



CABINET– 27TH OCTOBER 2021

SUBJECT: PAYMENT TO COMMISSIONED DOMICILIARY CARE PROVIDERS FROM WELSH GOVERNMENT SOCIAL CARE RECOVERY FUND

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR SOCIAL SERVICES AND HOUSING

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet's agreement to support the stability of the commissioned Domiciliary Care services in the Caerphilly Borough by paying care providers for planned call times instead of actual call times for the period 25 September 2021 to 31 March 2022.
- 1.2 Welsh Government officers have indicated in principle that the recently announced Social Care Recovery Fund (a one-off grant) could be used to fund the additional costs of this proposal. However, until formal approval of Caerphilly's spend plan in respect of the Recovery Fund is received from Welsh Government there is a possibility that the costs would require Council funding. The report therefore proposes that any shortfall in Welsh Government funding will be met from Social Services reserves.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The report will outline the specific issues currently being experienced by the domiciliary care sector and the feedback that has been received from commissioned domiciliary care providers as to the issues they are facing in terms of recruitment and retention.
- 2.2 The report will also advise how the issues are impacting on the Council's ability to broker packages of care in the community and outline the indicative in principle agreement from Welsh Government to use the recently announced Social Care Recovery Fund to try and address the problem.
- 2.3 Should Welsh Government not approve Caerphilly's spend plan in respect of the Social Care Recovery Fund then it is proposed that the additional cost of paying for planned call times instead of actual call times will be funded from Social Services reserves.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That the information and explanation outlined in this report is acknowledged and that Cabinet agree to support this sector of commissioned services and meet statutory obligations in relation to identified social care need by paying care providers for planned call times instead of actual call times for the period 25 September 2021 to 31 March 2022.
- 3.2 That Cabinet agree to underwrite the £900k estimated cost of this additional support from Social Services reserves should Welsh Government not approve Caerphilly's spend plan in respect of the Social Care Recovery Fund.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 That the Council supports the stability of the commissioned domiciliary care services as much as possible to meet assessed need within the community.
- 4.2 That the domiciliary care providers can make attempts to improve their position in terms of recruitment and retention for their agencies.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 The challenges facing the social care sector at the present time are unprecedented due to the ongoing issues the Coronavirus Pandemic has created. The social care workforce across Wales and the UK are exhausted with many leaving the sector for other jobs and vocations.
- 5.2 Although the entire care sector is facing a significant crisis in staffing, the domiciliary care sector is losing an unprecedented number of staff and this is creating a real challenge. Domiciliary care agency owners are advising that the following issues are testing their ability to continue to provide a service:-
- Ongoing sickness levels within staff teams
 - The need for staff to isolate due to being close contacts of a positive case of the virus
 - Staff are exhausted and are picking up increased shifts to cover for those who are off sick or isolating
 - The shortage of staff means that although calls are being made to provide support to people in the community, the calls are being covered by less staff, which in turn means that the people receiving support may not be getting their usual number or length of calls in an attempt to make sure that everyone gets a certain amount of support
 - Staff are leaving to work in retail and hospitality where the pay and terms and conditions offered are far better than care. (Aldi advertising jobs at almost £15 an hour, compared to the NLW of £8.91 an hour in care, although some providers pay just above that amount)
 - Incentives offered by companies such as Amazon (£1,500) and Sainsbury's (£500) to go and work them, with ongoing improvements in working conditions and a higher hourly rate of pay
 - The pressure that domiciliary care workers experience doing their job, supporting some significant complexity of need in the community either alone or with 1 other carer.
 - The travelling time between calls for carers and the cost of petrol and wear and tear on personal vehicles

- 5.3 The Support At Home Framework provides the overarching commissioning arrangement for domiciliary care in the Borough. All domiciliary care calls are assessed for by social workers and a planned amount of time is allocated for the calls. Where the carers are at the call for the planned amount of time, the call is paid for in full. However, if for any reason the call is shorter or longer than the planned amount of time, the service is paid for on the actual amount of time the call takes and there is a banding system in place to allow for some flexibility.
- 5.4 At the start of the pandemic the usual arrangements for payment on actual call times was suspended in accordance with commissioning guidance issued by Welsh Government and the calls were paid on planned times – this was to ensure the ongoing viability of the service and allow for any level of flexibility needed to continue to provide a service in the community. Providers found this very helpful and it supported stability.
- 5.5 Once the initial impact of the pandemic was over and the sector began to settle it was agreed that payment for the services would revert to payment on actual call times. This was manageable until recent months when restrictions were lifted, and sickness within agencies increased, hospitality and retail re-opened and the transmission of the virus within the community increased again. As a result domiciliary care agencies have articulated and evidenced the issues raised above in paragraph 5.2.
- 5.6 Meetings and discussion with domiciliary care providers has identified a view that returning to payment on planned calls rather than actual calls is likely to help the current staffing situation. In an attempt to retain staff, some domiciliary care providers have continued to pay their staff on planned call times, yet as the Council are paying on actual call times the providers are out of pocket. It is felt that returning to payment on planned calls may well encourage carers to stay in the sector, alleviate their concerns about the financial effect of temporarily reduced calls and call times and travelling times between calls.
- 5.7 The recently announced Social Care Recovery Fund (a one-off grant), being made available by Welsh Government to local authorities to support the recovery of the social care sector provides an opportunity to allocate additional funding on a temporary basis to address the issues being experienced in the domiciliary care sector. Officers believe that a return to payment on planned calls until the end of March 2022 is an appropriate and viable way to support the domiciliary care sector – it will hopefully support the retention issues that are a challenge and as a result help the market stability of this sector of care within the Borough.
- 5.8 Caerphilly Social Services Finance Department has received an in principle indication from Welsh Government officers that the additional cost of paying for domiciliary care calls on a planned rather than actual basis is likely to meet the requirements of the Social Care Recovery Fund. If so, there would be no additional cost to the authority of taking this decision. However, a small risk remains that Welsh Government may not approve the Council's spend plan. It is therefore proposed that any shortfall in Welsh Government funding should be net from Social Services reserves.
- 5.9 **Conclusion**

The domiciliary care sector is facing unprecedented challenges at the moment, locally, nationally and across the UK as a whole. Providers of this service have advised widely of the issues associated with the provision of the service and the recruitment and retention of staff. It is hoped that the temporary reinstatement of payment on planned rather than actual calls would help providers to retain carers and support people in the community who require this type of care and support in their own homes. It is very likely that the Social Care Recovery Fund will pay for the increase in cost as indicated in principle by Welsh Government officers. However, if Welsh Government does not approve the Council's spend plan then the Social Services Directorate could bear the additional cost through using service reserves.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

6.1 There are no assumptions in relation to this report.

7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7.1 This is not required in relation to this report.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The additional cost of paying for planned domiciliary care call times instead of actual call times for the period 25 September 2021 to 31 March 2022 is likely to be in the order of £900k.

8.2 Welsh Government officers have indicated in principle that the Social Care Recovery Fund could be used to meet these additional costs but a formal decision will not be received for some time.

8.3 Uncommitted Social Services reserves currently stand at circa £1million. It is therefore proposed that these reserves be utilised to fund the proposal in this report in the event of the Welsh Government not approving Caerphilly CBC's spend plan for the Social Care Recovery Fund.

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no personnel implications in relation to this report.

10. CONSULTATIONS

10.1 This report contains all the information gathered from those consulted about the issues being faced by the commissioned domiciliary care sector in Caerphilly and nationally.

11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 The Health and Social Care (Quality and Engagement) (Wales) Act 2020, Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014, Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016.

12. URGENCY

- 12.1 This decision needs to be implemented urgently, to ensure the stability of the domiciliary care market as outlined in the report. Welsh Government have indicated in principle that the Social Care Recovery Grant can be used for the purpose of paying planned rather than actual hours in the independent sector. However, as the spend plan has not been agreed formally an alternative funding source needs to be identified for the proposals in the report in the unlikely event of the Welsh Government not approving the spend plan.

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