

Forward Plan reference number: Not Applicable

Report title: Funding for additional resources for Adult Social Care	
Report to: Cllr Chris Whitbread, Chancellor of Essex and Cabinet Member with responsibility for Finance	
Report author: Nick Presmeg, Executive Director, Adult Social Care	
Date: 25 September 2023	For: Decision
Enquiries to: Jane Rigler, Head of Business Planning & Performance jane.rigler@essex.gov.uk	
County Divisions affected: All Essex	

1. Everyone's Essex

- 1.1 Adult Social Care (ASC) works to ensure that people with care and support needs, including unpaid carers, have the best possible wellbeing outcomes and can live independent and fulfilled lives. This is fundamental to achieving the strategic aim of health, wellbeing and independence for all ages set out in the Council's Strategic plan "Everyone's Essex".
- 1.1 ASC provides care and support to about 16,000 Essex residents at any one time and over the course of a year has contact with about 40,000 people. Demand was stretching capacity even before Covid and this continues to increase. The service has long and potentially detrimental waiting lists of people needing an assessment or a review by qualified and experienced workers.
- 1.2 Since 2021, additional temporary business support administrators have been providing essential back-office support to the ASC function, freeing up the capacity of Social Workers, Occupational Therapists, and skilled but not registered members of the workforce to focus on critical tasks that require their skills or qualifications.
- 1.3 It is essential that this business support capacity continues so that ASC can protect the time of frontline social workers to focus on work that requires their professional expertise and skillset.
- 1.4 To help manage demand, it is also a priority for ASC to ensure that information, advice and guidance are clearly communicated through various channels so that residents, families and carers can self-help and access community-based support and services independently where this is appropriate.
- 1.5 This report seeks approval to draw down funds from the Adults Investment Reserve for the continued funding of resources to support back-office functions, and to provide ongoing communications capacity. This will enable ASC to best manage its workload in providing front line services to vulnerable Essex residents.

2 Recommendations

2.1 Agree to draw down £1m from the Adults Investment Reserve as follows:

2.1.1 £854,000 for continued funding for:

- (i) fifteen (15) Business Support Assistants to create capacity within the Countywide Duty Team up until 30 September 2024; and
- (ii) ten (10) Business Support Assistants to support Operational Teams (two per quadrant and countywide) up until 30 September 2024; and
- (iii) one (1) Senior Business Support Assistant to supervise the above roles

2.1.2 £150,000 for communications resources up until Summer 2024.

3 Background and Proposal

- 3.1 Since the Covid pandemic, like many Councils, ECC has long and potentially detrimental waiting lists of people within Adult Social Care requiring an assessment or a review. While Essex appears to be typical of an average council within the East of England region, the ambition is to reduce the number of people waiting.
- 3.2 To address this issue, ECC needs to undertake additional work to reduce the number of people who are on the waiting lists, alongside making substantial improvements to the way that ECC's Adult Social Care assessment process will operate going forward, to ensure that the Council can complete more assessments / reviews compared to the current volumes. This is also important in the context of planned changes to adult social care charging regime from October 2025 when, if the national reforms are implemented, it can be expected that significantly more people will approach ECC to organise their care and support.
- 3.3 Adult Social Care is in the process of reviewing its workforce through the 'Workforce: Future Outlook' programme which will include a 'right person, right task' review to ensure ECC makes the best use of available resources and provide a more stable solution going forward. This work is expected to be completed by 31st March 2024.

Additional Business Support resource

- 3.4 In November 2020, funding of £1.3m was approved for additional temporary resources to support the exceptional pressures seen in services due to the impact of Covid, including the utilisation of best value business support resources.

- 3.5 Ten Business Support Assistants were recruited to operational teams countywide, allowing greater time to be spent by practitioners in managing front-line demand, and 15 workers filled capacity in the Countywide Duty (CWDT) telephony team, releasing trained CWDT workers to help address the waiting lists. There was a senior business support assistant recruited to supervise some of these additional roles.
- 3.6 The underspend of the funding approved in 2020 was carried forward to meet the ongoing pressures resulting from Covid and has enabled the extension of these roles until 30th September 2023.
- 3.7 This report seeks funding of £854,000 for the continuation of these resources from 1st October 2023 up until 30th September 2024, recognising that demand remains a challenge and that ASC needs to ensure frontline social worker capacity is supported to complete urgent tasks.
- 3.8 Extending temporary resources until the end of September 2024 will allow sufficient time to complete the ASC Workforce Future Outlook review which is scheduled to complete in March 2024 and implement any subsequent changes to the establishment.

Communications resource

- 3.9 To manage increasing demand, it is also essential that ECC informs residents, and all other audiences about the help and support that is available to them and provide easy access to information through a variety of channels. This supports people to self-serve and access community-based provision independently of ASC where this is appropriate and will help to reduce the need for to contact ECC.
- 3.10 ECC has numerous transformational programmes of work aimed at improving community-based support and early help, including Meaningful Lives Matter (delivering the disabilities strategy); Mental Health Transformation; All-age Carers (delivering the carers strategy), and the Intermediate Care Service review, all of which require communications and market resource capacity.
- 3.11 ASC has previously funded communications resource through project business cases, but recruitment of part-time workers in this field is very difficult and has resulted in multiple FTE appointments with some duplication and overlaps which does not make the best use of resources. Two fixed term workers have recently taken maternity leave until summer 2024.
- 3.12 Rather than recruiting temporarily to fill these specific roles, this proposal seeks £150,000 to be used for the purpose of additional communications capacity to support across the ASC function. This capacity may include a mix of fixed term or agency roles, or specialist resource purchased via the Corporate Communications procurement framework, depending on requirements.

4 Links to our Strategic Ambitions

- 4.1 This report links to the following aims in the Essex Vision:
- Enjoy life into old age
 - Strengthen communities through participation
- 4.2 Approving the recommendations in this report will have the following impact on the Council's ambition to be net carbon neutral by 2030: no impact
- 4.3 This report links to the following strategic priorities in the emerging Organisational Strategy 'Everyone's Essex':
- Health wellbeing and independence for all ages

5 Options

Option 1: Do nothing.

- 5.1 The 'do nothing' option would see the removal of temporary business support resources from locality teams and from the Countywide Duty Team with work transferred back to qualified social care workers. Waiting lists would continue to grow and capacity would be reduced as more time would be spent by registered professionals on administrative tasks.
- 5.2 This option would also mean that communications resources would continue to be secured individually by projects and programmes resulting in duplication and not making best use of resource across the function. This option would be more expensive as multiple full-time resources would be recruited.

Option 2: Secure additional temporary business support and communications capacity (recommended)

- 5.3 This option would see the extension of the current additional business support capacity in locality teams and the Countywide Duty Team for up to 9 months until 30th June 24 while the Workforce Future Outlook programme completes and makes recommendations regarding permanent future arrangements.
- 5.4 It would also result in funding additional communications capacity that can be called upon by all projects and programmes across the function. Future arrangements will be considered within the Workforce Future Outlook review.

Option 3: Secure additional business support capacity only.

- 5.5 This is not the preferred option as it would miss the opportunity to make best use of communications resources, and this is not cost-effective. But this option would enable ECC to retain business support capacity in locality and CWDT and avoid transferring work back to qualified social care workers.

6 Issues for consideration

6.1 Financial implications

6.1.1 The cost of this decision is £1m, it is across the 2023/24 and 2024/25 financial years as set out in the table below. This is to be funded by the Adults Investment Reserve, the balance in the reserve after this decision will be £20.9m.

Title	FTE	2023/24	2024/25	Total
	Count			
Business Support Assistant	15	£230,348	£241,865	£472,212
Business Support Assistant	10	£166,334	£174,651	£340,985
Senior Business Support Assistant	1	£19,909	£20,905	£40,814
Communications Capacity		£75,000	£75,000	£150,000
Total		£491,591	£512,420	£1,004,011

6.1.2 The cost has been calculated using the Medium Term Resourcing Strategy staff assumptions for 2024/25 in relation to pay award and employers pension contribution levels.

6.1.3 Any unspent funds arising from vacancies will be returned to the reserve.

6.1.4 There is a minimal risk that when these roles come to an end in September 2024 that some employees may be entitled to a redundancy payment. This risk will be minimised by looking to transfer the business support assistants into other vacancies within the overall business support structure.

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 Finance.

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.

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, sex, 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 Equalities Comprehensive 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

Equalities Comprehensive Impact Assessment

9 List of Background papers

None

I approve the above recommendations set out above for the reasons set out in the report.	Date
Councillor Chris Whitbread, Chancellor of Essex and Cabinet Member with responsibility for Finance	23.10.23

In consultation with:

Role	Date
Councillor John Spence, Cabinet Member for Health, Adult Social Care and ICS Integration	29.09.23
Nick Presmeg, Executive Director Adult Social Care	25.09.23
Executive Director, Corporate Services (S151 Officer)	19.10.23
Stephanie Mitchener on behalf of Nicole Wood	
Director, Legal and Assurance (Monitoring Officer)	16.10.23

Katie Bray on behalf of Paul Turner	
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