

Notice of KEY Executive Decision

Subject Heading:	Permission to award the 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: £947,337.62 Year 1 - £185,709.41 Year 2 - £184,440.93 Year 3 - £187,015.81 Year 4 - £193,236.66 Year 5 - £196,934.81
Reason decision is Key	Expenditure or saving (including anticipated income) of £500,000 or more
Date notice given of intended decision:	22 nd September 2025
Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Sub Committee:	People's Overview and Scrutiny Sub Committee

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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

Part A – Report seeking decision

DETAIL OF THE DECISION REQUESTED AND RECOMMENDED ACTION

This decision paper is seeking permission from the Strategic Director of People to award the Unpaid Carer Support Service to Imago Community. The contract will run from the 1st of February 2026 to 31st January 2029 with the option to extend for a further 2 years at a total value of £947,337.62.

AUTHORITY UNDER WHICH DECISION IS MADE

The Havering Constitution:

Scheme 3.3.3 Powers common to all Strategic Directors

1. General

1.1 To take any steps, and take any decisions, necessary for the proper management and administration of their allocated directorate, in accordance with applicable Council policies and procedures

4. Contracts

4.2 To award all contracts with a total contract value of below £1,000,000 other than contracts covered by Contract Procedure Rule 16.3

STATEMENT OF THE REASONS FOR THE DECISION

This paper is seeking permission to award the new Unpaid Carer Support Service to Imago Community following a successful procurement process for a period of 3 years plus 2 years optional extension (3+2) from 1st February 2026 to 31st January 2031 at a total value of £947,337.62.

Background

The current commissioned carers service meets the Council's obligations under the Care Act 2014 and supports adult carers in maintaining their caregiving roles. The service supports preventing the need for more expensive care and support interventions by leveraging existing personal and community resources.

The current service is designed to identify "hidden" carers and provide them with information and advice to help navigate the social care system. It also offers one-on-one support and peer support to help carers stay resilient, maintain a positive level of wellbeing, and reduce social isolation. The hub conduct outreach activities in the borough in order to identify carers and to promote the service. This is done in GP surgeries, Queens Hospital, Romford Market, various supermarkets and other locations. The Carers Hub also operate a drop-in service at their base of operations in the Borough at the volunteer centre in Romford.

Overall, the current service is performing well in several areas, including increasing the identification of unpaid carers, supporting Adult Social Care with assessments, and receiving positive feedback from service users from support delivered. However, there are areas for improvement, such as reducing spend on printing materials, expanding on outreach in certain areas, identifying more unknown carers, and ensuring capacity for completing assessments.

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To address these challenges, the Council has developed a new unpaid Carers Service that aligns with the broader Ageing Well and Living Well prevention offers for Havering residents. This will build on the current services successful foundation while placing additional emphasis on expanding outreach efforts and establishing a strong presence in community hubs across the borough.

Service Summary

The Support Service for Unpaid Carers in Havering is a comprehensive, community-based service designed to empower unpaid carers by providing them with emotional support, practical advice, training, and access to resources, all aimed at maintaining their wellbeing and independence while reducing reliance on statutory services. The service proactively identifies carers through outreach, digital platforms, and partnerships with health and social care, manages a carers register, and supports the completion of standalone carers assessments and care plans. Delivered in accessible community venues across the borough, the service focuses on inclusivity, sustainability, and collaboration with neighbourhood teams and other partners.

The service is framed around the following 3 key areas:

Outreach, Promotion and Identification

This includes the service operating a digital-first approach, using platforms like social media and the Joy App to promote itself and share information with the community. The service is expected to run regular events to identify and reach more carers, including working in partnership with health and social care organisations to assist in identifying carers. The service will actively participate in the Havering Carers Board to ensure carers' feedback is used to improve services and is expected to build strong relationships with existing preventative services to further support carers and those they care for.

Empowerment and Independence

This includes the service guiding carers in navigating health and social care systems and providing tailored training programmes for adult carers to help them manage specific conditions and needs. It includes offering one-to-one practical advice on accessing services, understanding entitlements and working with social services to deliver standalone carers assessments and care plans. This approach is designed to help carers maximise their potential and access the resources they need to manage their responsibilities more effectively.

Supporting Wellbeing

This includes the service identifying carers at risk of breakdown and providing emotional support to help them cope with challenges and build resilience. This includes running regular carers support groups across the borough to offer opportunities for social interaction and engagement and to organise regular carers forums to give carers a voice in shaping and improving services. This focus on wellbeing aims to foster a sense of community, reduce isolation, and enhance the overall quality of life for unpaid carers.

There is a requirement for the unpaid carer support service to be accessible across all areas of Havering, ensuring equitable access through various community settings and formats. The service must integrate with other local prevention services to enable coordinated care, seamless referrals, and early identification of at-risk individuals. This integrated approach aims to enhance support for both carers and vulnerable adults in improving outcomes and reducing the burden of care.

Procurement

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An open procurement process took place from the 6th of August to the 3rd of September 2025 in which a total of 6 bids were received. 5 out of the 6 bids were compliant and passed the Procurement Specific Questionnaire (PSQ) stage.

Following PSQ, the method statements from the five qualifying bids were evaluated using the 0-5 scoring. Four evaluators independently evaluated the bids over a two-week period ending on the 14th of October 2025.

Bidders were made aware in the ITT they must score a minimum of '3' in each of the quality and social value questions for their price to be evaluated. Following moderation of the bids, three bids scored a '2' or below on at least one question. Therefore, as stated in the ITT their price was not evaluated. Two bidders had their pricing schedule evaluated. Bids were evaluated on a 30/70 quality/price weighting.

Imago Community scored the highest total score of 95.00 out of 100.00, making them the most advantageous tender and therefore it is recommended that the contract is awarded to them.

Imago Community

Imago is a social action charity operating across Kent, Medway, East Sussex, and London, dedicated to improving health and wellbeing through a range of support services. Their work centres on empowering individuals, families, and communities by offering tailored programmes that address specific needs. Key areas of focus include support for carers—both the young and adults—navigation and wellbeing services that help people access appropriate care, and community engagement through partnerships with local authorities, health networks, and voluntary organisations. Imago also facilitates service user involvement via shadow boards and feedback mechanisms to ensure services remain responsive and inclusive.

Tender submission

Imago Community was awarded the contract for unpaid carers support services due to demonstrating a comprehensive, person-centred approach that aligned closely with the specification. Across multiple questions, Imago Community showcased a strengths-based model that prioritised carers' independence, wellbeing, and dignity, supported by inclusive engagement and co-production. Their responses provided clear examples of flexible delivery, culturally sensitive services, and proactive outreach, ensuring carers from diverse communities could access tailored support. Strong partnership working and a borough-wide hub-and-spoke model reinforced the provider's ability to deliver localised, accessible services that meet carers' needs effectively.

In addition, Imago Community's responses detailed robust infrastructure and governance. This included a secure case management system, a dedicated performance and evaluation team, and a structured mobilisation plan with defined timelines and risk management. The commitment to continuous improvement was evident through diverse feedback mechanisms, outcome measurement tools, and quality assurance standards. A clear recruitment and induction process, supported by ongoing training and safeguarding protocols, ensured staff and volunteers were well-prepared to deliver high-quality, compassionate support. Together, these elements demonstrated operational readiness, strong governance, and a clear vision for delivering responsive, inclusive, and impactful services.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

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Option 1 - *Do nothing*

There is the option to do nothing and stop providing unpaid carer support services when the contract ends on the 31st of January 2026. This option has been considered and rejected as this support meets the Council's obligations under the Care Act (2014). The continuation of unpaid carer support services is essential for promoting the well-being and quality of life of carers and enabling them to continue their caring roles.

PRE-DECISION CONSULTATION

N/A

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

Name: Sophie Barron

Designation: Senior Commissioner Ageing Well

Signature:



Date: 23/10/2025

Part B - Assessment of implications and risks

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

This report seeks authority to award a contract to Imago Community for an unpaid carers support service.

The Care Act 2014 requires the Council to assess a carer's need for support. This service is aimed at fulfilling this requirement.

The Council has the power to award the contract through section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972, which allows the Council to do anything which is calculated to facilitate or is conducive or incidental to the discharge of any of its functions, or through its general power of competence in section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 to do anything that individuals generally may do. There are limitations on the general power of competence, but the limitations do not apply to this decision.

The total value of the contract over 5 years is in excess of £947k, which is above the threshold for light touch services under the Procurement Act 2023 (PA23). In compliance with PA23 and the Council's Contract Procedure Rules an open procurement was undertaken. Following evaluation and moderation of the bids officers now seek to award the contract to the most advantageous tender for the reasons set out in the body of the report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

This paper is seeking permission to award the Unpaid Carer Support Service to Imago Community. The contract will run from the 1st of February 2026 to 31st January 2029 with the option to extend for a further 2 years at a total value of £947,337.62. The financial envelope for the procurement has increased from the decision paper to go to procurement; the initial contract value was £929,098.76. The actual cost for the carers support service in 25/26 is estimated to be £170,752; the Better Care Fund funds this. The annual contract value for year one of the contract following the award is estimated to be £185,709.41, this is an increase of c£15k against the current contract value. There is sufficient funding to fund this annual increase through the reprocurement of the age well prevention services.

Contract	Current 25/26 value	New value	Difference
Carers Hub	£170,752.56	£185,709.41	-£14,956.85
HSSS	£64,711.17	£118,149.63	£65,726.54
HSAH	£40,675.00		
Age UK	£78,490.00		

A review of the BCF will be undertaken in conjunction with the Health and Wellbeing Board to realign BCF funding following the reprocurement of the prevention services.

The annual contract values for the remainder of the contract are estimated as below:

Year 1 - £185,709.41

Year 2 - £184,440.93

Year 3 - £187,015.81

Year 4 - £193,236.66

Year 5 - £196,934.81

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The annual increases in costs proposed under the new contract will need to be covered by any annual inflationary growth bids if inflationary increases in the BCF are not forthcoming.

Supporting unpaid carers enable individuals to stay in their own homes longer, which helps reduce or avoid the high costs associated with formal care placements, investing in unpaid carer support should result in cost avoidance to LBH.

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

There are no HR implications and risks associated with this decision.

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:

- 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 demonstrates its commitment to the Equality Act in its decision-making processes, the provision, procurement and commissioning of its services, and employment practices concerning its workforce. In addition, the Council is also committed to improving the quality of life and wellbeing of all Havering residents in respect of socio-economics and health determinants.

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

There are no equalities and social inclusion implications and risks associated with this decision.

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HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Although there is no direct implication or risk through the award of the contract, the service through its three key areas (Outreach and Identification, Empowerment and Independence, and Supporting Wellbeing) has a high potential to result in positive population health and wellbeing of the unpaid carers, with subsequent benefits on the residents they cared for.

The service is designed to support and empower both the carers by:

- providing them with emotional support, practical advice, training, and access to resources;
- offering one-on-one support and peer support to help carers stay resilient, maintain a positive level of wellbeing, and reduce social isolation.

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

N/A

Non Key Executive Decision

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

CMT Member title: Strategic Director of People

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 _____