

# Wellbeing Prescription Service contract extension

## Strategy & Resources Committee Tuesday 11 January 2022

Report of: Julie Porter

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Purpose: To update Members on the delivery of the Wellbeing Prescription service and set out the plans for the future of the service.

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Publication status: Unrestricted

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Wards affected: All

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### Executive summary:

The Wellbeing Prescription Service ('WPS') is an East Surrey 'Integrated Care Provider' ('ICP') funded social prescribing service operated by the Council, in partnership with Reigate & Banstead Borough Council.

The WPS has been in operation since January 2015 and has grown considerably during that time. The current contract with the ICP was for three years from April 2018 to March 2021, with the option to extend for a further two years to March 2023.

A detailed report about the WPS was considered by the Housing Committee on the 12<sup>th</sup> March 2020, including examples of positive feedback about the quality of the service and the prospects of the contract being extended for a further two years from April 2021.

This report provides an update about the service and highlights the benefits for local residents along with opportunities for developing the service in the future.

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**This report supports the Council's priority of:** Building a better Council

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## **Recommendations to Committee:**

That:

- A. the current two-year extension of the existing contract with the NHS East Surrey Integrated Care Provider until the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 be endorsed;
- B. the future work of the Wellbeing Prescription Service be supported and proposals be developed for a new contract in 2023, including cost implications, risks, funding options, and a memorandum of understanding to be agreed between partners and
- C. a report on the outcome of B above be submitted to a future meeting of this Committee.

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## **Reason for recommendation:**

The continued delivery of the Wellbeing Prescription Service supports the Council's strategic priority of building a better Council. The service is one of the most direct examples of how the Council positively influences the health and wellbeing of residents across the District.

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## **Introduction and background**

1. The Wellbeing Prescription Service is an exciting and innovative social prescribing service which allows GPs and other local services to refer residents to a trained Wellbeing Advisor who can help them improve their health and wellbeing. Residents living in East Surrey can also self-refer to the service.
2. The Wellbeing Advisor meets with clients for up to an hour to discuss their needs, providing expert advice, encouraging behavioral change and signposting to local or national services.
3. This might include services that help the client get active, lose weight, meet new people, stay mobile and prevent falls, maintain independent living or improve their emotional wellbeing.
4. On average, clients are offered three appointments with an advisor, with a variety of appointment types; face to face at home, in a GP practice or public setting, via video or phone and group workshops.
5. The service continues to develop alongside the local Integrated Care Provider ('ICP') as social prescribing gathers momentum nationally following the NHS long term plan launched in January 2019.

6. The service was established following discussions between several health and care providers including GPs, hospitals, social housing, mental health, community care and social care about the need to address an increased demand for services by clients who had multiple health and lifestyle needs which couldn't be addressed by a single agency.
7. Since its launch in January 2015, Wellbeing Prescription has steadily expanded and is now offered to patients registered to all 18 East Surrey ICP GP surgeries, including all Tandridge GP surgeries.
8. In 2018, the Council entered into a contract with the Integrated Care Provider ('ICP') for a three year plus two-year contract, running from April 2018 to March 2021, with the option to extend for a further two years to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023.
9. In April 2021, an independent evaluation was carried out by a leading social prescribing academic and her team. It involved interviewing clients and stakeholders and collecting data about the service. The conclusions of the report were very positive and concluded that the service was supporting four key aims of the Surrey Health and Wellbeing Strategy, that the service provision was much wider than the initial remit (including supporting people with housing and homelessness, education and employment, carers' needs and benefits payments) and showed statistically significant improvements and a reduction in GP visits.
10. The Council expressed its interest in continuing to provide the Wellbeing Prescription service for an additional two years. Members may recall that it was agreed at Housing Committee on the 12th March 2020 that a proposal document would be submitted to the ICP. On-going budgetary provision for the service was also agreed as part of the 2021/22 General Fund budget and subsequently ratified by Full Council in February 2021.
11. Due to the Covid pandemic, the contract variation process was delayed and it was not possible to sign the necessary variation agreement (reflecting the extended timeline and other incidental matters) before the start of the two year extension. However, a letter from the ICP was received confirming the arrangement that enabled the Council to continue to operate the service past March 2021 and sign an agreement with the social prescribing software supplier to maintain the licence and continue to have use of the system.

### **Performance and Monitoring**

12. In the year 2020/21 the service received over 1,300 referrals, with that figure set to significantly increase during 2021/22. 655 new referrals were received during the 2021/22 Quarter 1 period alone and 686 in Quarter 2.

13. The most common reason for referral was weight management/eating well (55.6%) followed by support for emotional wellbeing (39.1%). The majority of respondents were 45-64 years old.
14. The majority of appointments were by telephone (75.7%), followed by home visits (13.3%) and digital/online (6.1%).
15. The most frequently used prescription is 'wellbeing Advisor Advice', which refers to a client appointment where the Advisor's advice has been central and where signposting may not have been felt necessary. The next most popular are lifestyle related resources, such as British Heart Foundation and NHS Live Well. Some clients require multiple prescriptions and a referral to a local service, such as DHC talking therapies, Action for Carers and Adult Social Care.
16. All referrals are responded to within 5 working days, with clients opting for a video or telephone appointment predominantly offered with a first appointment within 2 weeks. Clients requiring a home visit are also provided with a first appointment within 4 weeks, however to mitigate the increased waiting time for home visits, two additional staff have been trained to complete home visits.

### **Feedback & Case studies**

17. In July 2021 a new customer satisfaction questionnaire was designed. Two questionnaires have been created, one is disseminated to clients who have just one appointment or those unable to answer long questionnaires. A second longer questionnaire is shared with clients that have completed their final follow up appointment. The survey can be completed electronically on any device and if this isn't possible, such as for house bound clients, a paper version will be left with the client with a prepaid envelope.
18. In quarter two, 98 responses were received from clients, 80% scored the service 9 out of 10 on the promoter score.
19. Some recent client and stakeholder feedback included the following comments:

Client satisfaction "It's a very motivational service. Having a regular appointment made me focus more on what I needed to do and my advisor was first rate, really informative and knew her stuff. It is really great to have a service which offers support and advice for things you don't want to bother the doctor about. I can't recommend the service enough, it should be expanded and much more widely used as it will help the NHS in the long run" (client).

"My appointment with my well-being advisor was very positive. She was informative and knew how to help to achieve my goals"

"The wellbeing advisor was extremely helpful, warm and empathetic and really worked hard to come up with as many suitable solutions as possible..."

“To have this resource available is excellent and I am sure will be of great use to others as much as it has been to me. Many thanks”

“A supportive, knowledgeable and very personable consultant. Excellent”  
“...everything was very kind, smooth, reassuring and helpful”

“My Advisor was very friendly and made me feel at ease when talking through all options. She listened to me and made me feel she cared which is hard to find in many people these days”

#### GP Practice Manager

“...I just wanted to say that, you know, I’ve seen such amazing outcomes for people over the last five years and some people’s lives have completely changed because of it [Wellbeing Prescription Service]. So, I’m really quite convinced that, it’s something that I think needs to stay around for people. Because it just fills that gap. It’s got to be tailored to everyone’s individual circumstances. Anecdotally I know a lot of people that have been really, really helped by it.” GP Practice Manager

### **Resource and funding**

20. The team consists of a manager, two team leaders and 10 advisors (some are part-time) and is overseen by the Head of Customer Engagement and Partnerships. All direct costs of the service, including staffing, equipment, training and specialist software is covered by the ICP’s external funding.
21. The current contract includes a severance cost of £75,000,pa. The contract has to bear any incremental uplifts eg: inflation and social national insurance costs. If the contract was not extended past 31/3/23 for any reason, the Council can apply the surplus funds for cessation costs e.g redundancies and minimizing any risk to the Council
22. The current contract states that the Council would act as the “employing authority” and provides in-kind HR and Payroll support along with office space and back office support. This in-kind support is provided within existing resource and includes Human Resources, Leadership team, Information technology, financial services, office services and secondary pension. These costs are apportioned at 3.8% of the Councils FTE support costs. (Approx £85,000 pa)
23. East Surrey ICP GP practices have also given in-kind support by providing space at surgeries for the Wellbeing advisors to meet with clients and administrative support in booking appointments.
24. An MOU is currently in place which sets out clear responsibilities for partners in respect of funding, costs, in-kind support, management, monitoring and any legal or HR issues and risks. This arrangement is similar to that of the South East Surrey Family Support Programme.

## Well-Being Prescription Service – Looking forward

25. The key project for the WPS management for 2022/23 will be to put forward a proposal to continue to run the service past 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023. It is clear from both the external evaluations and from partners that the service positively influences the health and wellbeing of residents across Tandridge and Reigate and Banstead - the East Surrey ICP's catchment area.
26. The funding will need to be reviewed and incorporate a more commercial approach for the in-kind support costs to limit the pressures on this Council. Discussions will need to take place with the ICP and Surrey County Council to explore further funding from central government via the Better Care Fund.
27. The risks need to be assessed in terms of withdrawing the service such as:
  - financial costs to terminate the contract
  - reputational, withdrawing a service from residents and our partner agencies without consultation
  - costs associated with premature staff redundancies and impact on their own health and wellbeing
  - negative impact on residents' health and wellbeing who currently use the service – or will potentially use the service over next few years.
28. The service is a partnership service with established partnerships networks which means it can deliver services in an integrated, transparent and low-cost way.
29. It has a good track record of improving the wellbeing of residents, linking up local services and reducing pressures on GP's.
30. The Council would not want to cut a service without fully understanding the implications of doing so. The exercise of carrying out an external evaluation gave assurance that the service is a good and valued service.

## **Key implications**

### **Comments of the Chief Finance Officer**

It is understood that the contract is having good results for the clients and ICP. It has become well established. The direct costs are well defined and are well within the contract value. With a maturing contract, there would be further decisions to be made to ensure its stability and understanding the true cost the contract has on, not only the Council, but the ICP.

It should be noted that if the service provision changed to the Council having the service as a tenant and the ICP operated the service, the service would cost the ICP more than the current contract with the Council.

If for some unknown reason the ICP would like to withdraw from the service, the Council would be a neutral position if cessation costs were required. The Council needs to recognise that in the current financial climate the “in kind” cost need to be understood. For future contract discussions a mature costing and pricing structure needs to be acknowledged. Possibly highlighting volumes of clients and the step changes to optimise economies of scale.

### **Comments of the Head of Legal Services**

The Health and Social Care Act 2012 (“the Act”) introduced changes by way of a series of amendments to the National Health Service Act 2006. The Act gives local authorities a duty to take such steps as it considers appropriate to improve the health of the people in its area. In general terms, the Act confers on local authorities the function of improving public health and gives local authorities considerable scope to determine what actions it will take in pursuit of that general function.

The services set out in this report ensures that residents have access to the information and support they require to achieve optimum health. Such a service does appear to work best when all local partners work together to build on existing assets and services.

To withdraw from the Well-being Prescription Service at this stage, would mean that the Council may be required to pay back the grant funding. Clearly, any new arrangement to renew the service will need to be agreed by Members and be subject to confirmation that it will be cost neutral to the Council and there will be no financial burden on the Council’s general fund.

### **Equality**

The proposals within this report demonstrate a fully inclusive approach in that the service is accessible to all and addresses the needs of the more vulnerable members of the community.

## **Climate change**

This report contains no proposals that would negatively impact the Council's climate change ambitions.

## **Appendices**

None

## **Background papers**

None

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