

Somerset Council MTFP 2024/25 - 2028/29
Savings Proposal



Title of savings proposal	Learning Disabilities Employment Support Service
Reference Number	ADS005

Executive Directorate	Adult Services
Service Directorate	ASC Commissioning
Service	

Lead member	Cllr Bill Revans - Adult Social Care
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Cost centre name	
Cost centre code	

Overview of proposal

Description of savings proposal (alt+return for new line)

Somerset Council currently commissions an Employment Support service

The purpose of this service is to support adults with learning disabilities who would not be able to access universal services (for example, Job Centre Plus) in order them to gain and maintain real, paid, employment to receive support from a specialist service due to the challenges faced by people with learning disabilities to achieve employment.

The service operated by Discovery utilises the Individual Placement and Support model, which is considered best practice by the British Association for Supported employment) as well as the Project Search supported internship model. Once someone has achieved employment ongoing support is funded by an application for Access to Work funding (unless otherwise agreed).

70% of the people who access the service are young people aged 17-24 and the supported internships in particular support the Council's SEN (Special Educational Needs) objectives; however while the Care Act references employment support it is not in the context of this being something that the Council necessarily funds, although the Council does see benefit from doing so in terms of the promotion of greater independence for people with learning disabilities and diversion away from other, more costly, service types.

What will the saving achieve? (alt+return for new line)

The total expenditure on this service is £690,000

Type of saving	Non-LGR - Contract
Which of the 17 key areas does the saving cover?	Adult Services
Is this saving once-off or ongoing?	Ongoing
Does this impact on either the Council's priorities or another service?	Yes
Are there any policy change requirements? If yes, please provide further information below.	Yes

The Discovery contract requires the Council to publish a new commissioning strategy stating that it not longer commissions any given element of the contract before notice can be given.
This could be achieved by including it as part of the ASC Market Position Statement that is due for publication imminently.
The current draft Integrated Care System strategy for adults with learning disabilities and autism will also need to be amended to remove references to employment support - this is still subject to engagement with experts by experience

Benefits of the proposal

Tangible Benefits - savings/income £ (pro-rata for part year)		Intangible benefits (e.g. cost avoidance)
2023/24 (in-year)		Estimated redundancy costs for the 14 staff employed by Discovery that Somerset Council is responsible for funding
2024/25	228,500	Ongoing
2025/26	121,500	

Delivering the proposal

Describe the high level milestones for delivery, including timescales and target delivery date for the saving.

By 28/02/2024 Formal decision made to no longer commission Employment Support and this to be stated in the published Market Position Statement. Notice to then be immediately given to Discovery, and all individuals currently in receipt of this service to be written to by the Council to inform them of this and next steps.

By 10/04/2024 all individuals in receipt of this support to have been triaged to identify whether a review is required and if so, the prioritisation of that review

By 31/05/2024 all people currently receiving employment support where a high priority review has been identified as being needed to have had that review completed

31/05/2024 all employment support provided by Discovery that is funded by Adult Social Care ceases and the staff are either redeployed or made redundant

Who are the key people/services involved/required (internal and external).

Internal: ASC Operations Staff to triage people who will lose support and undertake reviews as necessary. Communications team input would be required as we would expect there to be significant opposition to this decision that would attract media interest. Work is ongoing with Childrens Services to see if alternative funding can be put in place for Project Search sites. Work would also need to take place with Job Centre Plus.

External: Discovery management team, Employers hosting Project Search sites.

What activity is needed to achieve the saving?

ASC Operational staff will need triage and then review those people impacted

What are the financial resources required?

A figure of £63,145.68 has been provided by Discovery for their anticipated redundancy costs

Are there any limitations or constraints?

The contract with Discovery only allows for services to be removed under certain circumstances. One of these is that the Council changes its published commissioning strategy, so this will need to happen before formal notice can be given.

What is the anticipated impact on service delivery to residents or business?

While those people and/or their carers assessed as eligible for support commissioned to meet assessed eligible needs under the Care Act 2014 will be offered alternative support the impact on those who are not eligible for other forms of Council funded support at this time will be that their funded support ceases.

In the longer term this decision will result in a reduction in the opportunities, independence, progression and incomes of people with learning disabilities living in Somerset, in particular those young people who become adults in future years.

Please note that an equalities impact assessment is required for all proposals.

Other implications	
Impact	Number or description
Staffing impact (#s)	14
Redundancy or vacancy?	Redundancy
Legal impact	<p>None. While this service is commissioned to support responsibilities under sections 6.61, 15.73, 16.1 and 16.2 of Care & Support Statutory Guidance (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-act-statutory-guidance/care-and-support-statutory-guidance), this does not state that the Council needs to provide or commission this service. As this proposal relates to a service reduction or change, those likely to be affected or impacted by it may seek permission to challenge it by way of judicial review. Grounds for challenge include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Illegality (the Council does not have power to make this decision); •Irrationality (the Council's decision is unreasonable OR the Council took irrelevant matters into account/failed to consider relevant matters); •Procedural unfairness (the Council did not follow statutory procedures or observe the principles of natural justice – flawed consultation process claims are usually made under this ground); and •Legitimate expectation (that the Council will act in a specific way as a result of its own statements/conduct).
Insurance or other impact	None
Equalities impact	An EIA has been completed for this proposal

Please ensure that you have consulted HR and your Finance Business Partner regarding any staffing savings.

Risks	
What is the risk status of the proposal?	High
What are the risks associated with this proposal?	<p>Over 70% of the people supported are in the 17-24 age group and there is a risk that decommissioning it will impact on the Council's ability to deliver against its SEND objectives in relation employment.</p> <p>People accessing day services/day opportunities (either commissioned or self-directed) if employment support is not available as an alternative, leading to additional long-term costs that based on our experience of developing an employment support offer since 2012 are difficult, time consuming, and costly to support people to move away from. For comparison the average cost of this service per person per week has been calculated as £59.50 per week, the average cost of a day service per week is £252.98.</p> <p>Carer stress due to people being at home with family carers instead of at work, leading to increased requests for respite, and in the worst-case scenario ultimately carer breakdown leading to one or more individuals requiring housing or an accommodation based service.</p> <p>This the type of progression-based service that the Adult Social Care "My Life, My Future" programme needs to have in place help to deliver its transformation objectives.</p> <p>Reputational damage. This service delivers both positive outcomes for individuals and the Somerset Council and it would be expected to be seen negatively by the people it supports, their families and the employers that host Project Search sites.</p>
Are there mitigations or actions that if implemented can reduce those risks?	<p>Work needs to take place with to identify external funding that might be available to mitigate the impacts, but this is in its infancy and even if secured is more likely to only be available to support specific elements, for example, supported internships through work with Children's Services.</p> <p>Work also needs to take place with universal services, including Job Centre Plus in preparation for the decommissioning to identify how those people who will lose/not be able to access support from Discovery can be best supported to continue to progress towards employment in order to achieve employment outcomes.</p>

Please send your completed form to your Finance Business Partner for sign-off and submission of request.