

Annex C: market sustainability plan template

Introduction

Wokingham Borough is the least deprived upper-tier authority in England and is one of the most affluent areas of the country. 83% of the borough's neighbourhoods are in the least deprived 20% of the country.

With a high standard of living, and plenty of green space, Wokingham Borough is a popular place to live which is reflected by net inwards migration. As well as this, it attracts many care providers who choose to do business in the borough. The Adult Social Care market extends beyond Wokingham's borough boundaries, particularly in neighbouring Reading and Bracknell, as well as the fringes of Oxfordshire and Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead.

Despite the crisis in social care, the Council and its health partners have worked closely with the sector to support sufficient delivery of good quality care. We have utilised Better Care Funding, COVID funding and Winter Pressures funding to support our providers. This has included:

- Facilitating hospital discharges with block purchase of care home beds and homecare hours.
- Specialist infection control nursing, to minimise the risk of outbreaks in care homes.
- Additional work with our hospital and community nursing providers to limit the number of double handed care packages discharged to the community.
- Giving additional training and enhanced rates to care providers to increase our ability to re-able people in the community and discharge people from the acute hospital.
- Support to recruit and train staff, including from abroad.
- The Care Home support team was launched to monitor outbreaks, collate and share best practise, offer specialist support and guidance and support with PPE acquisition.

Whilst some care providers work closely with the Council, due to historical contracts and relationships, there are others who are more dependent on the self funder market. A report conducted by the ONS (2021) estimated the percentage of self-funded residents in care homes within Wokingham Borough is 58.9%. This together with demand of placements from Health, particularly for hospital discharge during winter months can cause considerable challenges. Local intelligence suggests that providers who are solely reliant on clients that pay for their own care or on the Council (or a mixture) remain financially viable.

In the last three years, Wokingham Borough Council has not experienced any market failures in care homes although some have diversified their business, and

for domiciliary care, three providers have exited the market in a controlled manner. The local area remains an attractive proposition for many developers.

Workforce, as in all areas, remains a key challenge. Wokingham Borough has a higher job density (the ratio of total jobs to population aged 16-64) at 0.95, or an average of nearly one job available for every person of working age in the area and it is relatively easy to find employment in the area compared to the country as a whole. Perhaps partly as a result of this, around half as many work in the sector compared to the national average (Wokingham Borough – 7.1% compared to England – 13.6%). Money made available during COVID and Winter from central government, has been utilised to support our providers to retain staff, with specific payments being made to staff. This funding has also been utilised to support our providers to recruit staff (locally via recruitment campaigns) and also with international recruitment. These have resulted in additional staff being recruited.

This is compounded by the lack of affordable accommodation. A single person working in this sector could not afford to buy property here based on their wages alone. According to homelet.co.uk, for February 2022, the average rental cost per month in the UK for a new tenancy in the United Kingdom was £1,069 per calendar month, an increase of 8.6% from the previous year. In Wokingham Borough the average monthly rental cost was £1,669, nearly 38% higher than the already expensive South-East rental market, and 44% more expensive than the UK average.

It is well known that Adult Social Care has been historically underfunded. Like many local authorities, we are experiencing resourcing pressures (financial and workforce) across Adult Social Care. Whilst the average unitary authority receives revenue support grant and retained business rates to fund around 30% of their service costs (including Adult Social Care), Wokingham receives only 9% therefore the majority of funding for all of the Council's services is from Council Tax.

Section 1: Assessment of the current sustainability of local care markets

a) Assessment of current sustainability of the 65+ Care Home market

Wokingham has adequate provision within the local care home market to meet the needs of low level Nursing/Dementia beds but there is a lack of nursing dementia beds in borough, particularly for people with complex and challenging behaviour. Costs are escalating for residential dementia, with each new complex case drawing a higher fee.

Although the population aged over 85 is growing, there is not a corresponding increase in demand for council funded care home placements. Wokingham performs well in keeping people at home as long as possible so only people with the highest needs will enter a care home. It has been noticeable that the demand for nursing dementia beds in particular is increasing in the Borough. However, despite this we are confident that with a Home First approach, and the capacity as mentioned below we have sufficient beds to meet our needs until 2025. Wokingham has the second highest number of Care home beds of the Berkshire Unitary Local Authorities and the second highest number of beds per 100,000 population. Using

the NHS Capacity Tracker, there are currently 23 care homes (65+) within the borough with a capacity of 920 beds. The occupancy levels in March 2023

Nursing:

509 beds in total

383 occupied = 75% occupancy

Residential:

410 beds (of those that submit to the tracker – one provider has not submitted and they have 66 beds)

351 occupied = 86% occupancy

Some homes offer beds registered for a number of different needs as follows:

- 11 provide care without nursing and without dementia
- 7 provide care without nursing with dementia.
- 6 provide care with nursing without dementia
- 3 provide nursing care with dementia

The Council is seeking to manage the demand for Nursing/Dementia care within the borough and is exploring all opportunities to maximise our inhouse provision. Adult Services has recently been granted outline planning permission to build its own 68 bed care home by the end of 2025. We will continue to explore the viability of building our own care home as well as seeking alternative options to expand our portfolio. It is hoped that this will help the Council to meet a significant proportion of need for complex care (nursing, challenging behaviour due to dementia and the aging learning disabled population). It is important that Wokingham achieves the right market segmentation for local residents, including adequate affordable provision within the borough. We believe that in areas of the borough, the market has become congested with providers seeking to capitalise on the self-funder market. This has restricted growth in more affordable provision for local authority funded clients and facilitated migration into the borough.

There has been a reduction in the number of beds as some providers have chosen to diversify their offer and entered other markets, including the extra care market, evidencing that there is less of a demand for residential settings. The Council commissioned circa 300 care home beds as of March 2023 with approximately 200 beds being in borough. As such we purchase approximately 22% of the care home capacity in the borough, so the market reflects the aspirations and resources of the property owning sector of the population (with high property asset values converted), rather than the austerity limited Council budgets.

We monitor provider failures and have experienced none for residential care over the preceding two years, despite the impact of COVID-19 within the local area. One of the biggest care home groups in the UK has put its care homes up for sale, and

this includes two homes in Wokingham. This is a planned sale with priority being given to the continuity of care for residents and is not due to financial unsustainability. Additionally, some homes are expanding and also there has been significant interest from developers to build new homes in the Borough.

Diversity

As mentioned, the local market extends beyond the borough boundaries: of the care home beds that WBC commissions, 35% are outside the borough. Wokingham has a variety of provider types: national/regional providers including one that is local authority owned; the others are local charities and small businesses. Beds meet a mixture of needs i.e. residential, residential dementia, nursing and nursing dementia. In addition, there are beds which include ensuite as well as those without, and homes of high opulence which are priced above that which it is reasonable to expect the public purse to provide.

We receive regular new planning inquiries and applications for new care homes in the borough, particularly aimed at self-funder market and offering premium services.

A choice of care home is provided to individuals, where possible these are local care homes.

Quality

There are a significant higher number of care homes registered in borough compared to many of our neighbours. Of those on the NHS capacity Tracker, 18/22 (or 82%) are good or outstanding. 3/22 (14%) are requires improvement and one care home in the borough that has been ranked as inadequate (March 2023).

The WBC Care Governance process, also works closely with providers to ensure that they are performing to a high level.

Fee rates, Inflation and NMW Increases

The current Council spend on residential and nursing beds is circa £15 million per annum for people aged 65 and over. We purchase at spot rates offered at the time the care package is procured.

We have an annual uplift process where we consider the effects of CPIH, the National Living Wage and other statutory changes to staff pay. We benchmark against neighbouring local authorities and assess the capacity in the market. This intelligence is applied to the total budget that the Council can afford to give to Adult Social Care to fulfil its statutory duties. This year we determined we could afford a total of 6.7% budget increase. We chose to apply this as 7% on most packages of care but capped at the rate we are currently buying at for that level of need as care homes have increased rates for new beds over the last 12 months in line with inflationary pressures. This increase is awarded with the expectation that providers will move towards paying their staff at least the National Living Wage Foundation rate of £10.90 from 1st April 2023.

Compared to rates offered to the Council, providers have commented that there is a premium for self funder work.

Workforce

Reflecting the national picture, recruitment for care workers in the Borough is increasingly challenging. The majority of the population is educated and wealthy; house prices, including rental are too expensive on minimum wages and supermarkets pay higher hourly rates. Nurses are particularly difficult to recruit. The NHS is able to pay premium wages to both nurses and care staff. Like many other areas providers also source workers from Europe and beyond. The Council is working with SE ADASS and with SESCA (the South East Social Care Alliance) to develop a bid as per the requirements of the International Recruitment Fund for the Adult Social Care sector released in February 2023.

Many care staff do not drive and although our nursing and residential care homes are all within 1km from a bus route or railway station as the crow flies, there are times where public transport is not very regular, especially for early and late and weekend shifts. The Council has made any prospective developers aware of this and suggest that accommodation needs for care workers is taken into account.

Impact of delay to charging reforms

With a more affluent population and with a high density of care homes, the financial impact of the charging reforms across care homes and home care on Wokingham Borough Council is estimated to be between £10 million and £25 million per annum. This equates to an unfunded additional 20% of the Council's overall budget. The delay in the reforms to 2025 allows us to use this time to look at the pathway and understand the impact of the reforms.

Many care homes will continue to charge high private fees to self-funders and lower fees to the local authority. The self-funders deplete quickly on such high rates and the local authority then negotiates a new rate or moves the resident.

b) Assessment of current sustainability of the 18+ domiciliary care market

There are 47 domiciliary providers registered in the borough, although some of these focus on supported living only. In addition, many registered in neighbouring boroughs work in Wokingham. 39 providers have contracts with the Council. The Council spends approximately £9 million per annum on home care. The local home care market is large, with Council-commissioned home care accounting for approximately 7,500 hours a week, in addition to self-funded home care.

The Council currently works with 15 home care providers through our Care and Support Framework, set up in November 2021. This provides us with a procurement framework which offers four lots for home care, including three to cover the geographical zones North, South and Central. The Framework was set up in lots because of the difficulty in sourcing care packages in our rural areas. We have three lead providers in these areas, receiving higher rates, who are guaranteed the work and can focus on recruitment and build up rounds. In the unlikely event we are unable to source a provider from the Framework, we will commission a provider outside the Framework on a spot contract basis. Approximately 20 providers that

did not apply or did not submit a successful application continue to deliver packages but they are not able to automatically pick up new work.

The average number of hours each person is receiving per week has increased acknowledging that needs are getting more complex. This is partly due to the Discharge to Assess model, that allows medically optimised individuals to be discharged with additional support while assessments for long term care takes place at home.

We do not feel we are over-reliant on a small number of providers and ensure we are compliant with our market shaping duties within the Care Act. We monitor provider failures and have experienced very few over the preceding two years, despite the impact of COVID-19 within the local area. Over the last 24 months only three domiciliary care providers have exited the market. These have been due to:

- Provider 1 had not begun trading and decided to not continue
- Provider 2 had a historical inadequate rating by CQC for a number of years and decided to cease operations
- Provider 3 had been operating for over 20 years and decided to exit the market primarily due to staffing issues and changes in personal circumstances

The most notable provider had 8 local authority funded clients as well as a number of self-funders. When advertised, there was significant interest in these packages further evidencing sufficient supply in the market.

Diversity

The local market consists of mainly independent local organisations and not many major national providers. The size of providers varies, from providers who have a small number of clients and hours to those who have over 700 hours a week. Many providers work for other neighbouring authorities and this can be an issue impacting our ability to commission placements as all local authorities are competing for the same capacity.

In addition, there are some areas to the north and south of the borough which have historically been difficult to cover. The Council has limited the number of providers in these areas and is paying a premium for delivery to these to take into account travel time and mileage. It was hoped that by doing this providers would be able to build up rounds to remain sustainable. However, in reality, work from these areas often goes to a broader range of providers on our framework.

We are seeing increased numbers of people with speech and hearing impairments and there is a recognition that there are limited British Sign Language accredited providers in the borough.

We continue to receive high numbers of inquiries from newly set up domiciliary care providers, or from existing providers who wish to expand their business. The Council is not able to work with these providers as doing so will create an over

saturated market with many small providers who over the longer term may not have sufficient work to remain sustainable and financially viable thus risking continuity of care for residents.

In addition, further sustainability measures include a robust cost model and uplift process, workforce development strategy, supporting providers with recruitment, and regular provider support through forums and meetings.

Quality

Analysis of data from CQC inspection ratings on 1st March 2023 showed CQC inspection ratings are broadly in line with comparator local authorities. Across Berkshire, by number of providers, Wokingham Borough has the 3rd most ranked 'good' community-based Adult Social Care services (29), and the joint highest ranked outstanding community-based Adult Social Care services (2) - along with Windsor and Maidenhead. Of the 34 services inspected (registered in borough) approximately 91% (31) are "Good" or "Outstanding", the rest (3) are "Requires Improvement" and no "Inadequate" providers.

The WBC Care Governance process also works closely with providers to ensure that they are performing to a high level.

Fee rates, Inflation and NMW Increases

Fee rates are determined by our Framework rates. These were determined through a competitive tender process during the summer of 2021 and are uplifted annually.

We have an annual uplift process where we consider the effects of CPI, the National Living Wage and other statutory changes to staff pay. We benchmark against neighbouring local authorities and assess the capacity in the market. This intelligence is applied to the total budget that the Council can afford to give to Adult Social Care to fulfil its statutory duties. This year we determined we could afford a total of 6.7% budget increase. We chose to apply this as 7% on most packages of care but capped at the rate we are currently buying through our Care and support Framework. This increase is awarded with the expectation that providers will move towards paying their staff at least the National Living Wage Foundation rate of £10.90 from 1st April 2023.

We will continue to work closely with providers to ensure they remain viable or to look at how we can ensure continuity of care.

Providers have reported that when the Council is competing for capacity with private funders and neighbouring councils, the Provider will choose private funders over local authority work. However, the Council understands that other providers are very reliant and appreciative of Council work.

Workforce

Providers have reported that recruitment is now the most difficult it has ever been, and staff are also choosing to work or move to different sectors. Providers cite issues with driving, monitoring, reporting, reacting to changes in their schedules,

weather, traffic, conditions, cost of travel time and petrol. Staff welfare was also mentioned in terms of stress, frustration, and mostly overworked.

The Council has been working with providers and are running a local recruitment campaign to complement the national Every Day is Different. We have utilised adverts on local buses, bus shelters and petrol station nozzles. These direct people to a Council website page that has links to local providers who are keen to recruit. We have produced four short videos with local care providers, carers and cared for which we have added to our website. This supports recruitment and has a wider impact on improving the image of care.

We understand the importance of working with providers to create opportunities for care workers to develop professionally and personally. Not only will this create a motivated and driven workforce, we believe this will also ensure residents are able to access the best care possible, subsequently enhancing care work. To help with this, we have developed an Adult Social Care Workforce strategy and action plan to identify what actions we need to take to help the workforce.

Further methods to support the workforce include:

- An increase in the use of technology, from care assessment through to delivery of services is actively encouraged.
- We continue to ensure that where appropriate equipment is used to facilitate the delivery of care and help residents to maintain their independence.
- Providers are expected to work towards becoming more efficient and reducing costs where appropriate, such as travel time, and the Council encourages open conversations about how this can be delivered.
- Planning with regards to new and emerging Covid-19 variants (including long Covid) and colder weather conditions

Providers are also recruiting from abroad but some report that there are significant financial costs and time resource required for this. Smaller companies are worried that they do not have the funds to start the licence process and hence are at a disadvantage.

Impact of delay to charging reforms

As above, with a the more affluent population, the financial impact of the charging reforms across care homes and home care on Wokingham Borough Council is estimated to be between £10 million and £25 million per annum. This equates to an unfunded additional 20% of the Council's overall budget. The delay in the reforms allows us to use this time to look at the pathway and understand the impact of the reforms.

There is a separate market of providers who work solely with self-funders at rates above the local authority's framework rates. This will continue.

Section 2: Assessment of the impact of future market changes between now and October 2025, for each of the service markets

Wokingham Borough Council is supportive of the policy principles and aims of the reforms, as set out by the government. We endorse the positive framing of social care within People at the Heart of Care. However, these ambitions, plans and timescales must be realistic. They must be adequately funded and align with the other pieces of the reform jigsaw if we are going to achieve them.

Like many local authorities in the South East, we are concerned that the proposed reforms will have a disproportional impact on the resources available to the Council. This is a particular issue when considering the number of self funders in the local market and given that when social care reforms are fully implemented the Council will have to carry the financial responsibility for these residents much earlier than they otherwise would have. Without appropriate levels of funding, redistributing the financial responsibility for paying for an individual's care to the local authority will affect the Council's financial viability, leading to partial implementation or a fundamental reduction in public services available to all residents in the borough

Inflation and NMW increases

All sectors are grappling with the challenges caused by high inflation. The cost of living squeeze has affected everyone and whilst some people have been able to manage the effects of rising prices others have been disproportionately affected. This makes recruitment and retention into the sector an ongoing challenge. Residential homes are also being hit with inflation on utilities, food and other items and home care providers have increases to consumables and transport costs. There have not been corresponding increases in statutory funding to compensate.

Workforce

Wokingham Borough has a higher job density (the ratio of total jobs to population aged 16-64) at 0.95, or an average of nearly one job available for every person of working age in the area. This compares to just 0.87 for Great Britain overall. That means it is relatively easy to find employment in the area compared to the country as a whole. Local supermarkets are paying over £11 per hour for entry level jobs, rising with experience and many employers will follow the National Living Wage Foundation recent rise to £10.90. Therefore, a much smaller proportion of the working age population are employed in Health and Social Work.

In addition:

- Transport is an issue as public transport around rural areas is poor and staff are usually not drivers.
- Housing for Staff remains an issue, with house prices and rents unaffordable for those working in care. As a result, a significant amount of workforce is from neighbouring authorities, the Council is looking at ways to make key worker housing more accessible for care workers but this will be a longer term solution.

- However, many providers do have or are in the process of obtaining sponsorship licenses to bring staff from overseas, but this does come at an additional cost to deal with the levels of administration and compliance required.
- Some providers have fed back that due to the difficulties in recruitment they are having to spend additional money on agency fees. This is contributing to the additional cost pressures.

Fee rates

Wokingham Council purchases approximately 18% of the local care home market. Care homes have increased fees to both us and to self-funders very rapidly over 6 months. We anticipate that this will continue particularly given new planning applications being proposed which are of a more premium nature. The high rates will deplete self funders much more quickly. Our own care home will mitigate some of this, but we realise that we are a small part of the market.

Existing providers reviewing and exiting unprofitable contracts

Some providers have fed back that a process of review is in process whereby notice may be given on contracts, particularly given the above. We do not envisage this to happen at a significant level but commissioning arrangements will have to be reviewed if so. Some providers, despite years of making profits are not investing back into their businesses and are looking at the Council to support financially.

New providers entering the market

This is particularly the case for domiciliary care where there is an abundance of new providers entering the market on a regular basis. The Council is not able to offer them work, due to the framework being in place but also to ensure that it does not create an oversaturation of providers in the area, reliant on Council work and with insufficient work to create sustainable businesses. However, given that rates are continuing to increase, the Council may choose to open the framework. Advancements in technology and new ways of working (including commissioning arrangements) will always contribute towards lowering care costs, and this is something the Council will continue to explore.

Providers reducing costs, cutting posts

Some providers have reported reduced posts, including replacing Training Managers with individual Trained Trainer's and facilitated e-learning due to cost pressures. There is a concern that this will impact quality and there is an expectation from providers that the Council can do more, including additional support for overhead costs such as training, contribution to the Care Workers Charity and contribution to cost of policy & procedure development but this is not possible within our financial budgets. The Council has a workforce strategy in place to support providers, and also include training time and costs within their cost model. We also provide some training that is free and signpost people to the Skills for Care resources. We expect providers to be efficient to reduce costs where possible.

Section 3: Plans for each market to address sustainability issues, including fee rate issues, where identified.

The Council has a number of strategic documents that complement this MSP which can be found here:

<https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/council-and-meetings/open-data/plans-policies-and-strategies/?categoryesct191f252ff-550d-4cfa-a838-92ef2cb5f83c=10598>

These are:

Market Position Statement

This describes how Wokingham Borough Council will work with providers to ensure the development of a diverse, effective and high-quality local Adult Social Care market which is shaped towards supporting people to manage their care through personalisation and early intervention whilst feeling safe, included and a key part of our community.

Adult Social Care Strategy

Our strategy sets out the overall direction in ensuring that the most vulnerable people in our borough are protected, empowered and enabled to achieve the outcomes that are important to them. This will be a partnership approach, working closely with residents, the Voluntary and Community Sector, Health Services and Independent Care Providers

Workforce Strategy

Adult Social Care Workforce Development Strategy is a plan to make sure that the adult social care workforce in the Wokingham borough is working well over the next 4 years 2022 – 2026.

In terms of recent engagement with the market, we commissioned C.Co Ltd (C.Co) to undertake the Cost of Care exercise for age 65+ care homes and age 18+ domiciliary care as mandated by the Department of Health and Social Care. The Fair Cost of Care exercise was live for several weeks giving providers a number of ways to engage included drop-in sessions on line and in person, targeted e-mails presentations at provider forums, telephone calls to providers as well as 1 2 1 sessions.

Given the level of time and financial investment, and the use of an independent organisation to lead the exercise, the response rate has been disappointing and the outcome of this exercise does not represent actual costs of care in Wokingham Borough. Despite the data limitations, no data was excluded from the analysis and Wokingham Borough Council will have due regard to the data gained from this exercise and will consider it as part of any future fee-setting.

Providers were then invited to give their input to this Market Sustainability Plan. Several met with officers and/or completed a feedback questionnaire. These comments have been incorporated into this document.

(a) 65+ care homes market

Funding

Wokingham pay high rates when benchmarked to the authorities in the South East. We spot purchase care home places and we have found that prices for new placements have risen by over 12% over the year. For 2023/24 and beyond, careful consideration will be given to the external factors affecting the market including changes to wages and the cost of living in determining appropriate levels of funding required to support sustainability of providers in Wokingham. That must be balanced with maximising funding streams the council has at its disposal to support this for example the ASC Funding Precept and Council Tax. The Council will make use of all grant monies available in the future and will work with providers on an annual basis to understand cost pressures.

Actions to improve market sustainability

Our strategic priority is to prevent, reduce and delay the need for care and support and alongside providers to manage our markets to ensure continuity of high quality care for our residents.

It must be acknowledged that Adult Social Care has been historically underfunded with insufficient funding made available to meet demography and inflation pressures and increase care workers pay, while also supporting the provider market.

Although Wokingham Borough Council continues to perform well, funding is urgently needed to ensure Councils are able to deliver on all of their statutory duties under the Care Act. We continue to lobby national government, and have written to the last three Ministers, seeking sustainable funding for the social care system, recognising the increased levels of demand and the professionalism of care staff and enabling wages that compete with the surrounding economy.

The sector requires significant investment and there are severe and mounting pressures that are resulting in greater strain on the care workforce and unpaid carers and increased pressure on an already unstable provider market. Investment is particularly required to pay staff in line with the NHS, if we are to create a sustainable workforce for the future.

Further options to improve market sustainability:

- **Review of our choice policy**

Looking to offer across a wider geography when offering choice for care home placements.

- **Uplifts**

We will distribute our available uplift budget across the whole care market and continue to apply caps that reflect the rates we can purchase at. We wish to continue to pay at rates that enable care providers to pay at least National Living Wage Foundation rates to their staff.

- **Workforce**

We will continue with our support for recruitment across the sector: we have run a local recruitment campaign across several media and a workforce development strategy in place that extends to our provider markets. We will continue to support providers to recruit from overseas.

Whilst we do not have the required funding we continue to lobby Government to adequately fund social care. This would enable us to support staff recruitment and retention and enable homes to operate at full bed capacity by paying at least the National Living Wage Foundation rate of £10.90 as a starting point and, preferably, NHS Band 3 rates to be comparable with NHS staff. Estimated cost impact to the Council to increase to National Living Wage Foundation across these two markets is £560k pa or NHS Band 3 Lower is £900k pa. These figures make no allowance other inflationary costs.

For future years with appropriate funding from Government we would like to:

- support staff recruitment and retention
- fund providers who wish to bring care staff in from abroad
- continue local recruitment campaign
- prioritise this market with whatever uplift funding we have available as we want to keep people at home as long as possible
- pay at least Living Wage Foundation rate to care staff and ideally NHS band 3

- **Joint working**

We will continue to work with health partners , in particular Intermediate Care Review and this includes work to support Trusted Assessors in hospitals so that they prescribe appropriate packages of care and reablement plan (ensuring that we have the right prescription of care and are not unnecessarily increasing the number of double up packages of care).

Supporting our GPs with projects in place such as community navigation, Keeping in Touch, the Friendship Alliance, the Mental Health Alliance and the Dementia Partnership. This will support people in the community and build resilience.

We will also continue to explore opportunities for providers to benefit from shared training programmes.

We are keen to look at continuing and/or rolling out of the Collaborative Reablement Project pilot (pending its completion and potential positive evaluation), where home care providers are supporting with reablement and hospital discharge.

- **Information Technology**

Improving communication exchange, via IT of hospital admissions at an earlier stage to reduce delays in discharge.

- **Data**

We are using a Population Health Management approach, looking to ensure that we are using a data lead approach to the projects that we are initiating through integration. This takes data from health, social care, voluntary sector and wider council information.

- **Technology Enabled Care**

New devices and apps to help people communicate, reduce social isolation, control the home environment as well as maintaining health, fitness and wellbeing. Technology is an enabler of preventative, personalised and joined up care and support.

- **New models of care/commissioning models**

We are looking at increasing the in-house capacity of care home places through acquisition and new build. This will ensure that complex needs can be met within the borough. We will also explore purchase of block contracts which means providers are better able to plan.

(b) 18+ domiciliary care market

Funding

We prioritised our additional funding for 2022/23 towards the home care market as that was experiencing the biggest recruitment challenges. For 2023/24 and beyond, careful consideration will be given to the external factors affecting the market including changes to wages and the cost of living in determining appropriate levels of funding required to support sustainability of providers in Wokingham. That must be balanced with maximising funding streams the Council has at its disposal to support this for example the ASC Funding Precept and Council Tax. The Council will make use of all grant monies available in the future and will work with providers on an annual basis to understand cost pressures.

Actions to improve market sustainability

Uplifts

We will be providing uplifts within our financial envelope, mindful of our aim of keeping people at home. Our approach to uplifts is set out in our Cost of Care report.

Workforce

As above in Care Homes section 3 a).

Technology Enabled Care

As above but also encouraging providers to utilise technology for care assessment, planning and delivery. However, whilst electronic care planning leads to a reduction in care staff record keeping in the home, it takes time to implement, training costs to staff and monitoring and therefore any savings will be longer term.

Equipment

Focus on single handed care and reducing double up care packages, to free up capacity and reduced financial costs.

New models of care/commissioning models

We will continue to work with our framework providers but where possible will explore block contracts which means providers are better able to plan, some providers feel that the current market conditions of incremental growth does not support the development of the workforce as it does not give them certainty. However, providers are able to do a degree of this based on historic work and if the Council was to do this it would require additional funding.

Collaborative reablement – this is where we are training and mentoring providers to implement outcome focussed reablement care plans. Providers are also paid an enhanced rate to do this.

We work closely with providers to ensure that scheduling and rostering is efficient, where possible to adopt a cluster based approach to minimise travel time and ensure more effective staff utilisation. One provider has reported that their rounds are becoming fragmented with increased travel and mileage costs and this is being reviewed.

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