

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



Title of savings proposal	Citizens advice - local assistance scheme
Reference Number	ADS007
Executive Directorate	Adult Services
Service Directorate	ASC Commissioning
Service	Local Assistance Scheme - Citizens Advice
Lead member	Cllr Bill Revans - Adult Social Care
Cost centre name	
Cost centre code	

Overview of proposal

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

Somerset Council has statutory obligations in developing a local approach to preventative support; this will be a key focus area of the new Care Quality Commission assessment framework of Local Authority Adult Social Care services which launched in April 2023. As quoted in the Care Act 2014 "A local authority must provide or arrange for services, facilities or resources which would prevent, delay, or reduce individuals' needs for care and support, or the needs for support of carers. Local authorities should develop a clear, local approach to prevention which sets out how they plan to fulfil this responsibility, considering the different types and focus of preventative support. These services ensure that Somerset Council is meeting these statutory obligations.

The decision would mean that we would not move forward with proposals to re-commission our contracts for support for the Local Assistance Scheme which supports the Core Service within Citizens Advice. The current contract is due to come to an end on 31st March 2024. The review and re procurement of these services has concluded with the award for a contract to one provider to continue to provide a clear bespoke offer of a variety of support to Somerset residents. This will ensure continuing of service from 1st April 2024.

The service empowers people in Somerset to take control of their health and wellbeing by giving people time to focus on 'what matters to me' and take a holistic approach to an individual's health and wellbeing. This includes people with learning disabilities and/or autism and mental ill health.

The service provides immediate assistance when needed, as well as follow-on help for complex problems and warm transfer' to funded projects for specialist assistance. The service provides a high quality, responsive advice service that meets client's needs:

- empowering them to act early to avoid a problem escalating
- enabling them to address the issues that adversely affect their lives

The main aim of the scheme is to:

- provide a core universal offer of support across the County;
- the scheme is for emergencies/crisis intervention/a "last resort"/to alleviate immediate need and not to provide long-term solutions .

The majority of (subject to admin fee) money flows through to support vulnerable clients.

Local Assistance Scheme Criteria (Qualifying Need):

- Being without sufficient food for the members of the household and lacking any means of obtaining it.
- Being without fuel to cook or heat essential living accommodation and water for cooking and hygiene and lacking any means of obtaining it.
- Being without basic equipment required for cooking or heating essential living accommodation and lacking any means of obtaining it.
- Being without items of essential furniture and essential clothing for the particular needs of the household and lacking any means of obtaining them.

What will the saving achieve? (alt+return for new line)
 £107,000 per annum

Type of saving	
Which of the 17 key areas does the saving cover?	Non-LGR - Contract
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
This decision would mean we would not be able to fulfil our commitment to early help and prevention as currently set out within our 2023-26 Adult Social Care Strategy and joint Health and Social Care Strategy with our ICB partners. This would also impact on our ability to deliver against our Council Plan.	

Benefits of the proposal		
Tangible Benefits - savings/income £ (pro-rata for part year)	Intangible benefits (e.g. cost avoidance)	
2023/24 (in-year)	0	
2024/25	107,000	
2025/26		

Delivering the proposal
Describe the high level milestones for delivery, including timescales and target delivery date for the saving.
Allow contracts to come to a natural end on 31st March 2024. Savings would be realised from 1st April 2024.
Who are the key people/services involved/required (internal and external).
Commissioners and Procurement officers
What activity is needed to achieve the saving?
None - Contract terms will naturally come to an end and Commissioners would no longer seek approval from Executive to recommend ongoing service delivery as a result of the procurement process
What are the financial resources required?
None
Are there any limitations or constraints?
None
What is the anticipated impact on service delivery to residents or business?

Financial Risk

Evidence from Case Studies in areas implementing community led support (including Somerset case studies) suggest a potential 5% decrease in commissioned care in initial care and support arrangements compared to expected levels. For Adult Social Care alone if we were to stop this approach, this equates to £13m additional costs into the Council. These additional costs will ripple and increase across the whole Integrated Care System including Children Social Care, Mental Health services, Housing, Displaced People, My Life My Future, Revenue and Benefits, Somerset Direct, Acutes, Primary Care and voluntary and community sector.

Safeguarding Risk

Safeguarding is the action that is taken to promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults and protect them from harm. Protecting children and vulnerable adults from:

- abuse and maltreatment
- preventing harm to children's health or development
- ensuring that they grow up with the provision of safe and effective care enabling them to live free from harm, abuse and neglect

Removing this service will have a catastrophic impact on how effectively Somerset Council can safeguard Somerset's families and residents.

Other implications

Impact	Number or description
Staffing impact (#s)	Not for Somerset Council but possible redundancies within the VCFSE sector
Redundancy or vacancy?	Redundancy
Legal impact	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: <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	Attached within the EIA

Risks

What is the risk status of the proposal?	High
What are the risks associated with this proposal?	
A full Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed. There are other impacts in relation to this decision.	
<p>- Increase to an already pressured Adult Social Care system in terms of increase in the number of people requiring an Adult Social Care Assessment. 140 Carers and 881 Somerset residents already waiting for an Assessment as well as 3,221 outstanding reviews.</p> <p>- Increase in the number of people requiring statutory more costly service provision to meet their needs as community solutions will be reduced. This is not limited to Adult Social Care Services but will also impact increase in demand on Children's Social Care services; Mental Health services; housing; revenue and benefits; displaced people and Somerset Council Customer Services.</p>	

- Increase in the number of people seeking help from GPs who are already under extreme pressure, a recent report demonstrates a 40% increase through reduced community solutions

- Hospital flow be less effective with a rise in the number of people needing more acute services and a reduction in the solutions to be able to have an effective discharge as well as an increase in bed blocking. A significant reduction to Pathway 0 discharges resulting in an increase in demand through out bedded pathways which will be significant impact on health and social care budgets. There will be up to 10 % or 400 referrals per month into the funded Pathway 1 D2A service which would impact flow and cost of the service would increase by up to £3.5 million per year. Re-admissions will increase, with each re-admission costing around £3k per episode to the NHS.

- ASC My Life, My Future transformation programme will be significantly impacted through a reduction in the ability to be able to deliver on the savings identified, through reduced community solutions.

- Inability to be able to successfully evidence against CQC assessment criteria due to lack of support for unpaid carers and no clear plan for targeted prevention services. This risks a negative inspection outcome and damage to the Council's reputation.

- Somerset' VCFSE reduce the need for more costly statutory services. The negative impacts of reduced funding to the VCFSE, particularly at a time of increased vulnerability as they recover from the effects of both Covid19 and the Cost-of-Living Crisis, include: -

i. A reduction in service delivery and innovation

ii. Staff redundancies

iii. Reduced sustainability with potential closure of organisations

Are there mitigations or actions that if implemented can reduce those risks?

Would require an increase in social care resources to respond to the demand for support. This will cost more than the current offer and recruitment into these posts would be challenging and not immediate.