



CABINET - 27TH JULY 2022

SUBJECT: EXTERNALLY COMMISSIONED DOMICILIARY CARE

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR SOCIAL SERVICES AND HOUSING

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek agreement to provide additional time limited funding support to the externally commissioned domiciliary care market providers, due to the recruitment and retention pressures they are facing linked to the cost-of-living crisis and in particularly the current impact of increasing fuel prices.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 The report illustrates the current crisis in the social care sector in terms of the authority's ability to commission domiciliary care from the independent sector to meet the needs of vulnerable people and their unpaid carers. The report outlines a regional proposal to try to stabilise the sector over the next 6 months to help recruit and retain domiciliary care staff who are being significantly impacted upon by the current cost of living crisis, particularly in relation to the purchase of fuel.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Cabinet agree with the regional proposal to the current staffing crisis in the independent sector care market and increase the current commissioned hourly rate to providers by £1 per hour from the 1st August for six months
- 3.2 Cabinet agree the use of up to £215k of social services reserves to fund the proposed additional £1 per hour for six months.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The application of an additional £1/hour aims to stabilise the external domiciliary care market for the next 6 months to allow further work to be undertaken
- 4.2 The external domiciliary care market makes up on average 66% of care provision in the borough hence it essential they are sustained to ensure care is provided to our

most vulnerable residents.

- 4.3 To enable the authority to work in partnership with the health board to facilitate timely discharges from hospital requires a sustainable domiciliary care market.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 The pressures faced across the health and social care sector are well documented on a national basis and they are replicated locally across the Gwent (ABUHB) footprint. The COVID 19 pandemic along with additional factors such as Brexit are resulting in both the health and social care systems having significant pressures relating to the recruitment and retention of staff. This pressure has been further compounded in the last few months due to the impact of the costs of living crisis and in particular the high cost of fuel.
- 5.2 Across the Gwent Local Authority region, Directors of Social Services, Heads of Adult Services and Commissioning leads have been proactively working with both our internal domiciliary care providers and also our externally commissioned domiciliary care providers to consider a number of immediate and longer-term options to not only sustain and retain the current work force but also to encourage new carers to enter the profession.
- 5.3 During 2021/22, the sustainability of the market was a specific concern due to both the pandemic and the impact of high levels of staffing vacancies as a result of staff leaving existing posts to work across other sectors such as hospitality and retail. As part of this, all 5 Gwent local authorities via agreement by the Regional Partnership Board (RPB) invested our Welsh Government Winter Pressures grant funding to provide our commissioned domiciliary care providers with an additional £1 per hour in addition to our commissioned hourly rate as a one off sustainability payment This was a positive step which enabled the Providers operating across Gwent to enhance the pay scales of their staff and in the main maintain their current staffing levels.
- 5.4 However, over the past few weeks Providers have once again reported that staff are leaving the sector due to the increased cost of using their vehicles for work and in particular purchasing petrol for their cars. One agency reported that six staff had resigned in one week citing the fact they couldn't afford to put fuel in their cars , they were moving to jobs in care homes where this isn't a requirement.
- 5.5 The domiciliary care market is clearly very fragile. Without sufficient domiciliary care availability and a sustainable domiciliary care market, we are unable to provide sufficient and importantly consistent quality, care and support to our most vulnerable residents. We will also be unable to commission new packages of care to support unpaid family carers who may be struggling in their caring role and cannot expedite rapid discharges for people who are in hospital and are ready to return home thus having a further negative impact on an already congested hospital to home pathway.
- 5.6 Across Caerphilly, we currently have 21 independent domiciliary care providers, who provide 7,600 hours of support per week to vulnerable residents
- 5.7 We currently have 560 care hours per week we are unable to provide or commission for 86 people
- 5.8 There are a number of longer-term recruitment and retention work streams happening across the RPB region however the current fuel price crisis is one that we feel requires

an urgent response at a time when the health and social care system is facing unprecedented pressures.

- 5.9 In the independent sector currently rates paid for mileage vary considerably from 20p per mile to 45p per mile. 10 agencies pay between 25-40pence per mile. Where an agency has a fleet car scheme the mileage rate is altered accordingly. One agency doesn't pay a separate mileage rate it is incorporated within the hourly rate.
- 5.10 Applying the domiciliary care calculator tool developed by the national commissioning board demonstrates application of an additional £1 per hour would allow providers to increase their mileage rate by around 25p
- 5.11 It is recognised that this recruitment and retention crisis applies equally to in house services, however these will be dealt with in a separate report which will look at all council front line staff.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 Given the ongoing crisis in social care in terms of recruitment and retention, it is vital that we do whatever we can to try to stabilise a very fragile market. It is sensible to conclude we need to work on a regional footprint as several independent sector care agencies have contracts with more than one authority
- 6.2 Therefore, we are proposing that across the Gwent region that all 5 Gwent Local Authorities implement a £1 per hour financial investment for our commissioned hours, mirroring that which we implemented in 21/22, to enable our externally commissioned domiciliary care providers to increase their payments to frontline staff due to the impact of the costs of fuel.
- 6.3 The application of this payment will be monitored by commissioners to ensure it reaches front line staff and to monitor the impact.
- 6.4 Based on the assumptions that recruitment and retention crisis will continue it may be necessary to extend this payment, if this is the position a further cabinet report will be provided.

7. ASSUMPTIONS

- 7.1 This report assumes the crisis in social care in terms of recruitment and retention will continue for the foreseeable future
- 7.2 The assumption is also made that the cost-of-living crisis will impact on this part of the workforce significantly for the foreseeable future

8. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment has not been completed, as reports relate to fee levels and have no impact on protected characteristics.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The application of an additional £1 per hour for six months would cost between £197k and £212k depending upon how successful the additional payment proves to be in attracting carers back in to the profession, to take up the 560 hours of unmet need identified in paragraph 5.7.
- 9.2 The Regional Partnership Board will continue to consider the use of any slippage identified within the Regional Integration Fund (RIF) throughout the current financial year to cover the cost of the proposed £1 per hour increase for all five Gwent local authorities. Should RIF slippage become available then the £215k released from the social services reserves could be returned to social services general reserves.

10. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There are no direct Human resources implicated associated with this report

11. CONSULTATIONS

- 11.1 All consultations are reflected in this report

12. URGENCY (CABINET ITEMS ONLY)

- 12.1 This decision needs to be implemented urgently, by 1st August 2022 on a pan Gwent basis, due to the current crisis that the social care sector is experiencing. This is impacting on our ability to provide essential services to vulnerable people and support their unpaid carers.

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