

Notice of KEY Executive Decision

Subject Heading:	Permission to procure an Unpaid Carer Support Service
Decision Maker:	Barbara Nicholls, Strategic Director of People
Cabinet Member:	Cllr Gillian Ford, Cabinet Member for Adults and Health
ELT Lead:	Barbara Nicholls, Strategic Director of People
Report Author and contact details:	Sophie Barron Email: sophie.barron@havering.gov.uk
Policy context:	The Adult Social Care and Support Planning Policy states that Havering's vision is: 'Supporting excellent outcomes for the people of Havering by helping communities to help themselves and targeting resources and interventions to encourage independence'
Financial summary:	Total Cost for 3 years + 2 years Contract: £929,098.76 Year 1 - £175,000.00 Year 2 - £180,250.00 Year 3 - £185,657.50 Year 4 - £191,227.22 Year 5 - £196,964.04
Reason decision is Key	Yes (a) Expenditure or saving (including anticipated income) of £500,000 or more
Date notice given of intended decision:	20 March 2025

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Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Sub Committee:	People's Overview and Scrutiny Sub Committee
Is it an urgent decision?	No
Is this decision exempt from being called-in?	No

The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

People - Supporting our residents to stay safe and well **X**

Place - A great place to live, work and enjoy

Resources - Enabling a resident-focused and resilient Council

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Part A – Report seeking decision

DETAIL OF THE DECISION REQUESTED AND RECOMMENDED ACTION

This decision paper is seeking permission to procure an Unpaid Carer Support Service. The contract will run from the 1st February 2026 to 31st January 2029 with the option to extend for a further 2 years at a total value of £929,098.76. Officers intend to undertake an open tender to appoint a provider to deliver the Unpaid Carer Support Service.

AUTHORITY UNDER WHICH DECISION IS MADE

The Havering Constitution:

Part 3.3 Scheme of Delegation

Scheme 3.3.3 Powers common to all Strategic Director

4. Contracts

4.1 To approve commencement of a tendering process for all contracts below a total contract value £1,000,000

STATEMENT OF THE REASONS FOR THE DECISION

The Carers Hub contract provided by Carers of Barking & Dagenham ends on the 31st January 2026. This contract meets the Council's obligations under the Care Act (2014) and is designed to support adult carers in maintaining their caregiving roles. The service aims to prevent the need for more expensive care and support interventions by leveraging existing personal and community resources. It also ensures the Council's duties to help vulnerable individuals remain safe within the community are fulfilled.

This paper is seeking permission to procure an Unpaid Carer Support Service. The contract will run from the 1st February 2026 to 31st January 2029 with the option to extend for a further 2 years at a total value of £929,098.76.

The Council has a duty, when undertaking procurements, to ensure it is transparent, treating providers equally and any decision/action is proportionate. We are proposing an open tender with bids will be evaluated 70/30 for price and quality.

Our vision is to create an integrated and holistic approach to adult social care that prioritizes the well-being of individuals and communities alike. By championing proactive health measures and fostering a culture of collective responsibility, we aim to empower every individual to achieve their fullest potential in health and life.

We envision a future where preventative services are at the heart of adult social care, promoting not only the physical health but also the emotional, social, and mental well-being of all adults. Our dedication to community well-being means working collaboratively with individuals, families, organizations, residents, voluntary sector, and community providers to build supportive environments that nurture and sustain health across all life stages.

Through education, innovation, and compassionate care, we strive to inspire a sense of empowerment and self-determination in those we serve. Our services will be designed with

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input from carers, ensuring that the support we provide truly meets their needs and preferences. By partnering with voluntary sector and community providers, we aim to deliver services across the borough effectively. Together, we can create a resilient and thriving community where everyone has the opportunity to live a healthy, fulfilling life.

Background

The aging population and the after-effects of the pandemic have led to an increase in unpaid and hidden family carers, bringing attention to the challenges they face across Havering. To support carers, the Council offers initiatives such as the Carers Hub, which provides activities, assessments, and advocacy services. Efforts to support carers include the work of the BHR Carers Group, which focuses on improving advice, support, and mental health services for carers. The Council is also increasing targeted identification of unpaid carers through front-line services, family discussions, and service user interactions. Awareness campaigns highlight who carers are and the support available to them, alongside organising Carers Forums and promoting services like reablement and independence skills for individuals with learning disabilities. Collaboration with local community and faith groups has been strengthened, and a commitment has been made to integrate the identification and support of unpaid carers into the core work of re-commissioned services.

Carers Strategy

Havering also updated its Carers Strategy at the end of 2023 to address key priorities identified by carers, including improved access to information, enhanced GP support, and better respite services. The strategy identified that there are currently 1,900 adult carers registered with the current commissioned service, 5,000 residents identified as carers by their GP practice, and 1,209 adult carer assessments completed in the past year. However, it is widely acknowledged that the actual number of unpaid carers in the borough is likely much higher. Many individuals may not recognise their caregiving role or may choose not to access support services. The 2021 Census data indicates that 8.7% of the population is providing some level of unpaid care, which could translate to over 22,800 unpaid and informal carers in Havering. This reveals a significant gap between the number of known carers registered with a GP (5,000) or the Carers Hub (1,900) and the estimated actual number of carers, which is nearly 23,000.

In addition, our recent Ageing Well Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) states 51% of adult carers are providing unpaid care 20 hours or more hours a week. The percentage of adult carers (65+ years) who have as much social contact as they would like (22.7%) was lower than both London average (27.7%) and England average (28.8%).

This data demonstrates that there is a real need to enhance community engagement and support networks for adult carers. Increasing awareness and accessibility of support through local venues and online platforms will ensure more carers, particularly those providing extensive unpaid care, can benefit from the available services.

Current Issues with the Contract

- Fixed based services: This approach disproportionately affects vulnerable populations, such as the elderly, disabled or low-income individuals who may already face additional barriers to accessing support. Having services based in a specific location can limit the services effectiveness, preventing them from reaching and adequately serving the entire community.
- Inefficient use of resources: Duplication of services and support results in inefficient use of resources, diverting funds and efforts away from other crucial areas that could benefit the community.

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- Reduced quality of services: Strain on individual services to address complex needs and without adequate knowledge, support and coordination, leads to a reduction in the quality of services offered.
- Delays in support: Lack of coordination causes delays in receiving timely support, which can be particularly detrimental in urgent situations or crisis's.

Current Performance

NEW REFERRALS	April 2023 – March 2024					April 2024 – March 2025	
	Q1 Apr-June	Q2 July-Sep	Q3 Oct-Dec	Q4 Jan-March	Totals for 2023-24	Q1 Apr-June	Q2 July-Sep
No. of new referrals	70	69	62	61	262	71	73
Adhoc support	9	14	6	4	33	1	2
1:1 support	61	55	56	57	229	70	71

RE-REFERRALS	April 2023 – March 2024					April 2024 – March 2025	
	Q1 Apr-June	Q2 July-Sep	Q3 Oct-Dec	Q4 Jan-March	Totals for 2023-24	Q1 Apr-June	Q2 July-Sep
No. of re-referrals (all receive 1:1)	89	100	124	178	491	158	112

As you can see from the data provided above, most service users that accessed the service in 2023-24 were carers that are already known to the service and requested 1:1 support, representing 65.21% of all contact. This is a trend that seems to be repeating across the activity in 2024-25. This suggests that the service is providing more support to those who are already registered with the service rather than those who are not. Although quarterly referrals are slowly increasing and the service as of December 2024 has over 1,900 carers registered, there are still potentially 20,000 unknown carers in Havering who are missing out on support.

Redesigning the service to encompass a community-based model would create greater visibility and accessibility, attracting a broader spectrum of carers, especially from those harder to reach groups. The aim is by expanding the reach, we can effectively engage with the 20,000 unidentified carers who are currently missing out on support, thereby increasing overall awareness and access to essential services. This approach will ensure that more carers, especially those new to the service, receive the assistance they need.

Further Benefits of a Community Service

- Improved accessibility: Residents can access multiple services in locations across the borough, reducing barriers to support.
- Equity and Inclusion: An collaborative approach can help address disparities and ensure that all residents have equitable access to support services. This is especially important for marginalised and vulnerable populations who may face additional barriers to accessing help.

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- **Enhanced coordination:** Local services can better share information and collaborate on cases, ensuring holistic and consistent support.
- **Better outcomes:** Addressing multiple needs simultaneously leads to more effective and sustainable results for residents and families.
- **Flexibility and Responsiveness:** Services provided within local communities can be more flexible and responsive to the specific needs of the population. Being closer to the community, providers can quickly identify emerging issues and adapt their support accordingly.
- **Building Trust and Engagement:** Localised services help to build trust between service providers and community members. When support is provided by familiar faces within the community, residents are more likely to seek help and engage with the services offered.
- **Opportunities for relationships:** When residents receive services close to where they live, they have more opportunities to engage with their neighbours and participate in community activities. This helps to break down social isolation and foster stronger, more connected communities.
- **Strengthening Social Fabric:** When residents feel supported and connected, they are more likely to contribute positively to their community, such as volunteering and participating in local initiatives.

Recommendation

The unpaid carer community provides invaluable support to individuals needing assistance. To enhance their well-being and sustainability, it's crucial to procure a community-based Unpaid Carer Support Service that offers comprehensive carers assessments, preventive measures, and ongoing support in venues across the borough. Carers assessments will identify specific needs, evaluate the impact of caregiving, and develop personalized support plans.

Preventive measures are essential to reduce long-term strain on carers. These should include educational programs, access to health and wellness resources, and respite care options to prevent burnout. Continuous support through regular check-ins, peer support groups, and access to counselling and mental health services is also vital.

Implementing this service involves engaging with local communities, developing partnerships, securing funding, and establishing a monitoring framework to assess effectiveness. This investment will enhance the quality of life for carers and ensure the sustainability of their crucial roles within the community.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

Option 1 - *Do nothing*

There is the option to do nothing and stop providing Carers Hub contract when the contract ends on the 31st January 2026. This option has been considered and rejected as the contract meetings the Council's obligations under the Care Act (2014). The continuation of preventative services in social care is essential for promoting the well-being and quality of life of residents and social benefits include improved quality of life, greater health equity, and stronger community bonds.

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PRE-DECISION CONSULTATION

None

NAME AND JOB TITLE OF STAFF MEMBER ADVISING THE DECISION-MAKER

Name: Sophie Barron

Designation: Senior Commissioner Age Well

Signature:



Date: 12/03/2025

Part B - Assessment of implications and risks

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

The Council has a general power of competence under section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 to do anything an individual may generally do subject to any statutory limitations. The Council has the power under this section to agree to the proposals in the recommendations.

The value of the proposed contract is £929,098.76 over 5 years which is above the threshold for light touch services. Therefore, any procurement activity must comply with the Procurement Act 2023. Officers intend to undertake an open procurement which is in compliance with Section 20(2)(a) of the Procurement Act 2023.

The proposed open tender is compliant with the requirements of both the Procurement Act 2023 and the Council's Contracts Procedure Rules for contracts of this nature.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

This paper is seeking a permission to procure an Unpaid Carer Support Service. The contract will run from the 1st February 2026 to 31st January 2029 with the option to extend for a further 2 years at a total value of £929,098.76.

The actual cost for the carers support service in 24/25 is estimated to be £170,752, this is funded by the Better Care Fund and there is sufficient funding available to cover year 1 of the contract. The annual increases in costs proposed under the new contract will need to be covered by any annual inflationary growth bids.

A request has also been made to review the service specification alongside the KPIs before going out to tender to ensure this contract is value for money. Due to this being unavailable, no assurance can be given on the value for money of the contract at this time. However, having an unpaid carers support service in place does prevent clients from accessing other social care services which would be a more expensive option. Therefore, investing in a carers support service should materialise into cost avoidance by people not requiring more expensive social care services.

HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS (AND ACCOMMODATION IMPLICATIONS WHERE RELEVANT)

The recommendations made in this report do not give rise to any identifiable Human Resources implications or risks.

EQUALITIES AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Havering has a diverse community made up of many different groups and individuals. The council values diversity and believes it essential to understand and include the different contributions, perspectives and experience that people from different backgrounds bring.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires the council, when exercising its functions, to have due regard to:

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- I. the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- II. the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share protected characteristics and those who do not, and;
- III. Foster good relations between those who have protected characteristics and those who do not.

Note: 'protected characteristics' are: age, gender, race and disability, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnerships, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity and gender reassignment.

The Council is committed to all of the above in the provision, procurement and commissioning of its services, and the employment of its workforce. In addition, the Council is also committed to improving the quality of life and wellbeing for all Havering residents in respect of socio-economics and health determinants.

An EqHIA (Equality and Health Impact Assessment) is usually carried out and on this occasion this isn't required.

The Council seeks to ensure equality, inclusion, and dignity for all in all situations.

There are not equalities and social inclusion implications and risks associated with this decision.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

The commitment and re-procurement of the unpaid carer support service with an intention to improve the quality including social connectivity could give rise to positive Health and Wellbeing implications of the carers and residents they care for.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

The recommendations made in this report do not give rise to any identifiable environmental implications or risks.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

APPENDICES

None

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Part C – Record of decision

I have made this executive decision in accordance with authority delegated to me by the Leader of the Council and in compliance with the requirements of the Constitution.

Decision

Proposal agreed

Delete as applicable

~~Proposal NOT agreed because~~

Details of decision maker

Signed

Name: BARBARA NICHOLLS

Cabinet Portfolio held:

CMT Member title:

Head of Service title: Strategic Director of People

Other manager title:

Date:

Lodging this notice

The signed decision notice must be delivered to the proper officer, Debra Marlow, Principal Democratic Services Officer in Democratic Services, in the Town Hall.

For use by Committee Administration

This notice was lodged with me on _____

Signed _____