

MINUTE EXTRACT AND REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED**Adults and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 5 June 2018****CareOnLine Service**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Adults and Communities providing an update on the consultation with regard to the proposal to decommission the CareOnLine Service and giving an indicative position pending the finalisation of the report for the Cabinet on 6 July 2018. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 11' is filed with these minutes.

The Director reported that at the close of the consultation period on 22 May 2018, 117 responses had been received along with a small number of individual responses and two petitions. A representation had also been received from Mrs Lynda Jones, a CareOnLine user, a copy of which was circulated at the meeting.

The Chairman invited Mr Ian Retson to present his petition, containing 61 signatures, objecting to the decommissioning of the CareOnLine Service. In presenting the petition, Mr Retson stated that CareOnLine was a unique service providing a 'one stop shop' for the most vulnerable and isolated residents, and stressed that the alternative services suggested by the Council would not be able to provide anything like the support required by CareOnLine users. Mr Retson also said that the long term benefits of CareOnLine had been proven in that a large number of users had said that they would not have connected to the internet without the Service and that it had had a positive impact on their daily lives. He felt that the short term savings would be more than offset by the savings through giving greater independence and communication skills to users and asked the Committee and Lead Member for Adults and Communities to speak with some CareOnLine service users before making a decision.

Under Standing Order 35, questions had been received from Ms Ruth Mays MBE and Ms Kay Louis, which the Chairman had agreed would be dealt with as part of this item. A copy of the questions and the responses provided by the Chairman were tabled at the meeting and are attached to these minutes (marked 'B'). The Chairman invited Ms Mays and Ms Louis to ask a supplementary question.

Ms Mays queried how any transition to different providers would be managed and whether these new providers would have an opportunity to speak with CareOnLine staff to obtain a better understanding of what was available to service users through the CareOnLine Service?

In response, the Director stressed that if the proposal to decommission the Service went ahead, the Council would work with service users on a case by case basis to identify the best solution for their individual needs. It was also stated that the Council had been clear throughout the consultation that any suggested alternative organisations would not exactly replicate the CareOnLine Service, but it was necessary to ensure that transitions were available. Consideration was being given to whether there would be a small amount of transition money available so that, if any additional training or support was required, organisations would then be in a better position to help current service users.

Ms Louis explained the contribution of CareOnLine in helping people contribute to society and preventing social isolation. She stressed that these were very vulnerable people who needed the continued support of the CareOnLine Service and expressed concern that the alternative providers would be unable to meet the needs of the current users. Ms Louis asked whether CareOnLine could be transferred to Adult Social Care to enable it to continue?

The Director of Adults and Communities explained that it was not possible for Adult Social Care to support the service as not all users were eligible for Social Care support. Alternative services were available to help broker a service for those who were not assessed as requiring support from Adult Social Care.

Arising from the discussion, the following comments were raised:-

- (i) Concern was raised that the alternative providers would not offer the continuity of support that some users required, and it was suggested that the Lead Member for Adults and Communities should consider what provision would be missing if CareOnLine was decommissioned and whether the alternative providers could fill the gaps before taking the report to the Cabinet on 6 July. The perceived gap was the bespoke service offered by CareOnLine and the dedicated time given to users. A range of organisations offered a variety of services, but the gap was the offer of ongoing support over a longer period of time, which the County Council felt it could no longer sustain. Some organisations were looking to develop their services and the Council would remain in conversation with these, should the decision be taken to decommission CareOnLine, to look for any opportunities where, through alternative funding sources, they could develop aspects of the service which could bridge the gap. It was stressed that, throughout the consultation period, it was made clear that the alternative providers did not exactly replicate CareOnLine, but the Council had to look at how to provide non-statutory services differently. Individual service users would be contacted to discuss what would be offered by the new providers.
- (ii) Social interaction had been highlighted as very important throughout the consultation responses, but it was noted that the purpose of CareOnLine was to enable people to become digitally active and other services were available to assist with social isolation.

The Lead Member for Adults and Communities assured the Committee that he would consider the gaps in service provision prior to the final report being submitted to the Cabinet.

Question from Ruth Mays MBE to the Adults and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 5 June 2018

“A Council spokesman, when speaking to the press recently, stated that as part of a £50 million cost saving, it is being proposed to end the Council sponsored CareOnLine project. It was stated that several charities can now offer what CareOnLine has offered in the past. The Council said that it intends to use more cost effective ways to get people on line than exists today.

Can you indicate what these cost effective ways are?

If it is proposed to only use charity facilities, does the Council propose to offer some form of financial support to these charities in order that they can provide this vital service to vulnerable people?"

Response:

The Council is proposing to decommission the CareOnLine service as part of a £1.3 million savings target for the Communities and Wellbeing Service.

As part of the mitigation actions to offset the impact of any decision to decommission the service, it is proposed to manage the transition of current service users to a number of voluntary organisations, which although do not exactly replicate the bespoke nature of CareOnLine, do offer help and support in helping service users in using digital technology. Service users include around 50 people who currently receive a regular visit from CareOnLine staff, and around 200 people who have contacted the telephone support service over the course of a year.

The Council is considering how organisations may be supported to manage any transitional arrangements with current CareOnLine service users.

Question from Kay Louis to the Adults and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 5 June 2018

"Why cannot Social Care support CareOnLine when they are planning to invest a huge amount of money in care for isolated disabled and elderly people?"

CareOnLine can save them money and provide a perfectly tailored service to meet the needs of each individual which is much better than Community Life Choices."

Response:

The Adult Social Care Service may not be in a position to support all CareOnLine service users as they may not be eligible for Council funded social care services.

However, approximately one third of current CareOnLine service users have an active social care support plan. This means that they are eligible for a support package of social care which may include support and access to technology to help them remain independent.

Comments from Ian Retson to the report of the Director of Adults and Communities to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee - 5 June 2018.

Points 4 and 5. With reference to the number of service users; the numbers quoted refer only to current active users with no consideration for those who return multiple times over the years due to changing personal and technical circumstances. CareOnLine provides an individually tailored service and has never been about absolute numbers. Starting with the concept of on-line shopping in 2001 CareOnLine has been an innovator for the County Council ASC with examples such as Stroke Rehabilitation software, installing touch-screens and software in the Stroke wards at Coalville and Market Harborough Hospitals: Proving the uptake and rapid learning through tablets for Older People. Over the last 17 years several thousand older and disabled people and their carers have been enabled to access the Internet. *This is what success looks like.*

With reference to the funding pressures facing the Communities and Well-being service CareOnLine is rooted in the client base of adult social care and was founded originally to serve social care clients. Over 50% of referrals have historically been from the social care teams with only 1- 2% from libraries after moving the service to Communities and Wellbeing in about 2012. I would therefore request that the Committee ask if council funding can be found to support CareOnLine with a permanent home attached to ASC and consider suggesting that the skills and experience of the team be looked at as a possible revenue earner.

Points 8 and 24. The council claims that a number of alternative organisations can provide the necessary specialist IT support to users in their own homes. This does not reflect previous experience of these providers or the investigations of one Service user since they were named in the consultation document. CareOnLine has provided support to Vista both in their Kathleen Rutland Home and to individuals across the county who needed specialist software support for packages such as Dolphin Guide and Supernova. A CareOnLine service user recently contacted several of the proposed providers with the following results:

“I telephoned Age UK to ask if they offered a service of IT at home for disabled people, the answer was no. And so the lady referred me to Digital Champions..”

“Ability Net had a volunteer response, his name is Richard, and he is visiting me today, but this will not be on a regular basis Richard (from AbilityNet) came today for 1 1/2 hours, he was very pleasant and helpful. So that's that, no regular visits.”

“I asked Enrych if they provided IT help at home for disabled people. This lady said to contact the LCC; their number is 0116- 305-0004. Say that Enrych has referred you for an assessment, to see if I am eligible to receive some funding for a PA. Personal IT Assistant. She said IT cost is £15.50 per hour.”

“I have spoken with Heather at Voluntary Action South Leicestershire, as recommended by Leicestershire County Council, and Heather say's, no, we have never offered IT services to anyone. She was so sorry she could not help.”

Point 24 States that “ a range of volunteer services do offer free access to support that can act as an alternative ... Most offer free access support across all user groups in Including people who have limiting conditions such as frailty, mental health problems, long-term conditions and disability.” I would ask the committee to question if these volunteers are able to support and teach blind users in specialist software such as ‘Dolphin Guide’ and ‘Supernova’, Stroke rehabilitation software such as ‘Speech and Sounds’ and ‘React’, and speech recognition software such as ‘Dragon Naturally Speaking’.

Points 13-16. It is appreciated that the county council provided the questionnaire in an accessible formats. However, many of the CareOnLine users face extreme difficulties expressing themselves; some cannot speak and many would find it impossible to complete the survey without 1-2-1 personal assistance. *Have the voices of users really been heard?*

In order to fully understand the true value of the care online service it would be necessary for the committee members to visit service users individually with members of the CareOnLine team. If visiting is not possible Committee Members should at least review the 20 or so case studies which were published on the CareOnLine website. I would ask the committee to consider this action before making their final decision.

Representation from Mrs Linda Jones, a service user of CareOnLine, to the Adults and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 5 June 2018

Care on Line is a unique service which helps people with :- dementia, physical and sensory disabilities, learning disabilities, brain injuries and illness such as motor neuron disease.

The Care on Line team match a person with the technology and software best suited to their needs. Then they deliver training in the person's home. It doesn't stop there as care is ongoing. Care on line will visit the service user whenever they have a problem and there is help with maintaining the specialist equipment and software.

This service cannot be found elsewhere.

I want to tell you about my own experience of Care on Line.

I am deafblind.

Care on Line has helped me to understand the screen reader software I use it and without the specialist in their team I would have been struggling when my computer crashed and then when I needed a new one installed. The usual computer person doesn't understand how screen reader software works in conjunction with a computer and can very easily mess up the whole system.

Because I have this support I can stay in touch with friends and my community, continue with my voluntary work and maintain independence. For example I can access my diary and address book, store my recipes, keep records, scan documents listen to pod casts and much more.

Each person has different priorities and needs and will use their technology for different things but they are all important and necessary.

Another example of Care on Line helping a motor neuron sufferer to read independently.

The husband of a lady suffering from motor neuron disease gave up work to care for her. She was still able to read so he bought an iPad with a Kindle app. Unfortunately she was unable to turn the page.

She was extremely distressed as she was desperate for her husband to be able to have time for a walk and some fresh air.

Care on Line came to the rescue!

The team discovered a blue tooth device which musicians use when playing their instrument. It is a button on the floor which just needs a gentle press with a foot.

Thanks to the Care on Line team this lady was able to enjoy reading a book. I urge you to Please retain this valuable service.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

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