tiredness, disturbed sleep and stress as a result of their caring role.

28. The Provider will support the Caregiver to understand the key factors affecting their mental health and work to develop a support plan to achieve tailored outcomes. For example, a referral to a peer support group to combat social isolation, or support to access respite to offer the Caregiver a break.
29. Where a Caregiver may need support from a specialist mental health service, they will work directly with commissioned Providers to find an offer suitable for the individual. For example, talking therapies specifically tailored to parent carers.

Caregivers living in West Gateshead reported difficulties accessing support:

“I would like to see easier access to health and social care hubs for people who live in areas of Gateshead like High Spen.” (Adult Caregiver)

30. Caregivers will be encouraged to develop links with their community at a locality level, for example accessing wellbeing groups delivered by Integrated Neighbourhood Teams, or Lifelong Learning through Learning and Skills provision.
31. Through the term of the contract, two mental health services will be developed to support young people with enduring mental health difficulties. These will offer 1-1 and group support to young people with complex needs, including Young Carers.

Market Sustainability

32. The Provider will be encouraged to consider a staffing model which includes, for example, a part-time Business Development Manager or equivalent role to ensure there is sufficient capacity and expertise to seek income outside of the Council/ICB contract.
33. This will address the risk of financial reliance on the contract and improve market stability. This will offer added value to the contract through income generation, thus enabling the Provider to develop new service elements reflective of need of Caregivers once the contract is established.

Short Breaks

34. Accessing suitable respite remains a key priority for Caregivers in Gateshead, yet a review of existing services highlighted an inequity across those people in receipt of care who access and contribute towards respite provision and those receiving respite under the umbrella of Caregivers' services, which are provided at no charge.
35. We have an opportunity to better utilise volunteer capacity to deliver support for Caregivers and Cared-for people, such as peer support, skills swaps, activities to reduce social isolation and providing short breaks.
36. The model proposes the development of a Volunteer-led Sitting Service which will allow Caregivers a break from the caring role whilst also removing the inequity from other respite type Care Act provided services.
37. Volunteers will spend an agreed time each week participating in activities with the Cared-for person such as chatting or playing board games. This provides the Cared-for and Caregiver with respite that is delivered into the home and flexible to

individuals' preferences. Outcomes include increased wellbeing and reduced stress for the Caregiver, and improved social interaction and wellbeing for the cared-for. Volunteers will have access to training such as Safeguarding and Professional Boundaries.

38. Volunteers will not deliver any CQC-regulated care such as administering medication or personal care. Developing the volunteer infrastructure in Gateshead to deliver the service will provide pre-employment opportunities, increase access to sitting service support, and offer opportunities for carers who are bereaved.
39. All existing users of the Carer Relief Service will continue to be supported alternative support is accessed either by utilising respite allocation through social care, the volunteer-led sitting service, or other local services such as the NHS Responders programme, or MHM Communities befriending scheme. Funding will be made available to ensure this is smoothly transitioned over a 12-month period.

Peer Support

40. Caregivers possess significant expertise about the caring role and how to work with services to advocate for their needs and the needs of the cared-for. The new model will build on good practice around the co-delivery of services to develop peer support groups, delivered by experts by experience.

The benefits of peer support and socialising were regularly referenced by Caregivers throughout the engagement process:

"I was keen to give something back so ran a craft session which was like an escape for the carers that came...we were different ages, but all had that shared experience of caring and therefore something in common." (Adult Caregiver)

"I would like to see wider networks, not just groups or coffee mornings in the centre. More availability for respite for Parent Carers in the summer holidays or clubs/activities where children can take part and parents can meet and get support." (Parent Carer)

41. By harnessing existing volunteer infrastructure, the Provider will develop roles suited to the needs of individuals and support pre-employment pathways.
42. The Provider will be supported through Gateshead Volunteer Centre to access resources such as the Volunteer Coordinators Network and Training Programme such as Introduction to Volunteer Management.

Participation and Engagement

43. In line with Gateshead's commitment to introduce Community Led Support, the Provider will work actively to involve Caregivers in the development of the service, decision making and governance. For example, the Provider may establish an expert panel to gather the views of Caregivers from different backgrounds.
44. The Provider will ensure they gather appropriate feedback from those using the Service and adapt their delivery accordingly, to ensure continuous improvement.

Opportunities to contribute meaningfully to the development and delivery of Services improves feelings of recognition and respect, a key priority to Caregivers:

“Having a Young Carers rep at the Council would be good... at the moment I think if I was to tell them something they wouldn’t listen. I wouldn’t know who to talk to or where to call. A rep would mean we could tell them what we think.” (Young Carer)

Inclusivity

45. Nationally, Young Carers are 1.5 times as likely to be from black and minoritised ethnic backgrounds ([Wong, 2017](#)). Evidence also shows that Black, Asian and Minoritised Ethnic Caregivers are more likely to suffer financial difficulties because of the caring role, and care for more hours than White counterparts ([Carers UK, 2022](#)).
46. Caregivers from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic backgrounds told us it is important to build cultural awareness into the support offered, and that the new provider should recruit a diverse workforce to improve representation and inspire other people from similar backgrounds to do such roles.
47. The proposed model will refocus support to those Caregivers who may be experiencing multiple barriers to support, or socioeconomic inequality. The Provider will work proactively to support Caregivers from a range of backgrounds, through the provision of a dedicated post. This includes engagement with Caregivers from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic communities, religious communities such as Orthodox Jewish Caregivers, and those who identify as LGBTQ+.
48. Research demonstrates that Caregivers who themselves have enduring health conditions or disabilities face additional hardships. The Provider will support Caregivers to recognise their own individual support needs and identify support to remove barriers and improve health outcomes. For example, through financial and welfare advice and guidance, or support to understand their eligibility to help in the home.

Investing in Caregivers

49. The 2023-4 investment in Caregivers services is £1.020m funded through a 50/50 contribution from the Council and ICB from the Better Care Fund (BCF). The below table demonstrates the funding required to deliver the new proposed model.

YEAR	All Age Carers			Short Breaks		TOTAL
	Core	Wellbeing Fund (Young Carers)	Wellbeing Fund (Adult Carers)	Carer Relief (Tapering)	Volunteer Sitting Service	
Year 1	£507,000	£25,000	£50,000	£265,000	£125,000	£972,000
Year 2	£507,000	£25,000	£50,000	£25,000	£160,000	£767,000
Year 3	£507,000	£25,000	£50,000	£0	£180,000	£762,000

50. Core budgets for delivery of support services to all age caregivers have been protected, with an additional £30,000 per annum funding allocated to support the delivery of an enhanced all-age service model.

51. A wellbeing fund has been retained for all age Caregivers to support access to short breaks and activities to improve health and wellbeing. Eligibility criteria to access the fund will be redesigned to ensure it targets those most in need.
52. £265,000 has been allocated to support the transition of the Carer Relief service for a minimum of 12 months, with small budget for year 2 to safeguard any delays.
53. Investment in the sitting service will grow through the contract term to reflect the gradual expansion of the service. The allocated budget includes funding for training, travel and DBS, expenses, service management and volunteer recruitment.
54. The Council and ICB will continue to invest £1.02m annually from the BCF. £47,000 in Year 1, £252,000 in Year 2 and £257,000 in Year 3 will be reinvested into improving the infrastructure supporting Caregivers across the system at a locality level. This will enable Health and Social Care partners to embed principles that recognise the rights and needs of Caregivers to ensure long-term and sustainable cultural change.
55. In addition to this investment, relevant ICB contracts are being reviewed to improve the experience of Caregivers, for example through advocacy for carers with eligible support needs, and mental health support for parent carers. This will improve local health infrastructure, and lead to better outcomes for Caregivers.

Consultation

56. The Portfolio Holders for Children, Young People and Families, Health and Wellbeing and Adult Social Care have been consulted on this work.

The Director of Place, Gateshead ICB, has also been consulted on this work.

Alternative Options

57. There are no alternative options. If existing services remain the same there will be limited opportunity to deliver against our strategic objectives.

Implications of Recommended Option

58. **Resources:**

- a) **Financial Implications** – The Strategic Director, Resources and Digital confirms that Gateshead Council's funding for the procurement of services can be met from existing resources. The ICB contribution together with that of the Council is included within the Better Care Fund.
- b) **Human Resources Implications** – There are no Human Resource implications to Council employees. There may be staff who are eligible to transfer from existing providers to any potential new providers under TUPE arrangements, however that will be determined by the incoming and outgoing providers.

c) **Property Implications** – There are no property implications arising from this report.

59. **Risk Management Implication** – There is a risk that any delays to the procurement process would result in a gap in service provision. This risk will be mitigated through either extending existing arrangements or delivery diverted to other areas.

60. **Equality and Diversity Implications**

Approval of the model and associated funded will support the delivery of services for Caregivers who are at risk of experiencing social inequality and discrimination. An Integrated Impact Assessment has been completed, which identified cumulatively positive impacts upon Caregivers who may experience compounded inequalities. Any potential negative impacts to the proposals have been mitigated through building capacity and awareness in the system, and redirecting funds to meet emergent need and our strategic priorities.

61. **Crime and Disorder Implications**

There are no Crime and Disorder implications arising directly from this report.

62. **Health Implications**

Approval of the Caregiver service model and associated funding will have a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of Caregivers. Funding will support activity to reduce social isolation, improve the integration of health and social care services, and connect individuals with suitable mental health provision.

63. **Climate Emergency and Sustainability Implications**

There are no Climate Emergency and Sustainability Implications arising from this report, however, Health of Caregivers is a priority within the Caregivers Strategy 2024-9. The Integrated Impact Assessment also outlines how considerations around emissions and environmental impacts will be considered through the proposal.

64. **Human Rights Implications**

There are no human rights implications arising from this report.

65. **Ward Implications**

All wards are affected, as the services will be open to all Caregivers living in Gateshead.

Background Information

66. Integrated Impact Assessment.

67. Caregivers Strategy 2024-9.

68. Integrated Adults and Social Care Strategy 2023-8.

69. Making Gateshead a Place Where Everyone Thrives.

70. Health and Wellbeing Strategy.