

Advice & Support Recommissioning

Consultation Report

To inform the recommissioning of advice and support services consultation has taken place with a range of stakeholders. This report sets out the consultation process, key issues raised and responses. It also sets out the proposals for further engagement in the drafting of specifications and evaluation of tenders.

Part 1 - Provider Consultation

Floating Support

A notification of the Council's intention to recommission Floating support was published on the Sell2Wales portal in early May 2016 to inform providers of the intention to recommission services and to invite them to register for further information.

Two commissioning workshops were held attended by current and prospective providers of Floating support. The purpose of the workshops was to gather provider input to help shape the recommissioning process and the services to be commissioned. The number of organisations and representatives attending can be seen in the table below:

Floating Support	
Attendees	Organisations
Workshop 1	
45	30
Workshop 2	
39	28

Floating Support Provider Workshop 1

The reason for re-commission services was explained and the providers were asked to consider the initial proposal to commission separate packages for Generic and Older Persons floating support and to recommission Specialist floating support at a later stage alongside accommodation based services.

The advantages and disadvantages of one or multiple contracts were discussed and providers were also asked for their views about how support should be allocated if there were to be multiple providers, e.g. geographical or client based. Providers' views were also invited on what makes a quality support service and to consider methods of measuring a quality service. In addition to the views gathering during the workshops, providers were invited to submit their responses and feedback in writing.

Overall there was widespread support for separate packages for Generic, Older Persons and Specialist Floating Support. The general consensus was that more than one provider would be the preferred option for generic floating support; allowing diversity, greater flexibility and a broader range of skills. In terms of how generic floating support contracts should be split the majority of respondents favoured all-inclusive contracts of equal size. The majority of respondents favoured one provider for Older Persons floating support given the lower value of the contract.

A range of feedback was received about specifying and measuring quality services this was summarised in a presentation to the second workshop.

Floating Support Provider Workshop 2

Providers were informed of the proposal to commission 2 contracts for Generic floating support; and one contract for older person's floating support. This balanced the need to have flexibility with the need to make economies of scale. It was explained that one contract did not mean one provider and that a lead provider model or consortium would be welcomed.

Some providers agreed that the proposal offered the opportunity to deliver a wide range of locally based services and expertise; the potential for economies of scale, the retention of local knowledge and would facilitate new ways of working. However a number of issues were raised including concerns that the expertise required to support all diverse client needs would be compromised; that there was risk if one of the two contractors failed. Concerns were also raised that there would be increased TUPE implications for the successful contractor to deal with. Some thought that smaller organisations would not be able to participate as sub-contractors due to anticipated reduction in management costs and economies of scale and that this could impact on the service user.

The comments of providers were carefully considered however the main proposals, to have two contracts for generic support and one for older persons support was not changed as a result of the feedback. Given the potential cuts to funding there is a need to ensure best value and that services for clients can continue.

It was considered that although there would only be limited number of contracts for generic floating support, there are still other providers for specialist floating support

ensuring a robust supply chain is in place. The specification will include as a key requirement, the need to mainstream the skills to meet all equality and diversity needs of all client groups, the need for this expertise will be set out very clearly in the tender documents. Quality of service will be given equal rating to cost in the tendering process to ensure that any reduction in cost will not impact the service user.

The possible impact of TUPE on providers was accepted and while it is a matter for potential bidders to seek their own independent legal advice with regard to any potential issues, the council will give its opinion on TUPE as soon as possible to help with planning. In addition the Council have arranged with C3SC to organise a provider networking event to help encourage collaboration and consortia.

Comments from the providers about how to ensure quality were will be considered as part of the detailed specification of services.

Gender Specific Support Services (including Domestic Abuse)

A notification of the Council's intention to recommission Gender Specific support services was published on the Sell2Wales portal in early May 2016 to inform providers of the intention to recommission services and to invite them to register for further information.

Two commissioning workshops were held attended by current and prospective providers of Gender Specific support services. The purpose of the workshops was to gather provider input to help shape the recommissioning process and the services to be commissioned. The number of organisations and representatives attending can be seen in the table below:

Gender Specific Services (including Domestic Abuse)	
Attendees	Organisations
Workshop 1	
28	18
Workshop 2	
24	17

Gender Specific Provider Workshop 1

The need to re-commission services was explained to providers. Initial findings from the Needs Assessment were presented including the number of current referrals. It was explained that this data would help the council to identify key needs and any gaps in provision. Views were sought on the range of services to be commissioned, any gaps in provision and the potential contract packaging options. Comments on the day were recorded and written feedback was also invited.

There was widespread agreement with the proposal to commission a one stop shop and it was strongly felt that the Service User views should be at heart of commissioning. Many respondents stressed the importance of prevention / early intervention; and for partnership working to resolve problems. It was felt that children & young people should be included in the proposals, along with greater provision for male victims; many cited the need for a holistic / 'wrap around' approach.

The majority of respondents favoured the option of all services being delivered in one bundle, as a consortium/partnership approach, in order to deliver a wide range of locally based services & expertise in a joined up manner.

Gender Specific Provider Workshop 2

The proposals for re-commissioning Gender specific service including the definition of service users to be assisted under the contract and the range of services to be included. It was proposed that the Perpetrator Programme put forward in the first workshop be commissioned separately, but that close links to victims services be maintained.

A representative of Welsh Women's Aid presented the findings of the organisation's research into domestic abuse services including survivor feedback; principles and suggested approaches to take in redefining services. It was agreed that this was broadly in line with the council's proposals. Welsh Womens Aid have agreed to have an ongoing involvement in the services design.

The feedback was generally positive although the difficulty in attempting to bring together a diverse community of services whilst striving for inclusivity was acknowledged. The proposed scope of the new services, including support for the victims of wider violence against women, was welcomed.

There was strong support for a consortium / lead provider approach and attendance at the networking event to be facilitated by C3SC was publicised as a way to take this forward. There were concerns raised over the proposed separation of a perpetrator programme; the feeling being that there should be a wraparound approach that is all inclusive. It was therefore agreed to reintroduce the perpetrator

programme into the services to be commissioned. It was also agreed to extend the timescales for the procurement process to allow suitable models of support to be explored.

Advice Services

An advert was placed on Sell to Wales to inform providers that the council intended to recommission Advice Services and to ask for expressions of interest. A workshop was held on 3rd August 2016, with current and potential providers. 33 individuals attended the session from 26 organisations. A presentation was given of the proposed approach to recommissioning. The success of having a single contract was outlined and the intention to continue with this approach. It was explained that the council Money Advice team will be able to carry out more advice work in house and to the aim is to procure an advice partner who will work with the council to reduce duplication. It was explained that funding would reduce over the 5 years of the contract. The presentation was followed by a round table discussion. Comments made at the meeting were recorded and further written comments were invited.

A number of key issues raised by the group and a written response to these issues make. Responses to these issues are recorded below:

Key Issues

1. Concern was expressed about the reduction in funding given the growth in demand due to Welfare Reform. The requirement for a needs assessment to determine unmet / future need was raised and the also need to provide services to hard to reach groups.

It was explained that the overall resource for Advice provision is not being reduced, but that resources within the Central Library Hub will be reconfigured and four Hub Officers upskilled to provide advice, there will also be an Advice Mentor to assist the existing manager to maintain the quality of the advice given. Reassurance was given that the level of current demand has been taken into account in the proposals and also the impact that Welfare Reform will have on the demand for Advice Services. The Service is very aware of all the Welfare reform changes.

It was explained that advice services are only one aspect of the councils response to Welfare Reform and details of how the council is responding to welfare reform were given as below :

Universal Credit

The Council's Money Advice Team and Into Work Advice Services have been funded by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) to provide Personal Budgeting Support and Digital Support to those clients who are claiming Universal Credit. These services are provided in 14 locations across the city. It was explained

that all Advice Providers should be referring their clients who need support with Universal Credit into these sessions. Communities First teams also have extensive resources, including Communities For Work, to provide into work advice and to help clients meet the claimant commitment. The DWP also share with the Local Authority the projected number of new Universal Credit claimants for the coming financial year so that steps can be taken to ensure that services are in place to meet the demand.

Benefit Cap

The DWP share information with the council about the individuals that are going to be affected by the Benefit Cap. Funding has also been provided by the DWP to the Local Authority to support those affected by the Benefit Cap. Two new advisors have been created from this temporary funding to work on a casework basis, to practically assist those tenants who have been affected by the Benefit Cap with a range of solutions.

Benefit Sanctions

There is an increase in the number of clients that are having their benefits sanctioned. The Money Advice Team seek to resolve the issues causing the sanction and work closely with the Into Work Advice Team to ensure that the client's Universal Job Match account or Universal Credit Account is up to date and that clients are proficient in the IT systems they need to be accurately showing their job searching activity. The Money Advice team are also signatories for the Foodbank, and so can issue Foodbank vouchers for those clients who are struggling to feed themselves and their families.

Disability Benefits (PIP, DLA, ESA)

As migration from DLA to PIP continues, many clients require support to complete PIP forms. As well as the Money Advice Team being fully trained on the completion of both forms and the descriptors associated with these forms. Visits are co-ordinated through the Hub using the most appropriate service such as the Council's Independent Living Service which carries out holistic visits to older people and people with disabilities, helping with income maximisation, assessing them for disabled adaptations and addressing issues of social isolation. Where more intensive support is required clients are referred to Floating Support services.

Appeals against Welfare Reform decisions

The new contract retains all the current specialist advice provision. Much of this work currently is appealing PIP / DLA / ESA decisions. The Council has recognised the need to protect this independent specialist advice provision and as at present specialist advice will be provided under the contract for Housing, Welfare Benefits and Debt. There is also Floating Support provision to provide more intensive support, visiting clients in their own home and accompanying them to Tribunal. Under new contractual arrangements providers of floating support will be required to have

greater expertise in welfare benefits which will further enhance this more intensive service.

2. Concerns were raised that some customers may not want advice from council officers and that clients should have a choice. There was also concern that there may be conflict between council departments and that council advice may not be independent and accredited / audited.

Many clients are already happily using council services for advice. Client satisfaction survey results for the period April 2015 – March 2016 show that 95% of those surveyed were happy with the advisor, 95% rated the advice they received as very good and 99% would recommend the service. The Money Advice team have not directly experienced any client stating that they do not want to be helped by an advisor because they are council staff, however we accept this may be the case in a minority of cases. For the minority of clients wanting to seek advice from another source there are other projects where clients can be referred, although there are eligibility criteria for most of these. Some changes have been made to the proposals in response to the consultation and these changes will help address this issue(see point 3 below).

There are many advantages to having directly employed council advisors who, with clients consent, can access council systems, including Housing benefit and Council Tax IT systems, it is often in the clients best interest to see a council advisor as queries can be resolved more quickly. Advice given by council Advice staff is always independent; officers are fully aware that they are to remain impartial. The advisors do not act on behalf of any council departments and this has not caused any conflicts as officers respect each other's roles. The advisors do not pass on any client information to any organisation / council department without the consent of the client. The IT systems used for advice work are not accessible to any other council departments.

All council advisors have or are working towards a qualification, these include IMA in Money Advice Practice, and Introduction to Debt Advice (accredited by the Money Advice Service Quality Framework for Individuals) Regular auditing of the advisors work is carried out by the quality team in the council, who have a wealth of experience in welfare benefits. By realigning the resources available in the Hub we are also creating an Advice Mentor The purpose of this role is to carry out audits regularly and will be on hand daily to support the team with their queries. Senior officers are also in place who have years of experience in working in welfare benefits and are also qualified in the IMA Money Advice Practice.

Specialist advice will continue under the new contract and therefore any specialist advice required by a client would be given by the new contractor. The aim under the new contract is to commission an 'Advice Partner' to work with the council service to

ensure the effectiveness of overall provision of the service. The contractor will work proactively with the in house team to help resolve any issues.

3. There was concern that generalist welfare benefit will not be provided by the contractor.

Following the workshop and comments made, it has been decided that a more flexible approach will be taken and some generalist welfare benefit advice will now be provided by the new contractor. However over time council advisors will be seeing more of the clients seeking generalist advice for welfare benefits, budgeting and debt and housing.

Part 2 - Service User Consultation

Floating Support

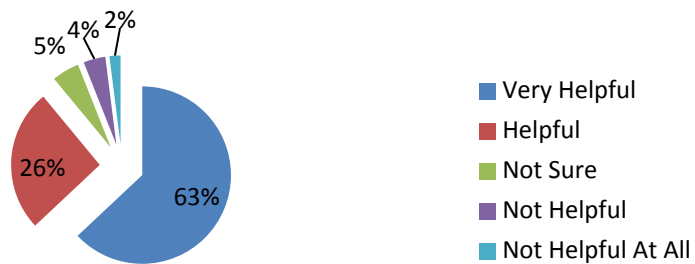
As part of the engagement with users of Floating Support services, a survey was sent to people who ceased receiving support in the six months from January to June 2016. The aim was to capture views on current services and how these could be improved for the future, in order to inform the specification of services.

The survey was posted to 607 former users of the service. As well as returning the survey in paper format, users were given the option of completing the survey electronically through the Council's website. A total of 57 responses were received, 9% of those sent. While a low number this was considered a reasonable sample level for this hard to reach group.

The clients who returned the survey had received a service from a range of providers, the list of these can be found at appendix 1.

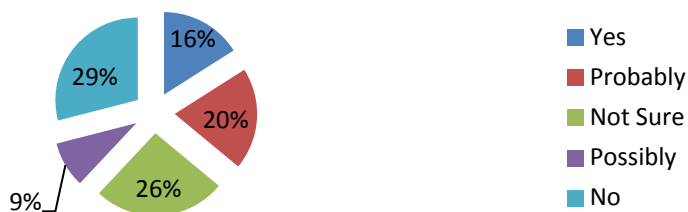
Chart 1 below indicates the responses to a question relating to the helpfulness of the support, this showed very high satisfaction with the current services. A small number were dissatisfied and details of these issues have been passed to the providers concerned.

Chart 1: How helpful do you think the support was?



As well as helping clients to maintain their accommodation, providers of Floating Support services are expected to help clients develop the skills and confidence to be able to tackle similar problems should they arise again. Responses to this issue are reflected in chart 2 below. As can be seen 36% said they would or probably would be able to deal with the issues themselves in future while 29% were clear that they would not be able to do so.

Chart 2: If you had similar problems again, would you feel able to deal with them yourself?



Those completing the survey were asked what they had found most helpful about the support they received. Many respondents expressed how grateful they were to receive help and were full of praise for their support worker. Example comments were:

“I will be eternally grateful for the support I received.”

“My support worker was fantastic.”

“She did not judge me.”

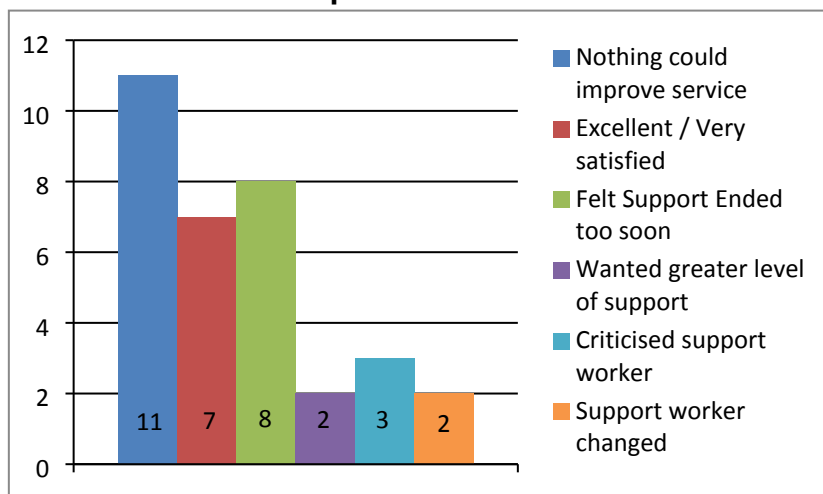
When the service user did identify a specific area where the support had been helpful, Chart 3 shows which aspects featured most often.

Chart 3: Most helpful aspects of support



Service users were also asked to say what they felt could be done to improve the service they had received. Chart 4 shows the responses to this request; many indicated that they were very satisfied with the service they received and there was nothing that needed to be improved.

Chart 4: Areas for improvement



Comments included:

- “A little more empathy with the person’s needs.”
- “Same support worker calling.”
- “Having my support for a bit longer.”

Key Issues

- The overall level of satisfaction with the service was good across a range of providers.
- The importance of help with welfare benefits was clear and this will be one of the priorities for the new service.

- The lack of resilience amongst service users was of concern with many feeling they would need support again if similar issues occurred. The importance of empowering service users to become more independent will be a key part of the new arrangements.
- The length of support was an issue for some clients. The normal period for support to be provided is 12 weeks while this period is generally long enough the time in support can be extended if necessary, although the aim is not to develop dependence in the client but to encourage independence where possible. This flexibility to extend the time on support will form an important part of the new contractual arrangements.

Further Service User involvement.

Encouragingly, 18 respondents to the floating support survey indicated that they would be willing to be involved in helping the council to develop services. It is planned to involve these volunteers further in focus groups to inform the specification of services. This will also be the case with any respondents to the domestic abuse survey who have expressed an interest in helping further with the consultation.

Older Persons Services

A number of separate consultations have taken place with older people recently who are users or potential users of services.

A questionnaire was issued to all applicants aged 50 and over on the Common Waiting List to gain further information about their housing and support needs. In 2015, the Council commissioned David Couttie Associates to carry out Local Housing Market Assessment in respect of older people. Both surveys confirmed that older people were most interested in independent accommodation with visiting support. Only with those over 80 years old was sheltered housing a more popular option.

In addition the tenants of ten Council-run sheltered housing schemes across Cardiff were visited to identify their ongoing needs for support. The type of support identified included mainly housing management issues such as security and safety and reporting repairs. Within the council sheltered housing schemes these services are still offered by scheme managers and the community alarm system. Assistance with explaining letters, filling in forms and making appointments were also important and this service will be included in the recommissioned service.

Further consultation has been arranged with other landlords of sheltered housing accommodation to identify any gaps in service as a result of the changes in

supporting people funding and to ensure that where appropriate needs are met through the new contractual arrangements.

Gender Specific Services

People who are currently experiencing domestic abuse, or have experienced domestic abuse within the past 3 years have been invited to take part in an online survey.

The consultation, which has been conducted in collaboration with the Vale of Glamorgan, is still open but, to date only 82 responses have been received. Fourteen responses were excluded as they stated that they had not been a victim of domestic abuse within the past 3 years, at which point they were asked no further questions and the survey closed. 27 responses have been received from people living in Cardiff, 23 from residents of the Vale and 18 from people living elsewhere. Due to the low number of responses from Cardiff residents the period of consultation has been extended. Once the consultation closes the responses will be analysed and considered. A number of focus groups are also being held to inform the recommissioning.

Part 3 - Other Stakeholder Consultation / Involvement

As part of the consultation a number of other stakeholders and those with specific expertise were consulted, including:

Registered Social Landlords – a separate meeting was held to gain a landlords perspective and a number of useful comments were received regarding client needs and the importance of communication with landlords. A landlord representative has agreed to be further involved in the details specification of services.

Cymorth – were contacted and they referred officers to their commissioning guidance which was reviewed.

The Head of Partnership Strategy and Commissioning for University Health Board was consulted and has agreed to be involved in the drafting of the specification as it relates to mental health.

The Domestic Abuse Executive – including a wide range of statutory partners including Police and Fire Services have been advised of the proposed changes and comments have been requested.

Welsh Womens Aid – presented to the workshop and have provided information and research on the provision of services, their expertise will be sought further during the recommissioning process.

Welsh Government (Department for Local Government and Communities) - sent a representative to the Advice Service commissioning event, have advised about accreditation and offered further help with the specification of services.

C3SC (Cardiff Third Sector Council) hosted a networking event for potential support providers to raise awareness of ways that they can work together through consortia or other forms of partnership. There were 49 attendees to the event all representing third sector providers.

Further Consultation

A focus group of floating support clients will be held to better understand their needs and preferences, if possible service user involvement in assessment of tenders will take place. Further consultation will take place with landlords about the need for services in sheltered and extra care facilities to ensure that their needs are addressed in the specification. RSL and Health representatives have agreed to be further involved in the specification and tender evaluation.

The survey of suffers of domestic abuse will continue for a further period and will be widely promoted. Focus groups are continuing and a full report on the findings will be produced. Further consultation will take place about the detailed nature of the service to be provided and Welsh Womens Aid will be asked to provide expert assistance with the specification.

Feedback from all the consultations will help inform the detailed specification and evaluation of services.