# VCFS Funding Opportunities 2022-2025: Universal Carers Support and Guidance

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## Part 1: Universal Aims and Objectives

### Welcome

The services outlined in this tender will contribute to the wider work of Wokingham Borough Council’s (WBC) Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector (VCFS) partners, to deliver prevention work in the Borough: Supporting our residents to improve their health and wellbeing, and aiming to prevent, reduce, and delay the need for formal care and support.

One of Wokingham’s key strengths is its rich and vibrant voluntary sector. For many years it has provided outstanding service to our residents and in particular, improved the lives of many vulnerable people. Wokingham’s Voluntary and Community Sector strategy recognised the importance of acknowledging this while outlining clearly how we intend to work with the sector going forward. This procurement delivers a programme of funding that is designed to work cohesively to prevent, reduce and delay the need for formal care and support and to have a whole-Borough impact of better outcomes for vulnerable people.

Prevention is a multi-disciplinary, multi-sector concept, and reflects the aims in the recent Government Health and Social Care White Paper of using greater integration between health and social care to deliver support to provide a more holistic, joined-up and co-ordinated experience for users. We want to foster a culture of prevention that is more than the absence of ill-health or a need for care, but also creates, innovates and attracts people to volunteer and work here, in a Borough where all our residents feel equally supported and fulfilled.

### Vision and Values

Within the VCFS strategy we stated our vision of ‘an independent, sustainable and diverse voluntary and community sector, working with the community, Council and partners to meet the needs of local people’. We are delivering this within three main priorities:

* To prevent, reduce and delay the need for formal care and support.
* To work in partnership and build the capacity of the VCFS.
* To commission services that deliver quality and value for money, in line with our strategic priorities.

This procurement therefore draws together the priorities in the VCFS strategy with the golden thread in the Community Vision:

* Making Wokingham a Great Place to Live, Learn, Work and Grow.
* Enriching Lives.
* Building Safe, Strong Communities.
* Changing the Way we Work for You.

We’ve used our Corporate Delivery Plan values of being customer-focused, acting as One Team, taking ownership and being ambitious to identify where prevention services are working well, and where there are clear needs for support, which we will work together to fulfil. The service outlined in this tender will contribute to the others already underway in the community and will centre on several principles shared with these other services:

* A more collaborative approach.
* Increased focus on partnership working.
* Greater use of service user input.
* A more focused equalities requirement.
* More coherent and consistent contract management to support providers and the sector (for example, use of platforms such as Joy will support residents to the right support at the right time in the right place).

### Global Pandemic

The Council recognises the toll that the pandemic has taken, including its direct and indirect impact on residents’ physical and mental health, strain on relationships, increased isolation and greater anxiety, stress and depression. As a Council, we know that the pandemic has had a disproportionate effect on our most vulnerable groups, including impact on people with disabilities, people living in poverty, and BAME communities. Both the measures taken to combat the pandemic and the associated economic fallout have been difficult to bear for many people, with travel restrictions meaning some people have gone for very long stretches of time without seeing loved ones. Improving the wellbeing of residents includes supporting the effects of the pandemic on an ongoing basis, an aim that is very much within the scope of this procurement.

### Strategic Goals

Wokingham Borough Council’s Adult Social Care Strategy 2020 – 2025 sets out the ambition for Wokingham Borough to be one of the best boroughs for adults and carers in need of support to live; where they feel safe, included, and a key part of our community. The key priorities of the strategy are to:

* Keep people safe.
* Prevent, reduce and delay the need for formal care and support.
* Involve people in their care and support.
* Work in partnership and commission services that deliver quality and value for money.

Set out within Wokingham Borough Council’s Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy 2020 – 2025 is the vision for an independent, sustainable and diverse voluntary and community sector, working with the community, Council, and partners to build capacity and meet the needs of local people. This vision informs the aims and objectives of the service being procured here, as do the Health and Wellbeing Board objectives of tackling social isolation, reducing inequalities and increasing physical activities.

This procurement will complement other health and wellbeing work going on in the Borough and encourages collaborative attitudes to completing work within the Dementia Action plan, the Equality plan and other relevant plans as required. We want to prevent ‘silo working’ and foster an atmosphere of collaboration, ensuring not only high-quality services and less duplication, but also supporting individual choice and control as required in the Care Act. Further details about how this might look and on partnership/consortium bids are in the Partnership Working section below.

### Outcomes-Based Commissioning

This procurement has used an outcomes-based commissioning approach, where the specifications consist of the outcomes we would like to see for that area or demographic group, with the provider encouraged to work within the criteria in the Invitation to Tender to be creative and innovative in finding solutions. There are many ways and means to deliver high-quality prevention services, and we know that providers in the sector are flexible and knowledgeable enough to devise creative solutions that reach as many vulnerable people as possible. Therefore, once the service is awarded, the provider may discuss its specific operational practices with contract managers during the mobilisation period, with a final agreement to form part of the legal documentation for signing.

### Universal Bidding Criteria

Within the questions for this tender are some criteria that we would like to see all applicants for funding to reflect in their submission. These areas have been identified as being important to achieving the Council’s overall aims with this procurement and so all potential providers are asked to demonstrate that they understand and meet these adequately. Please see the ‘Invitation To Tender’ (ITT) for questions.

### Funding Sustainability Expectations

Commissioners are increasingly aware of the need to achieve high value for money, as resources from central government continue to diminish. As part of this procurement, we will be looking at how organisations grow their funding to a wide base of support and diversify income streams, demonstrating resilience and sustainable growth within their organisations. This will be discussed at contract management meetings and support will be given, where required. We will also be looking for providers with good experience of financial sustainability to share good practice within the sector, as part of partnership working.

### Legislation

It will remain the responsibility of the service provider to be aware of current and changing legislation governing and informing the delivery of services, and it will remain the responsibility of the service provider to ensure that it complies with all and any changes to national legislation and published guidance on good practice such as, but not limited to:

* Care Act 2014 and statutory Care Act guidance.
* Children and Families Act 2014.
* Wokingham Borough Council’s Adult Social Care Strategy 2020-2025.
* Wokingham Borough Council’s Voluntary Sector Strategy 2020-2025.
* Wokingham Borough Council’s Carers Strategy 2020-2025.
* Mental Health Act 1983, as amended by the Mental Health Act 2007.
* Code of Practice (Mental Health Act 1983).
* Equality Act 2010 (in particular the Public Sector Equality Duty).
* People at the Heart of Care 2021.

### Equality

WBC’s new Equality Plan aims to ensure that the Community Vision is realised for all our residents, ensuring that no-one is left behind and that unfair and discriminatory barriers are removed. This includes fulfilling the duties under the Equality Act 2010, specifically the public sector equality duty (PSED) which requires that due regard is given to:

* Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
* Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
* Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

These are sometimes referred to as the three aims or arms of the general equality duty. The Act explains that having due regard for advancing equality involves:

* Removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
* Taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people.
* Encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

The PSED applies to public authorities and to those who are not public authorities but carry out public functions (when they are carrying out those public functions) and therefore applies to potential providers within this procurement.

The provider must demonstrate a pro-active approach to equality issues, including submitting an equality policy as part of the governance and compliance process. The provider must also demonstrate an understanding of health inequalities as well as the socio-economic drivers behind these, as well as an understanding of how underrepresented groups across the nine protected characteristics under the people in Equality Act might be encouraged to engage with services and ensure VCFS networks within the Borough remain representative of the people they serve. Monitoring under this programme will ask about numbers of people from protected groups engaging with services in order to ensure no group is left behind.

### Partnership Working

Potential providers are encouraged to submit partnership and/or consortia bids for the service in this procurement. The service must also work with existing services and demonstrate co-operation with referral and access services within the Joint Front Door, including maintaining a profile on the Joy platform so that residents using the app can easily find the service that best matches their needs.

Partnership working means a focus on the whole system ensuring that people are properly cared for and that nobody ‘slips through the net’ – it is expected that prevention services will cross-refer to one another and to the Council where they are working with someone who has multiple needs. Services working in the prevention space will naturally form close links and will need to work co-operatively with other voluntary and community groups, and the Council, demonstrating a commitment to a collective endeavour and seeking to resolve conflict swiftly. All services must have a clear policy and procedure for circumstances where it appears there may be a conflict of interest, for example due to a personal relationship or financial interest.

Partnership working includes the following principles and expectations:

* Organisations will attend regular forums and meetings relevant to their work.
* Organisations will be proactive in delivering outreach in the community.
* Organisations will demonstrate a commitment to joint working principles: Information sharing, openness, honesty, sharing resources, avoiding duplication.
* Organisations will demonstrate a commitment to collective endeavour of building and supporting resilience in Wokingham’s VCFS.

### Participation/Co-Production

In order to deliver successful VCFS commissioning WBC recognises that it is critical to utilize the experience, knowledge and insight of local people with lived experience; continuing to work closely with Social Care Futures (SCF) to implement this. For this procurement WBC has sought to implement and reinforce the opinions and feedback of local carers at every stage, starting with an outreach initiative at Carers Rights Day that has been instrumental in informing the service specification. WBC will also access this expertise through a paid panel of people with lived experience as part of the evaluation of applications. This panel will include people from across the community, with lived experience in the service areas being commissioned. This process will be delivered via a third party, with full support and training to people with lived experience provided in conjunction with WBC. Panel members will be participating in evaluation of tenders, but it is planned that they will also participate in delivering service feedback as part of the commissioning process throughout the service duration. Potential providers are also encouraged to use, and be able to evidence, co-production, participation, and service user involvement in their service delivery and in continuous improvement.

### Workforce and Volunteers

The provider will always deploy a sufficient number of staff to enable services to operate at capacity and ensure that appropriate management support is available to staff and volunteers. The provider must ensure that staff employed to deliver services are appropriately trained, skilled and experienced, and are committed to delivering a high quality, person-centred service. The provider must ensure that it follows the current Disclosure and Barring Service rules with regard to background checks on staff and volunteers and have satisfied themselves that they have completed adequate checks.

It is expected that staff and volunteers should have or develop:

* Appropriate qualifications, where appropriate (e.g. if a role calls for Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) registration).
* Experience of working within their subject area, including working face-to-face with people and dealing with confidential and/or sensitive personal information.
* A full understanding of safeguarding issues and procedures.
* The ability to find and deliver proactive and innovative ways of providing outcome-focused support.
* An understanding of the impact of varying issues and needs facing carers in the Borough, including mental health, finance and housing, disability or illness, and recovery from the global pandemic.
* The ability to work in a sensitive manner.
* Skills in effective communication methods for the group covered by the funding.
* Knowledge of other relevant organisations and community resources for the group covered by the funding; skills in networking, partnership working and awareness of referral routes.
* The opportunity to access appropriate Continuous Professional Development or training to ensure best practice and up-to-date registration for their profession, if appropriate.

### Eligibility for Services

The service must have a clear policy setting out who is eligible to access the service and the circumstances in which the service may be refused or withdrawn. This must be agreed with the Council and shared with key referral agencies, stakeholders and prospective service users and subject to regular review.

Eligibility criteria for the provision of this service are detailed in Part 2 below.

The provider must have a written policy setting out the circumstances in which it may withdraw from offering or providing a service to an individual and the process for making a complaint about this decision.

### Referral and Access

Access to services should be via self-referral, or via referrals made by any Wokingham voluntary, community and faith group, as well as via Wokingham Adult Social Care teams. The provider will need to be flexible in meeting the access needs of all people in the community, including physical access, language barriers, and ethno-cultural requirements. If waiting lists are operated, the provider should be clear about how these are operated and progressed.

The provider will be expected to use the Joy platform and the Wokingham Community Directory as a source of referrals and should maintain an up-to-date profile on both.

It is expected that services are accessible throughout the week. Access should be available in person, by telephone, email and via the internet.

The service will maintain an appropriate office/site base in or close to Wokingham Borough.

The service should have a complaints procedure with stated response timescales. These procedures should be made widely available in appropriate formats. Complaints and their outcomes should be logged and made available to the Council upon request. Any serious complaints shall be reported to the Council as a matter of urgency.

### Engagement, Communication, Awareness and Publicity

The provider will advertise, publish and make widely available information that clearly informs individuals and organisations who may wish to use this service, when this service is available and how it can be accessed.

The provider should maintain a profile in the Wokingham Community Directory and on the Joy platform. These should contain sufficient information to be clear what the offer of each service is to prospective clients and support regular communication to people who are eligible for the service to tell then how to access it.

Services will be pro-active in seeking feedback from carers and stakeholders using a number of methods that will maximise participation. The service will actively encourage and facilitate service user consultation and involvement with regard to service development, including the following areas:

* Policy and changes.
* Monitoring of service delivery.
* Service improvements and changes.
* Major changes to the support service.
* Service steer and delivery.

### Governance

As a minimum requirement, the Council expects the provider to have in place and be working to the following policies and procedures. It is expected that these documents are refreshed and reviewed at least every two years.

* Equality and Diversity policy.
* Business continuity plan Incident reporting and recording.
* Safeguarding policy and procedures
* Data Protection policy and Information Sharing policy.
* Compliments, Complaints and Whistleblowing policy.
* Disciplinary and Grievance policy and procedures.
* Lone Worker policy and procedures.
* Recruitment, Training and Induction policy and procedures.
* Customer involvement policy and procedures.
* Staff supervision policy.
* Infection control policy.
* Health and Safety policy.
* Minimum insurance levels of £5,000,000 public liability and £10,000,000 employers’ liability (and professional indemnity where appropriate).

### Monitoring, Reporting and Universal Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

The service will be subject to contract monitoring which may consist of an annual contract monitoring visit to ensure that the requirements of the contract and service specification and outcomes are being delivered.

Contract monitoring will be led by the Adult Strategy and Commissioning Team and may be carried out in conjunction with service users and stakeholders. Where significant performance concerns are identified the Provider will be expected to work with specialists in the Team to develop a service improvement plan which will be monitored on a regular basis with clear, agreed and time bounded actions.

The service specification, KPI’s and outcomes will be reviewed and amended as appropriate. This will be carried out in consultation with the provider.

The Provider must comply with contract management arrangements which includes regular contract monitoring meetings and the submission of KPIs via Wokingham Borough Council’s Contract Management System, Atamis, in line with agreed reporting timescales.

The requirements of service delivery may change over the life of the grant and the Grantee must be willing to work in partnership with the Council and other relevant stakeholders to ensure that the way that the service is accessed/delivered meets the needs of those eligible to use it.

Information requested will include:

* Number of people who have accessed the service.
* Number of new referrals and source of the referral.
* Number of referrals refused and the reason why.
* Demographics data as requested.
* Number of partnership meetings attended.
* Number of people signposted to other services and the which ones.
* Number of people referred on to a statutory service.
* Number of complaints and compliments.
* The universal KPIs and outcomes for all services below.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **KPI** | **Outcomes** | **Method of Measurement** |
| **KPI 1** | Customer satisfaction survey is conducted annually. Evidence that customers are involved in the decision-making processes for the organization. Evidence of regular customer consultations. | Customers, families and carers have a positive experience of care and support. | Customer feedback.Survey results. Consultation results.  |
| **KPI 2** | Demographic information for customers displays increased diversity in line with the Council Equality Plan.Referral information demonstrates that the service is working with customers with varying needs. | Customers from diverse backgrounds and with varying levels of need are able to access the service. | Equality monitoring template. Referral and access data. Customer feedback.Case studies.  |
| **KPI 3** | Employed staff and volunteers have undertaken all required minimum training within 3 months of starting. | Customers, families and carers experience timely and appropriate response to their needs.Customers, families and carers are kept safe and feel safe and secure during interactions with VCS staff.  | Training records.Customer feedback. |
| **KPI 4** | The provider can evidence representation on relevant community forums/panels.The provider can evidence effective joint working with other organisations including cross referring and partnership / alliance work. | Customers, families and carers receive up to date information and are signposted appropriately to other relevant bodies.Customers experience joined-up support across the Borough and any gaps in provision are swiftly identified and filled. | Data from joint services including the Wokingham Community Directory and the Joy platform.Referral and access data. Forum reports and minutes. Customer feedback. |
| **KPI 5** | The provider demonstrates a pro-active approach to outreach and equalities including increasing engagement amongst communities previously harder to reach.  | The need for care and support for customers across the Borough including diverse groups is reduced or delayed. | Equality monitoring data.Case studies. Referral and access data. Customer feedback. |
| **KPI 6** | Provider can demonstrate a reduction in numbers of people referred for formal care and support as a result of their service.  | The need for care and support for customers has been reduced or delayed. | Case studies. Numbers referred for formal care and support against a baseline expectation. Number of people supported to stay in their own homes as a result of the service.  |

Part 2: Service Specification - Universal Carers Support and Guidance

Purpose

The service we are procuring is to support carers living in Wokingham Borough and to enable carers to balance their caring role in order to live a life outside of caring. The service will provide advice, information, and outreach support for both adult and young carers as well as carers of individuals with Learning Disabilities. The service will proactively identify gaps in the provision of carers services and will work with relevant agencies on development of services for carers. It will be the lead agency on carers, delivering training and championing carers issues, and will work proactively with other VCS partners to ensure a cohesive response to the needs of carers. The service will support the central priorities of the ‘Carers Strategy 2020-2025’ and contribute toward the associated outcomes detailed in the ‘Carers Strategy Implementation Plan’.

A ‘carer’ is anyone, including children and adults who looks after a family member, partner, or friend, who needs help because of their illness, frailty, disability, a mental health problem, or an addiction, and cannot cope without their support. The care they give is unpaid; and this service will not be supporting carers who are employed to provide care services.

The service we are procuring will support both adult and young carers as well as carers of individuals with Learning Disabilities (LD). A ‘young carer’ is defined as a person under 18 who provides or intends to provide care for another person who needs support due to illness, age, disability, substance misuse or mental health problems. An ‘LD carer’ is someone that provides informal care and support to a child, young person, or adult with a learning disability, who needs support due to reduced intellectual ability and difficulty with everyday activities. We also recognise that not all carers will identify with the above definitions and expect the service to proactively seek out these individuals, identify them, and offer appropriate support and guidance.

*Carers have told us that they want:*

* Information in the right format, at the right time.
* In-person support and guidance when they need it.
* Help to stay emotionally and physically capable of continuing their caring role.

*Wokingham Borough Council will:*

* Commission a service that meets the above, and work collaboratively with the provider on its delivery of these requirements.
* Continue to co-produce this service with carers at every step of the commissioning process.
* Work to promote this service to all carers across the Borough.

Priorities for Service Delivery:

The service will provide support in the following four areas:

1. Identifying and Recognising Carers, including Seldom-Heard Carers.
2. Empowering Carers.
3. Enabling Carers to have a Life outside their Caring Role.
4. Young Carers.

1. Identifying and Recognising Carers, including Seldom-Heard Carers

* Carers will be proactively engaged. The service will be promoted widely and regularly through a range of formats which will include in-person events.
* Carers will be engaged with through GP surgeries and at hospital discharge, to ensure that they have access to advice and information at the right time and in the right place.
* Other referral-routes will be strengthened and expanded. This includes but is not limited to: Statutory services; the Wokingham Hospital Memory Clinic; and other local VCS groups/organisations.
* The service will be delivered in a manner that is universally accessible: Identifying existing and hidden carers by adapting approach and terminology to reach those who do not identify as carers (e.g. male carers); and, reaching under-represented ethnically diverse groups and carers of people with complex drugs, alcohol, or mental health issues.
* The service will remain sensitive to individuals and take a person-centred approach that considers the various impacts of key factors such as race, ethnicity, sex, gender, age, etc.
* The service will conduct assessments in order to identify carers individual needs. Where appropriate, carers will be actively signposted to WBC for statutory carers assessments; of which the carers service assessment will form the basis.
* The service will develop and promote a universal definition of a carer to encourage people to make use of available support and guidance, and to remove any barriers, stigma, or misconceptions around the term.
* The service will be integrated within the local VCS, including taking and making referrals via the Joy app and adopting a ‘No Wrong Front Door’ policy for people seeking preventative support.

2A. Empowering Carers: Information and Guidance

* The service will ensure that carers feel confident in their caring role and able to make well-informed decisions with access to support and training in aspects of the caring role (e.g. first aid, fraud awareness, carers rights etc.). The content of any training/workshops will be based on carers feedback.
* Carers will also have access to specific training, prior to statutory assessment and/or need, to allow them to fulfil their caring role safely; and with relevant knowledge on specific issues such as safe moving and manual handling.
* The service will build and maintain an accurate understanding and shared library of local resources, voluntary groups, and service providers; in order to identify the best options to meet carers’ needs.
* The service will provide support and signposting to all carers who contact via a range of means (telephone; mail/post; email; drop-in; etc.).
* The service will provide regular advice and information on carer-specific issues and entitlements, including: Financial entitlements; rights in employment; and carer-specific rights.
* The service will ensure that the advice and information available to carers is clear and accessible so that carers are aware of the full range of support available.
* The service will simplify and streamline resources and information around groups/services and promote this to all new and existing carers in an easily accessible and appropriate format, as a first resource for new carers.
* The service will signpost carers towards access-points they are most comfortable with and remain mindful of individuals’ preferences for who they seek support from.
* Information will be provided in the right format, at the right time. Carers will be able to access information both online and in-person.

2B. Empowering Carers: Liaison and Advocacy

* Carers will be aware of their rights and entitlement to assessment and support services through a service delivered both in-person and online, to ensure that they can access support by the means best suited to their circumstances.
* The service will prevent carer breakdown through implementation of effective prevention strategies, including face-to-face carer liaison work, groups, workshops, and activities.
* The service will guide carers that struggle to access or understand information on a one-to-one basis, either via telephone or in-person.
* The service will support older carers and recognise their specific needs and requirements. This will include proactive support and encouragement to plan for the future.
* The service will signpost and guide carers towards appropriate respite services and work with carers to help them live a life outside of caring.
* The service will offer proactive support and welfare calls as requested and appropriate.

2C. Empowering Carers: Groups and Peer Support

* Carers of people with learning disabilities (LD) will be supported through the development of a strong defined-relationship with our local LD carers organisation. This will create a more streamlined and accessible approach for carers to access specialist services and to avoid overlap.
* The service will set up carers groups/forums as a means of peer-support and standing up for carers’ rights.
* The service will encourage new carers to use carers groups and recognise their peers as a valuable resource and source of information.
* The service will regularly ask for feedback from carers on the activities it runs and ensure that activities are run in-person/online where there is evident support for either.
* The service will deliver its services with transparency; work to reduce barriers around statutory carers assessments; and work proactively to advocate for carers when statutory support may be needed.

2D. Empowering Carers: Awareness-Raising

* Carers will maintain a high profile in the Borough through awareness-raising events (to mark Carers Week, Carers Rights Day, etc.) and through regular marketing, campaigns, communications, and publicity. The impact of these events will be maximised through activities and initiatives that will connect carers to relevant support services.
* Carers will have a voice in decision-making through facilitation of communication between carers, statutory organisations, and other forums.
* The service will gather feedback on specific needs that cannot be met due to a lack of local services, and relay this back to the Commissioning Team at the Council. Where service gaps or barriers fall within the remit of this service it will co-produce a suitable offer with carers.
* The service will work with its local partners in the VCS to promote early recognition of carers as well as access to support services. There will be a specific focus on promotion within GP surgeries.
* The service will encourage feedback via a range of methods to ensure that carers are able to get their voice heard without unnecessary form-filling.

3. Enabling Carers to have a Life outside their Caring Role

* The service will enable carers to fulfil their educational and employment potential; access leisure and recreational opportunities; and to identify and facilitate other social and recreational opportunities.
* The service will reduce carer social isolation through guidance and advocacy for respite and access to social groups.
* The service will reduce carers’ economic disadvantages through advice and support to maximize benefits and, where appropriate, obtain suitable paid employment.
* The service will support carers mental and physical wellbeing. It will promote a healthy lifestyle and provide relevant information; including guidance on accessing health-checks and getting support to access health services.
* The service will facilitate well-moderated but carers-led group sessions that allow all carers to feel welcome and have a voice.
* The service will promote a range of carers group activities from sessions that centre on carers issues to sessions that aim to provide an escape from carers issues. This may include both carer and non-carer activities simultaneously, so that both may have a safe break.

4. Support for Young Carers

* Young carers will be identified, assessed, and provided with appropriate support in a timely manner, leading to improved education, and health and wellbeing outcomes, including meeting statutory requirements. The service will also produce outcomes-focussed plans and conduct referrals to other services and safeguarding where appropriate.
* Young carers will be actively involved in service development and have regular meaningful opportunities to have their voices heard via a young carers’ forum. This will interlink with other democratic opportunities for young people in Wokingham (such as the Youth Council) so that young carers can directly influence decision-makers about their shared issues and challenges.
* Young carers will be recognised and supported appropriately at school through outreach and awareness-raising activities that aim to improve academic attainment, health and wellbeing, and the ability of young carers to realise their full potential.
* This may include setting up and supporting young carers group; leading INSET training; or involvement with pastoral support teams. Wider contact with schools will be established and maintained by the provider, who will demonstrate how they are increasing their reach through funding monitoring.
* Young carers will be more confident in balancing their caring role with their experience as young people by being offered opportunities for respite such as shared groups and activities. Such opportunities will offer recreation, support, and the chance to connect with peers who can share their experiences.
* Awareness of young carers will be raised in the Borough through appropriate publicity, marketing, and engagement with social media and conventional media in order to engage the public in young carers’ issues.

Capacity

According to the 2011 Census, there were approximately 14,000 carers in the Wokingham Borough; 3,000 of whom were over the age of 65, whilst 719 were under 25. These figures, however, are likely to be underestimation. Predictions suggest that the number is likely to have risen since 2011, with the number of carers aged over 65 set to increase by 35%, and the number over 80 to rise by 70%.

As of November 2022, the current provider has 976 carers registered (719 of these are adult carers and the remaining 257 are young carers). In addition, 872 carers were recorded as having been assessed or reviewed by WBC’s ASC services since 2020. Of these 872 carers, 519 were 65 or over (59.5%) and 13 were under 25 (1.5%).

In this context, referrals to the service are expected to be a minimum of ten per week (consisting both adult and young carers), and the service will be expected to meet capacity by actively training and recruiting new staff to meet this demand.

Assessments

The provider will be expected to carry out its own adult carers assessments, when first contacted by carers. Initially these will compliment and support a Statutory Carers Assessment from the local authority (where one is needed and requested). However, during the course of this contract there is an ambition and expectation to pilot a project as part of this contract, whereby the provider will complete statutory carers assessments and annual carers reviews. WBC will work collaboratively with the provider on developing this aspect of the service, but the provider will need to develop the skills, knowledge, and capacity to support this element of the specification.

Eligibility, Referral and Access to the Service

The service is available free of charge to any carer living in the Wokingham Borough area who meet the criteria in the service purpose above. Referrals can be made from any source, including, but not limited to:

* WBC adult and Children's Social Care teams.
* Directly from Carers themselves.
* Hospital and GP surgeries.
* Wokingham Memory Clinic.
* PINC (LD carers service).
* Other VCS organisations.
* Schools and Early Help Hub.