



**CABINET**

**11 DECEMBER 2018**

**DIRECTOR: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ADULTS, COMMUNITIES & WELLBEING,  
ANNA EARNSHAW**

**CABINET MEMBER WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR: ADULTS, COUNCILLOR  
SANDRA NADEN-HORLEY**

Subject:	Funding Decision and Consultation Outcomes for Sensory Impairment Services
Recommendations:	Cabinet is asked to:- <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Note the outcomes of the consultation process on the proposals set out in this report.</li><li>2. Agree the decision to continue the services and funding for a further 12 months in 2019-20 subject to the improvements listed.</li><li>3. Note the need for a further and wider review of prevention and wellbeing contracts and intention to move to outcome based contracts in future as part of wider Local Government Reform.</li></ol>

**1. Purpose of report**

- 1.1 To share the outcome of the recent consultation on the future of two Adults Service contracts for visually and hearing impaired clients.
- 1.2 To obtain agreement from Cabinet for the continuation of these services and contracts.
- 1.3 To highlight the positive impact these services have on the mental health and access to healthcare for people with a sensory impairment.
- 1.4 Members should also note that as part of the proposed local government re-organisation of the County with a view to creating two unitary authorities (which is still subject to consultation and Secretary of State final decision) support for this and other wellbeing and prevention services should be considered and the opportunity explored to seek greater innovation, outcomes driven contracts and strengths based future service provision based on local need. The future funding model should form part of this wider review as currently District and Borough Councils have varying approaches to wellbeing and prevention services.

**2. How this decision contributes to the Council plan**

The Council's vision is to make Northamptonshire a great place to live and work. This is achieved through increasing the wellbeing of your county's communities and safeguarding the county's communities.

This initiative helps the Council to deliver this vision through the following strategic priorities outlined in the Council Plan

- Northamptonshire communities and individuals are safe.
- Reducing health inequalities amongst the county's communities.
- Tackling the top 10 health risks in partnership with citizens and health and social care colleagues.
- Improving education progress attainment and skills at all key stages and throughout adulthood.
- Keeping communities and individuals safe and supported to be healthy and stay independent.
- Effective commissioning to ensure good care at the right time for the best price, which supports people in achieving their outcomes.
- Maximising the use and value of our assets to support safe and efficient service delivery.

### **3. Background**

3.1 Northamptonshire Adults Social Services (NASS) and Children First currently jointly provide funding to the National Association for the Blind (NAB) and DeafConnect to enable these charities to deliver support services to Adults and Children with sensory impairments in Northamptonshire. This funding represents a small percentage of the overall funding that these organisations receive across with additional funding leveraged for example through charitable trusts providing NCC with excellent value for money.

3.2 Current County Council funding arrangements are due to end at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019.

3.3 The Adult's Services commissioned from Northamptonshire Association for the Blind (NAB) offer adults with sight loss advice together with help and practical support to overcome the emotional and practical challenges of living with sight loss. This helps them to live as full, active and independent a life as possible in their own home and/or with their family or carer. This includes advice, guidance and support to:

- cook safely when they have poor eyesight, and with food storage and preparation
- get out and about for example, doing the shopping
- stay safe in and around the home
- other daily living skills
- get advice and guidance on the availability of health, social care, employment and other services, and benefits and entitlements that might help them overcome whatever challenges they might be struggling with as a result of their sight loss
- Discover how to make use of existing skills or how to enjoy again many of the activities and interests they used to enjoy before their sight loss.

In addition the service provides:

- information, advice and support service to promote independence including access to specialist equipment and aids
- opportunities for people to meet and socialise, taking part in a variety of activities and get access to health and care services
- develop skills for independence, employment and hobbies

3.4 The Adult's Services commissioned from DeafConnect help deaf and hard of hearing adults to continue to live independently in their own home, with their family or carer(s) including an information, advice and support service to promote independence including access to specialist equipment and interpreting services.

3.5 Like the NAB service, DeafConnect also provides the opportunities for people to meet and socialise, taking part in a variety of activities, get access to health and care services and develop skills for independence, employment and hobbies

#### **4. Consultation and Scrutiny**

4.1 A consultation was carried out between 4th October and 8th November to better understand any potential impact on adults with a sensory impairment if the Council proceeded with a proposal to reduce or stop the funding which contributes to the services delivered by NAB and DeafConnect.

4.2 This consultation did not include the services commissioned through Children First and related only the adults elements of the service.

4.3 Feedback on the proposals was sought via a mixture of methods including a questionnaire and public events for service users. Summaries of the consultation responses are available at Annexes 1 to 4.

4.4 Responses to the consultations for both the NAB and Deafconnect services broadly demonstrated a need for the services, a good level of engagement with the services and that the services significantly helped to reduce levels of social isolation and escalating health needs.

4.5 Respondents to both of the consultations gave strong indications that removal of the NCC Adults funding for Visually Impaired and Hearing Impaired services would especially impact negatively on people with a sensory impairment, and especially on those people who additionally had health or mental health diagnosis. Removal of the public funding towards these services was viewed as likely to create especially escalating health needs, to a lesser degree escalating social care needs and to put vulnerable adults at risk.

4.6 The matters set out in the report have not been subject to scrutiny. Councillors were informed that funding for Sensory Impairment services was going out to consultation.

4.7 The consultation also highlighted a number of improvements that should be considered for the current service. Improvements will be delivered through revising the specification in response to the consultation which will be progressed in 2019/20 as follows;

- The providers need to give a satisfactory response and resolution (as relevant) to a small number of negative comments which arose from the consultation.
- Providers should set out a clear plan for doing more to increase engagement amongst the hardest to reach people with sensory impairments; the small minority who are clearly, evidenced through response to the consultation, feeling disengaged.
- The need for the Hearing Impairment service to engage with Mental Health specialists and/or greater use of befriending schemes to do more to tackle social isolation. There may be an opportunity to seek external funding for a pilot mental health project.
- The need to seek more innovation from both services and a greater focus on strengths.

## **5. Equality Screening**

5.1 The proposal has had an Equality Impact Assessment undertaken and there are equalities implications from any decision to reduce or stop the service.

5.2 This would most significantly impact on people with a sensory impairment, however this impact would be felt more strongly still by people with a sensory impairment and a Mental Health or other Health diagnosis, and likely put people with a sensory impairment at greater risk of developing mental health or other health problems. This is due to difficulties accessing healthcare for people with a sensory impairment, and due to the greater likelihood for people with a sensory impairment of becoming socially isolated.

5.3 This risk may be further exacerbated for people with a sensory impairment who are additionally at risk of rural isolation. Details are set out in more detail in the Equality Impact Assessment which can be found here:

*Adult Social Care:* <http://www3.northamptonshire.gov.uk/councilservices/adult-social-care/policies/Pages/EqIAs.aspx>

## **6. Alternative Options Considered**

6.1 As well as the option to continue to fund the services as set out in the recommendation, alternative options were also considered as follows:

6.2 Option 2; Cease funding. This has been rejected as the consultation response for both the Hearing Impaired and Visually Impaired services strongly indicated that these services are highly valued, well used, reduce social isolation amongst an at risk group, reduce likelihood of escalating health needs of a high risk group. To cease funding these contracts could result in significantly greater demands on health, wellbeing, mental health and adult social care budgets, and put service users at risk.

6.3 Option 3; Go through a procurement process to deliver visually impaired services. This has been rejected as there is a limited local market which is able to provide these services, the current services are only part funded by NCC and secure significant other funding, and utilise volunteers enabling high levels of

value for money to be achieved. Procurement processes are lengthy and any new organisation looking to set up an equivalent service would require a significant mobilisation period to develop a network of volunteers, engage participants, build trust, establish a business plan and premises and secure wider funding. This level of mobilisation and procurement is not achievable prior to the end of the current funding on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019.

6.4 Option 4; Deliver these sensory impaired services in-house at NCC. This has been rejected as NCC does not at present have the necessary skills to provide these services. If NCC were to provide these services they would be considerably more costly than those provided through NAB and Deafconnect. NCC may struggle to recruit and train staff in the required time period prior to the end of the current funding on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019.

## 7. Financial Implications

7.1 The financial implications of continuing with these Adults contracts is set out below. This assumes that a further year of funding will be provided for the continuation of these contracts pending a wider review of how they are best commissioned as part of a wider and more integrated set of prevention contracts across the proposed new unitary authorities. The budget shown is included in the base funding of the Adult Social Care Directorate in 2018/19 and is proposed to be funded by Adults in the 2019/20 budget on the basis that the recommended option is to continue with these services, but that they have significant health related outcomes.

7.2

	Current year	Forecast	
	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21 & beyond
	£000	£000	£000
<b>Capital Investment</b>			
Costs			
Funded by			
<b>On-going costs (revenue)</b>			
Costs - Staffing			
Other		£70,000	
Total on-going costs (revenue)		£70,000	
Funding by	Adults: Prevention		

What benefits will the proposal deliver?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Value for money – both services use the current NCC funding, and would use future NCC grant funding to leverage considerable funding from elsewhere.</li> <li>Cost effectiveness – both services deliver a considerable more cost-effective service than would be achievable if NCC were to replicate these services in house.</li> <li>Other benefits realised – Support people with protected characteristics identified in the</li> </ul>
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	Equalities Act 2010 (further detail in section 5 on Equality Screening and in the EQIAs).
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## 8. Risk and Business Continuity Management

### a) Risk(s) associated with the proposal

Risk	Mitigation	Residual Risk
Legal Challenge from current providers	Funding levels maintained on previous year therefore no reduction in funded service	Amber
Legal Challenge from other providers	Short mobilisation, reliance on other external funding, and only 12 month grant period therefore challenge unlikely. Future funding decisions will need to be taken by future unitary authorities. Current contracts have been in place since 01/04/15, and values were reduced from 01/04/17.	Amber
Negative impact on service users	No reduction in funded service	Green
Short-term grant funding	Early communication with future unitary authorities of current provision, consultation responses, and service requirement.	Amber

### b) Risk(s) associated with not undertaking the proposal

Risk	Risk Rating
Legal Challenge	Red
Business Continuity	Red
Negative impact on service users	Amber

## 9. List of Appendices

- Appendix 1 Consultation Summary NAB by Commissioner
- Appendix 2 Consultation Summary DeafConnect by Commissioner
- Appendix 3 Draft report Visual Impairment Contract Consultation Team
- Appendix 4 Draft report Hearing Impairment Contract Consultation Team

Author:	Name: Bernie Lally Team: NASS Commissioning
Contact details:	Tel: 01604 07342066149 Email: Bernadette.lally@nass.uk.net
Background Papers:	Yes
Does the report propose a key decision is taken?	NO
If yes, is the decision in the Forward Plan?	

Will further decisions be required? If so please outline the timetable here	Yes, decisions for funding from FY 1920/21 will need to be considered as part of a move to unitary authorities.
Does the report include delegated decisions? If so, please outline the timetable here	Yes; grant delegated authority 11/12/18 to provide time to award grant funding and put delivery requirements and monitoring arrangements in place.
Is this report proposing an amendment to the budget and/or policy framework?	YES – Budget. Fund service through Adults
Have the financial implications been cleared by the Strategic Finance Manager (SFM)? Have any capital spend implications been cleared by the Capital Investment Board (CIB)	YES Name of SFM: Mark Walker  N/A
Has the report been cleared by the relevant Director?	YES Name of Director: Anna Earnshaw, Executive Director for Adults, Communities and Wellbeing
Has the relevant Cabinet Member been consulted?	YES Cabinet Member: Cllr Sandra Naden-Horley, Adults portfolio holder
Has the relevant scrutiny committee been consulted?	NO Scrutiny Committee:
Has the report been cleared by Legal Services?	YES Name of solicitor: Allis Karim
Have any communications issues been cleared by Communications and Marketing?	YES Name of officer: Liz Fitzgerald
Have any property Issues been cleared by Property and Asset Management?	YES Name of officer: Ian Boll
Have the Procurement Implications below been referenced in the Paper: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have you evidenced compliance with the Council's Contract Procedures Rules?</li> <li>• Have you made clear in this paper where you are seeking Cabinet to approve an exemption from the Contract Procedure Rules and detailed the risks and mitigations?</li> <li>• Have you identified any EU or UK legislative risks such as non-compliance with the Public Contract Regulations Act 2015, transparency and open competition?</li> </ul>	YES Name of officer: Paul White

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have you identified the procurement risks associated with a contract?</li> </ul>	
Are there any community safety implications?	YES Failure to award this grant funding may adversely impact quality of life of Northamptonshire residents with a sensory impairment
Are there any environmental implications:	NO
Are there any Health and Safety Implications:	YES Failure to award this grant funding may adversely impact quality of life of Northamptonshire residents with a sensory impairment
Are there any Human Resources Implications:	YES Failure to award this grant funding may result in a greater demand on NCCs very limited sensory impairment team.
Are there any human rights implications:	YES as detailed in the EQIA. Failure to award this grant funding may result in a negative impact on people with protested characteristics.
Constituency Interest:	N/A Cross County Impact