

**Forward Plan Reference Number: FP/197/10/21**

<b>Report title:</b> Adult Social Care Market Support and Development	
<b>Report to:</b> Councillor Christopher Whitbread - Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Corporate Affairs	
<b>Report author:</b> Moira McGrath, Director of Commissioning – Adult Social Care	
<b>Date:</b> 19 November 2021	<b>For:</b> Decision
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<b>County Divisions affected:</b> All Essex	

**1. Everyone's Essex**

- 1.1 Everyone's Essex, our new organisation strategy, sets out the strategic aim of health, wellbeing, and independence for all ages. Within that aim is a commitment to helping vulnerable people to live independently and free from abuse and neglect, by enabling an effective care market and strong domiciliary support.
- 1.2 The Adult Social Care sector in Essex is currently experiencing unprecedented pressure. The long-term trend towards care in the home has accelerated at a speed which has been hard for the market to absorb; this has been compounded by the Discharge to Assess approach from the acute hospitals. At the same time the impacts of the COVID pandemic are still being felt and wider economic factors are exacerbating matters.
- 1.3 The sector currently has access to a range of support from both central government and Essex County Council. Feedback from the market confirms that additional short-term support will allow it to better meet current immediate challenges and to support the Council's strategic aim of ensuring sustainable, high quality, resilient services across Essex that can effectively meet the changing needs and aspirations of adults.
- 1.4 The proposals in this paper do not create any additional climate impacts, consistent with our net zero climate commitments set out in Everyone's Essex.

**2 Recommendations**

- 2.1 Agree to draw down a total of £870,950 from the Adults Risk Reserve to support the stabilisation of our Social Care Market through training initiatives for our carer workforce and the delivery of our Market Shaping Programme.

**3 Background and proposal**

- 3.1 The global outbreak of coronavirus (COVID-19) has significantly affected the health and care sector generally. The older people care home market

especially has been impacted by loss of residents, fewer placements, staff shortages and financial fragility.

- 3.2 Urgent work has been undertaken across the Council and local NHS partners to ensure an effective response to COVID-19. The main objectives of this have been to ensure the safety and wellbeing of Essex residents and to ensure the sustainability of providers of social care, in line with our duties under section 5 of the Care Act 2014. The pandemic continues and it remains vitally important to sustain good quality providers of social care, to make sure that they can continue in business whilst demand, workforce and other COVID-19 related pressures continue.
- 3.3 Existing measures that have been put in place to support the Adult Social Care market include:
- Twelve months of underwriting of older people residential and nursing care beds until 31 March 2021 followed by replacement block purchasing approach until 31 March 2022.
  - Establishing the Covid Resilience Fund, allowing Residential, Nursing, Home Care and Supported Living providers to claim for exceptional costs.
  - Providing flexibility to Day Care, Home Care and Supported Living providers in the delivery of commissioned services.
  - Designated settings for safe COVID-19 isolation following an acute hospital stay, ensuring care homes are better protected from spread of infection.
  - 'Provider of last resort' cover from ECL Ltd and domiciliary providers to ensure care homes are able to run safely should staff need to self-isolate.
  - Government-led initiatives, including Infection Control Fund, Rapid Testing Fund, Workforce Capacity Fund, PPE portal.
- 3.4 In usual times, the Council would experience market exits and inflationary/non-recurrent cost pressures from time to time across Adult Social Care services and would respond and support the market accordingly. It is anticipated that the after-effects of COVID-19 will mean that these usual market pressures and exits are likely to occur more intensely, at a greater scale and within a shorter timeframe. Action is required to ensure that the Council can appropriately and effectively support market exits in its usual ways during this challenging time. This will include operational support and may also mean some financial support, to ensure any market exits are planned and in a managed way to minimise disruption for adults, their families and the workforce.
- 3.5 As well as the recovery from the effects of the pandemic over the last 12 months, demand for services is changing as a consequence of the 'home first' principle being reinforced across health and social care ('home first' meaning that people should return to their home environment before long-term care decisions are taken, in order that sub-optimal choices e.g. unnecessary residential care admissions, are not made at a time of personal crisis). In line with our duties under the Care Act 2014, the Council needs to ensure that the

right services are in place and the market is sufficiently developed and supported to meet this changing demand. When residential or nursing care home provision is required, the Council's aspiration is that it should be 'Good' or 'Outstanding' provision, as recognised by the Care Quality Commission.

- 3.6 The Council has undertaken work to assess demand for older people care home places in 2021/22, particularly given the impact of the pandemic on sustainability and the unfortunate closure of some care homes. This assessment has determined that the trends pre-COVID-19 of fewer overall placements into care homes, in line with the Councils 'home first' approach, is likely to continue. This trend has been further exacerbated by COVID-19. The Councils 'home first' approach also means that the care home market needs to have the capability to be able to support adults entering residential care later in life and with increasing levels of complexity and frailty. This may require adjustment to buildings and workforce skills to be able to support needs, including dementia and nursing needs.
- 3.7 In response to the challenges outlined in this report, it is proposed that £870,950 is drawn down to cover the following initiatives:

#### Market incentives

- ECC are looking to support and invest in increasing our Essex Workforce within the Carer Market. This financial incentive will support positive recruitment drives and encourage carers or other professionals to promote working in the care sector but will not include any payments to staff.

#### Recruitment of resources

- The Essex Care Provider Information Hub has been a critical website throughout the pandemic to keep providers informed on legislation, COVID Grants, training, support and insight. The website is currently in the process of an upgrade and requires support to update the content on to the new platform. This platform will also house Essex County Council's Market Position Statement and Strategy for Adult Social Care.
- The Market Shaping Programme requires internal Project Manager resource to oversee the delivery of the Market Shaping Programme. Initial resources have been identified; however, their existing role requires backfilling to ensure existing work pressures are progressed whilst delivering this programme.
- We are proposing to work with Essex Care Association on the development of recruitment and retention work with providers. We would like them to employ a Workforce Project Manager to directly support providers with a range of activities related to the workforce. They will organise and support a range of activities that will benefit the whole care market in relation to the areas identified. The intention is to

work flexibly with providers and ECC on the priority areas of need, which are likely to be recruitment, retention, wellbeing and resilience in the first instance.

- To increase resource capacity in our Workforce team to provide additional support in two key areas, communication and engagement to our provider market, and to support the implementation of the Workforce Strategy.
- It is proposed that ECC's recruitment team will set up a recruitment service for the care market. Using their expertise in hard-to-fill markets, they will advertise and attract suitable staff for Essex care providers. The aim will be to attract both temporary and permanent staff, who are either new to the sector or have existing experience. For those new to the sector, the service will screen CVs, interview individuals, fund care certificate training, carry out usual recruitment checks and release CVs to the market. This takes much of the time and cost associated with recruitment away from the providers, saving them time and money. In the long term, it is proposed that the care provider will be charged a small fee, undercutting existing care agencies; however, for this financial year, given the challenges the provider market is experiencing, ECC will fund the service.

## **4 Links to our Strategic Ambitions**

4.1 This report links to the following aims in the Essex Vision

- Enjoy life into old age
- Develop our County sustainably
- Share prosperity with everyone

4.2 The implementation of our initiatives supports ECC objectives to reduce our carbon emissions across Essex whilst improving the quality of services received by adults. The expectation is that the provision of additional training will allow adults to remain at home and within their community whilst enabling our most vulnerable adults to remain at home. The use of our existing services will reduce the need for additional carers or skills to provide support to the same adult and by encouraging employment in this sector we are supporting our Social Value agenda to recruit locally and reduce carbon emissions caused by our workforce travelling further afield.

4.3 This report links to the following strategic priorities in the emerging Organisational Strategy 'Everyone's Essex':

- A strong, inclusive and sustainable economy
- Health wellbeing and independence for all ages

## **5 Options**

## 5.1 Option 1. Do nothing (not recommended)

This option is not recommended as it increases the risk of market exits that cannot be carried out in a planned way and could have a significant resource implication for Adult Social Care in supporting multiple unplanned market exits and movement of residents simultaneously. It could also impact on our ability to meet our duty under section 5 of the Care Act 2014 to promote a sustainable market of services, to promote choice and control for individuals and their families and to promote consistent quality with a focus on good and outstanding provision.

## 5.2 Option 2. Deliver proposals (recommended)

Securing funding will allow ECC to building on existing work through the COVID pandemic and support the market and our carer workforce to stabilise or be supported to exit. The fund also means that wider market development activity can be carried out to ensure services are in line with future need and demand, facilitating a range of activities which support market development, including offering greater staff resilience and upskilling as well as advice for those providers who may be considering the future configuration and sustainability of their businesses.

# 6 Issues for consideration

## 6.1 Financial implications

6.1.1 The table below sets out the profile of the requested drawdown from the Adults Risk Reserve. The total drawdown across the three financial years is £870,950, with £203,450 being drawn down for use within this financial year.

Project/Initiative	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	Total
Workforce Incentives Scheme	£ 50,000	£ 200,000	£ -	£ 250,000
Essex Care Provider Information Hub	£ 17,500	£ 70,000	£ 52,500	£ 140,000
Market Shaping Programme	£ 27,500	£ 82,500		£ 110,000
Essex Care Association	£ 12,500	£ 50,000	£ 37,500	£ 100,000
Workforce Resources	£ 25,000	£ 100,000	£ 75,000	£ 200,000
Care Market Recruitment	£ 70,950			£ 70,950
<b>Total</b>	<b>£ 203,450</b>	<b>£ 502,500</b>	<b>£ 165,000</b>	<b>£ 870,950</b>

6.1.2 The opening balance of the Adults Risk Reserve is £10.1m. The closing balance for the 2021/22 financial year will be £9.9m. The final balance in 2023/24 after these drawdowns will be £9.2m.

6.1.3 Although the Adults Risk Reserve was set up to mitigate price pressures, this drawdown will be used for initiatives that will mitigate future price increase across the Social Care market.

## 6.2 Legal implications

- 6.2.1 The Council's financial regulations state that all drawdowns from reserves must be approved by the Cabinet Member for Resources.
- 6.2.2 Drawing down of money from reserves does not authorise any expenditure that is a key decision or any significant changes to ECC services or funding, which must be authorised by the relevant Cabinet Member.
- 6.2.3 The proposals in this report are unlikely to amount to a subsidy since they do not directly involve paying money to providers.

## **7 Equality and Diversity considerations**

- 7.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty applies to the Council when it makes decisions. The duty requires us to have regard to the need to:
  - (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act. In summary, the Act makes discrimination etc. on the grounds of a protected characteristic unlawful.
  - (b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
  - (c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.
- 7.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, gender, and sexual orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).
- 7.3 The equality impact assessment indicates that the proposals in this report will not have a disproportionately adverse impact on any people with a particular characteristic.

## **8 List of appendices**

Appendix A - Equality Impact Assessment

## **9 List of background papers**

Decision paper FP/658/03/20: Funding for Adult Social Care: Covid-19 Funding Response  
Decision paper FP/989/02/21: Residential and Nursing Care Home Funding from April 2021

<b>I approve the above recommendations set out above for the reasons set out in the report.</b>  <b>Cabinet Member for Finance, Resources and Corporate Affairs</b>  <b>Councillor Christopher Whitbread</b>	<b>Date</b> <b>9<sup>th</sup></b> <b>December</b> <b>2021</b>
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**In consultation with:**

<b>Role</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care</b>  <b>Councillor John Spence</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup></b> <b>December</b> <b>2021</b>
<b>Executive Director of Adult Social Care</b>  <b>Nick Presmeg</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup></b> <b>December</b> <b>2021</b>
<b>Director for Finance, Corporate Services (Deputy S151 Officer)</b>  <b>Stephanie Mitchener on behalf of Nicole Wood</b>	<b>22</b> <b>November</b> <b>2021</b>
<b>Director, Legal and Assurance (Monitoring Officer)</b>  <b>Paul Turner</b>	<b>19</b> <b>November</b> <b>2021</b>