

**8 September 2014****Agenda Item: 9****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, SOUTH NOTTINGHAMSHIRE****ON-LINE ASSESSMENT AND INFORMATION AND ADVICE PROVISION IN  
RELATION TO ADULT SOCIAL CARE****Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide the Adult Social Care and Health Committee with further information about the requirements of the department as a result of the implementation of the Care Act 2014, including the introduction of on-line assessment, and the move towards a greater degree of automation in the triage process.
2. To approve the spend of a maximum of £54,000 in order to join up existing information and advice systems across children's and adults' services and to meet the requirements of the Care Act from April 2015.

**Information and Advice**

3. The Care Act brings benefits but also many challenges to Local authorities and plans are progressing in anticipation of implementation from April 2015. This report seeks to address the department's response to the specific challenges around the predicted increase in demand for social care assessments as a result of the Act, and the increased requirements of Local authorities in relation to the provision of a universal information and advice service. Further details in relation to the changes brought about as a result of the Care Act can be found in the 25 November 2013 Committee report, Implementation of the Care Bill.
4. This report builds on the work undertaken by the Care Act Team, and also on the work undertaken by the Access to Good Information Group. On 9 June 2014, Adult Social Care and Health Committee approved ASCH Information, Advice and Advocacy Strategy, which agreed principles aligned to the Digital First Strategy and provided a solid foundation for moving forward to meet the requirements of the Care Act. This included having one central electronic directory and web pages for information to be held, up-dated and disseminated, although other channels and services will be available to help people who need it to access the information.

**On-line Assessment**

5. The introduction of the reforms within the Care Act is expected to bring about a significant increase in the request for social care assessments within the County. There are two specific areas which will result in a sizeable increase in assessment volumes. From April

2015, the department can anticipate approximately 1,000 additional carers presenting for assessment each year. From autumn 2015, onwards the financial reforms are expected to result in 6,800 to 9,100 extra service users, although this may start sooner.

6. The Department of Health recognises the increase in demand the changed legislation will bring and allows, within the Act, for local authorities to consider the delegation of some assessment responsibilities to other parties, and a requirement to offer a supported self-assessment (a supported self-assessment places the person in control of their assessment to complete it, but it remains the local authority's responsibility to make this decision about eligibility). An on-line self-assessment form would be critical in meeting these new demands.
7. This tool would enable service users to take more control of the assessments; receive a quicker decision on their care and support needs and eligibility for funded support; and improve outcomes through signposting to offer services. This self assessment tool could be used by Council staff and partner organisations, as well as by service users and their family members to improve access to social care.
8. To maximise the effectiveness of this form, it is proposed that it will be able to automatically undertake some of the prioritising of work which is currently undertaken within the department. This will result in ineligible people who complete the form being signposted towards relevant pages within the on-line information and advice pages of the Council's website.
9. The form will also feed directly into the department's computerised case management system, Framework-i, and could therefore potentially reduce the need for operational staff to collect information which a service user has already provided.
10. It is proposed that there be a number of forms, which would be hosted on the County Council website, and these would include the Carers Assessment, aspects of the Community Care (or needs) assessment and the financial assessment. The first of these will be piloted in autumn 2014. Before going live, all of the forms will be subject to testing with service users, partners in Health and Community/Voluntary organisations, to ensure that they are fit for purpose. It is not intended that these forms should replace all other methods of assessment, which will continue to be available.
11. Initially, it is intended to design and develop this form using staff from within Nottinghamshire County Council Communications and ICT services, with additional input from the team responsible for maintaining Framework-i and the Care Act Team.

## **Information and Advice Provision**

12. A further pertinent dimension of the Care Act is the local authority's role in preventing, reducing or delaying the need for care and support. Clearly the provision of accessible, accurate and credible information and advice is essential in meeting this requirement. Having an on-line social care directory ensures the information can be managed, updated and may assist in signposting people to other sources of assistance and support.
13. A key requirement of the Care Act is for the Council to establish and maintain a service for providing local people with information and advice relating to care and support for adults

and their carers. This service will enable people to identify choices for their support and will be provided in a number of ways, including the essential digital route.

14. This information provision needs to be more comprehensive than has been the requirement previously, ensuring it meets the needs of all of the people of Nottinghamshire in relation to care and support for adults, including those who do not meet the eligibility criteria, and support for carers. The Act is quite specific about what level of information and advice should be provided. It should be more than just basic information about care and support and should address prevention, financial advice, health, housing, employment and what to do in cases of abuse or neglect of an adult.
15. Currently, our on-line information and advice functionality is provided digitally within Nottinghamshire via a number of information pages on the NCC internet, through an on-line e-marketplace, Choose My Support, and via the BEDs system (for care home placements). The current partnership agreement with Leicestershire and Nottingham City ends in February 2015.
16. Although the department has some existing on-line information on both the Nottinghamshire County Council public website and via [choosemysupport.org.uk](http://choosemysupport.org.uk) it is not felt to be adequate to meet the increased needs of the future. The various requirements of the Care Act mean that a comprehensive system is required and this should also prevent duplication and lack of consistency.
17. Officers within the department have investigated a number of options for providing this, including the undertaking of a full tender process, and the extension of our current contract, with Choose My Support.
18. Currently one provider supports the on-line directories for both the library service and the Children and Families service, within Children, Families and Cultural Services (CFCS); e.g. the on-line information and advice provision, as part of the SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) local offer. This current provider is viewed as a market leader for this type of system, and currently has contracts with over 60% of the top tier local authorities in England.
19. As the next positive step towards integration, and a more joined-up and corporate approach, it is proposed that the department enters into a 12 month agreement with the current provider, potentially in partnership with Nottingham City Council and CFCS, giving the people of Nottinghamshire a greater chance of having all their social care information needs met via a single website.
20. The market for this type of provision is relatively immature at this point, certainly in terms of Care Act compliance. In addition to aligning our contract lengths with those of partners, inside and outside the Council, the decision to choose an interim 12 month option will enable the national market to develop its offer. Due to procurement law, the interim contract would not be able to be extended past March 2016, so the department would choose to go to tender during 2015 for a new provider, having fully clarified our requirements and partnerships.

## **Statutory and Policy Implications**

21. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

## **Implications for Service Users**

22. The provision of advice and information enables people, carers and families to take control and make well-informed choices about their care and support and how to promote well-being. On-line self-assessment will enable service users and carers to take more control of their assessment, ensure quicker decision making and improved access to a range of service to meet preventative needs. On-line assessment will provide an option for service users and carers to complete a support self assessment where they are willing and able to do so. Service users and carers will be engaged in the on-going testing and development of the directory and forms, in order to ensure they are easy to use. This will take place where possible, through existing groups and forums and other appropriate approaches.

## **Options Considered**

23. Extending existing arrangements has been considered, but would not meet the requirements of the Care Act, and indications are that other partners are seeking alternative arrangements for similar reasons. Staying with the current provider would incur significantly higher costs than the current £32,543, due to other partners withdrawing from the contract. Therefore increased or full costs of the existing system would fall to Nottinghamshire County Council.

## **Financial Implications**

24. From 2015/16, an indicative £0.7 million capital and £358,000 funding for information, advice and advocacy, is allocated to the Council, associated to the implementation of the Care Act. However, this funding is not confirmed, and will be contained in the 2015/16 Better Care Fund, which is agreed in negotiation with partner agencies through Health and Well-being governance structures. Previously, monies from the Social Care Reform Grant funded the on-line directory. This grant is no longer available, and the existing allocation will all be spent by February 2015.
25. The proposed new provider currently has a contract within the Council. The price for their product would be a maximum of £40,000 for the implementation of the system, involving the migration of data from existing sources and the integration of Adult Social Care with Children, Families and Cultural Services, and approximately £14,000 for maintenance for 12 months. This may be reduced further if Nottingham City becomes partners to the contract.

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

It is recommended that Committee:

1. note the further information about the requirements of the Department as a result of the implementation of the Care Act 2014, including the introduction of on-line self-assessment, and the move towards a greater degree of automation in the triage process
2. approve the spend of a maximum of £54,000 in order to join up existing information and advice systems across children's and adults' services, and to meet the requirements of the Care Act from April 2015. The funding will be contained in the Better Care Fund.

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#### **Constitutional Comments (KK 14/08/14)**

26. The proposals in this report are within the remit of the Adult Social Care and Health Committee

#### **Financial Comments (DLM 15/08/14)**

27. The financial implications are contained within paragraphs 24 and 25 of this report.

#### **Background Papers and Published Documents**

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Committee Report – Implementation of Care Bill 25 November 2013.

#### **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All.