

Classification: Open	Decision Type: Key
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Report to:	Cabinet	Date: 06 September 2023
Subject:	Support at Home Service Proposal	
Report of	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing	

1.0 Summary

Bury Council is proposing to end the Support at Home Service, to reduce spending in the coming years (£500,000 as stated in the Budget Cabinet papers).

To be clear, Support at Home is a non-statutory service, for people over the age of 60, that provides wellbeing checks and advice and support with day-to-day tasks (known as the warden service) and must not be confused with Care at Home that supports people with personal care.

A six-week public consultation ran from 11 May to 21 June 2023. This included face-to-face sessions, an online survey, a paper survey and the offer for individual arrangements and one-to-one conversations.

2.0 Recommendation

The recommendation is to continue with the proposal to cease to provide the Support at Home service once the consultation with the current Support at Home workforce is completed.

Agree to the commencement of consultation with affected staff on the proposed closure of the Support at Home service, as set out within the body of this report and subject to the agreement of the recognised Trades Unions through the Local Government Services Consultation meeting.

Agree to delegate authority to the Executive Director of Health and Adult Care and the Cabinet Members for Health and Wellbeing and HR (Human Resources) and Corporate Affairs, in consultation with the Director of People and Inclusion, Monitoring Officer and S151 Officer to consider responses received from the consultation and produce a final version of the structure.

Six Town Housing will take over the management of the local authority sheltered accommodation schemes and will be available to offer housing related support only to ensure health and safety within the buildings, be contactable Monday to Friday during office hours, introduce tailored housing support plans to those who need them, and signpost/refer to other services as needed. The current cleaning staff will transfer to Six Town Housing in accordance with TUPE regulations.

People in the wider community will also be signposted/referred to other services appropriate for their needs.

Please refer to Section 6 of this report for further details on the proposed new model.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation

Ending the Support at Home service will remove long-standing issues around duplication of service provision with Six Town Housing. Housing responsibilities, including the issues highlighted in section 12 of this report, will clearly be the responsibility of Six Town Housing, and people with care needs will be referred to Adult Care Services.

All customers will be screened by the current Support at Home service prior to it ending, and referrals/signposting will take place as appropriate for individual needs. Other services include, but are not limited to, the Older People's Staying Well Team, Calico Floating Support, and Age UK Bury (Information/Advice, Befriending, Social Groups, and a Handyperson Service). All of which are preventative services that promote well-being in-line with the Care Act 2014.

Although most of the consultation feedback highlighted concerns about the proposal to end the Support at Home service, an inequitable demand for support has been created over many years which runs the risk of creating dependency, rather than maintaining independence and we must now support people in the shift towards streamlined services that promote self-help and resilience.

We will work with partners and relevant services to ensure that information and advice on alternative provision is communicated in an inclusive manner.

4.0 Alternative options considered and rejected

Alternative options have been considered but found to be unfeasible at this time, for example, we are unable to increase customer charges to keep the service, because the wellbeing element of the service is not housing benefit eligible and largely subsidised by the Council.

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5.0 Background

This year the Council had to agree its budget in an extremely difficult context.

Since 2019 the Council has been managing through a pandemic, with the associated resource challenges across increased costs, additional demand, and reduced income.

Whilst using reserves to manage the short-term impacts caused by Covid-19, the challenges of the national economic context have increased, and the budget must respond to the significant worsening of the Council's financial position.

As a result, Bury Council is proposing to end the Support at Home service, by way of reducing spending in the coming years (£500,000 as stated in the Budget Cabinet papers).

A review of the Support at Home service highlighted long-standing issues around duplication of service provision, particularly with Six Town Housing. An inequitable demand for support has been created over many years, which runs the risk of creating dependency, rather than maintaining independence, we must now support people in the shift towards streamlined services that promote self-help and resilience.

6.0 The Proposal

The proposal would see the Support at Home service coming to an end.

Support at Home is a non-statutory service, for people over the age of 60, that provides wellbeing checks and advice and support with day-to-day tasks (known as the warden service) and must not be confused with Care at Home that supports people with personal care.

This will affect approximately 367 people in local authority sheltered accommodation schemes and 148 people in the wider community.

Six Town Housing will take over the management of the local authority sheltered accommodation schemes and will be available to offer housing related support only to ensure health and safety within the buildings, be contactable Monday to Friday during office hours, introduce tailored housing support plans to those who need them, and signpost/refer to other services as needed. The current cleaning staff will transfer to Six Town Housing in accordance with TUPE regulations.

People in the wider community will also be signposted/referred to other services appropriate for their needs.

Staffing impact

The Support at Home Service has a substantive establishment of 18 roles (14.87 FTE):

Role	No. of posts	FTE	Grade
Domestic	5	3.18	3

Home Support Worker/Support Worker	10	8.79	6
Senior Support Worker	2	1.9	8
Registered Manager	1	1	13
TOTAL	18	14.87	

Since the potential closure of the service was identified as a budget option in October 2022 there has been proactive work with the team to understand individual skills and aspirations and identify potential opportunities to mitigate redundancies should the proposal go forwards. Firstly, a skills matrix was developed for each member of staff to help identify suitable alternative roles across the Council. Furthermore, following approval of the Council's Budget in February, any vacancies within the wider organisation were ringfenced to the team, and Managers held 1 to 1 discussions to support individuals in considering movement to these roles. Through this process 4 individuals have been successful in moving into alternative roles within the Council.

There has been ongoing engagement with Trade Union representatives since October 2022 with 2 informal engagement sessions with the team.

Following the proactive work described above, the current structure consists of the following:

Role	No. of posts	FTE	Grade	No. of posts now filled	FTE of posts now filled
Domestic	5	3.18	3	5	5
Home Support Worker/Support Worker	10	8.79	6	6	5.37
Senior Support Worker	2	1.9	8	2	2
Registered Manager	1	1	13	1	1
TOTAL	18	14.87		14	13.37

All 14 remaining employees in the current structure would be affected by the proposal:

In summary it is proposed:

- Home Support Worker/Support Worker – 10 posts are disestablished (of which 6 employees remain in post). These employees would be redundant, subject to consultation. Sufficient posts have been identified and will be ringfenced to the team to apply for within the Rapid Response team and Six Town Housing should they wish to apply
- Senior Support Worker - 2 posts are disestablished. These employees would be redundant, subject to consultation. Sufficient posts have been identified and will be ringfenced to the team to apply for within the Rapid Response team and Six Town Housing should they wish to apply.

- 5 Domestic employees will transfer to Six Town Housing under TUPE arrangements subject to consultation.
- The Registered Manager covers both the Support at Home and the Falcon and Griffin Extra Care Scheme (F&G). Their job description has been revised to remove responsibility for the Support at Home service as a basis for consultation and grading has been re-evaluated and moderated in-line with Council policy.

Staff at risk of redundancy will continue to be proactively supported to move to suitable vacancies in the Department throughout formal consultation.

Eight roles have been identified and will be ringfenced to these individuals to apply for, providing sufficient opportunity for them all to maintain in employment:

- Funding has recently been secured from the NHS to create 6 new posts. The roles will sit within the Rapid Response team within Adult Social Care and will see an emergency response service delivered between 8am and 10pm 7 days a week.
- Six Town Housing have agreed to create 2 vacancies for work that will continue and to ringfence these vacancies to the Home Support Workers/Support Workers and Senior Support Workers should they wish to apply.

Given the nature of these roles they would not be considered a legal suitable alternative to redundancy. Staff may therefore prefer to leave the Council's employment.

Subject to agreement of the recommendations in this report, officers will work to commence consultation for a period of 30 calendar days in-line with the employee consultation toolkit and following a Local Government Consultation (Section 188) meeting with Trade Union colleagues starting 28 September 2023. There will be a whole staff meeting followed by 1-2-1 sessions with individual members of staff.

TUPE

The domestic work will continue through Six Town Housing and therefore as per TUPE regulations there is a service provision change and the five employees engaged as Domestic staff have the legal right to be TUPE-ed into Six Town Housing. Their work will continue and therefore it is suggested that the TUPE transfer takes place in December 2023.

The ongoing work to consider the future delivery model of Housing in Bury and potential transfer of these functions back into the Council may see these staff move back into Council employment in spring 2024. However, this remains subject to the ongoing Resident Test of Opinion and subsequent Cabinet approval. The Council's obligation to these staff under TUPE remains and hence, in accordance with legal requirements, they would transfer to Six Town Housing in December 2023.

In terms of the Support Workers and Senior Support Workers this work is not continuing and therefore TUPE will not apply.

Redundancy costs

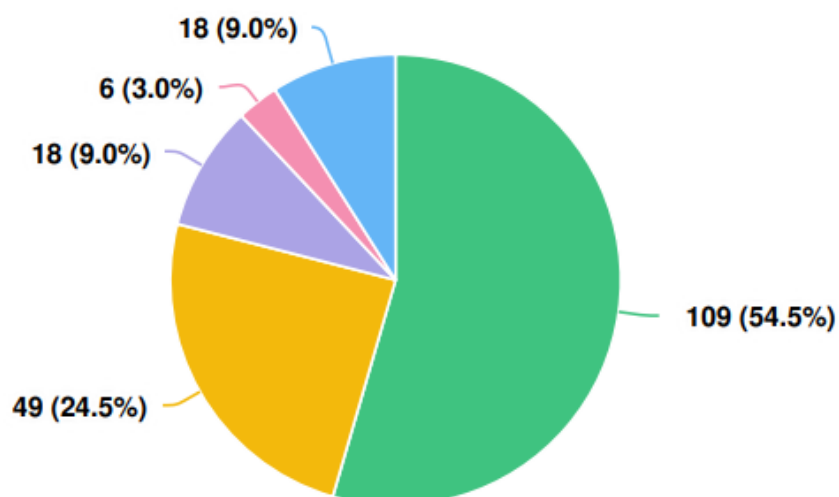
The maximum redundancy cost for the 8 individuals at risk of redundancy would be £66,242, which would be borne by the service and would be offset against the savings that will be delivered from the proposed changes. This sum will reduce if any of the 8 individuals at risk of redundancy secure an alternative role. The associated capital costs related to the early release of pension benefits for the 4 workers over the age of 55 is £65,903. This would be met from the Council's fund held centrally with the Greater Manchester Pension Fund (GMPF) and would again reduce if alternative employment is found.

7.0 Consultation – Key Findings

A six-week public consultation ran from 11 May to 21 June 2023. This included face-to-face sessions, an online survey, a paper survey and the offer for individual arrangements and one-to-one conversations. The Support at Home staff hand-delivered all surveys and offered support to those who needed it.

The chart below provides a breakdown of who completed the survey out of 200 people:

- Green: Support at Home Customer
- Yellow: Family, friend, carer, or advocate
- Purple: Council member of staff
- Pink: Partner Organisation
- Blue: None of the above



Out of approximately 515 Support at Home customers in total, 109 completed the survey (21%).

Most customers who completed the survey said they do access the Support at Home service and 84% feel the proposal will impact them either, a great deal or quite a bit.

'Support to feel safe and secure in my home' ranked the highest in terms of being very important to people.

Please see Appendix 1 for the Consultation Report.

7.1 Customer Comments

Some customers who completed the survey raised concerns about the proposal. For example:

"The Support at Home team is a highly valued asset and must not be taken away from us. Their help and advice is priceless and very reassuring. Not everyone has family."

"Crucial to check on me daily as I have frequent blackouts and suffer from PTSD and poor mental health and loneliness."

"I could have a fall and not be found for a few days. I will also become more isolated and depressed."

However, some customers agreed with the proposal with one person stating:

"No other ideas necessary, you have hit the nail on the head. Remove all wardens, they are not necessary in the day to day running of sheltered accommodation, if people need help, Careline is at hand."

7.2 Family, Friend, Carer or Advocate Comments

Some people who completed the survey under the category of family, friend, carer or advocate also raised concerns about the proposal. For example:

"Removing this help for the elderly and vulnerable will have a massive detrimental effect on their quality of life and will put more pressure on the NHS through other already overwhelmed support services. Removing this service is just moving the issues, this does not help anyone."

"The Wardens play an integral role in co-ordinating building repairs etc. to six town housing, whose telephone line and answering service are very often difficult to negotiate for residents."

"No one checking on my relative, the removal will not only impact my severely disabled relative but put more caring responsibilities on myself, of which I am unable to continue any longer."

7.3 Council and Partner Organisation Comments

As above, concerns were also raised by Council employees and partner organisations about the proposal to end the service. For example:

"Losing the Support at Home service will be a loss. It is so useful for us social workers for cases that don't require a full package of care but require some oversight."

However, the need to make efficiencies and streamline services was recognised.

7.4 Face-to Face Sessions

Face-to-face sessions took place at the 'under one roof' sheltered schemes (9 in total). The numbers of people attending these sessions varied from scheme to scheme and there was a mixture in attendance (customers, family, and staff).

Many of the same topics came up at each session and clarity was requested on several areas, resulting in an updated 'Frequently Asked Questions' document which has been sent out to all customers – please see appendix 2.

8.0 Links with the Corporate Priorities:

In line with the Let's Do It! Strategy we want to help Support at Home customers to access opportunities and create new ones on their own, without creating long-term dependency on public assistance.

This strengths-based approach means focusing on individuals' strengths and not on their weaknesses. This includes personal resilience and capabilities but also the current and potential social and community networks, to ensure that people stay connected and independent.

9.0 Equality Impact and Considerations:

Inclusion, equality, and the needs of customers have been considered throughout the service review process and will continue to be considered throughout any potential process for change.

Withdrawal of the service, because of its very nature and the demographics of those that use it, will impact certain protected groups to a greater extent. However, the characteristics of users have not been a factor in decision making.

There is a risk that, if the service were withdrawn without any mitigation or assessment of users prior to its cessation there would be a negative impact on certain groups. Through the continuation of the housing-based support via Six Town, signposting to other support options and the assessment and consideration of users for any appropriate statutory provision this impact will be mitigated.

Care will also be taken to ensure all communication and engagement is fully accessible. Where carers are involved, conversations will continue to ensure they are fully engaged and supported appropriately.

Although some stakeholders may view the change as a negative impact, the Council aims to achieve efficiencies, streamline services, create clear roles and responsibilities, and increase equity and independence for customers/tenants.

Please see appendix 3 for Equality Analysis.

10.0 Environmental Impact and Considerations:

The proposal supports the Council's target to be carbon neutral by 2038 as the removal of Support at Home visits will contribute to the plans for low carbon travel.

11.0 Key Risks and Mitigations:

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
Significant disruption and unrest for staff	Input from HR and Unions as appropriate.
Lack of support for tenants/customers and reduced peace of mind for carers.	All customers will be screened by the current Support at Home service prior to it ending, and referrals/signposting will take place as appropriate for individual needs.
Increased demand for other services.	Prior communication with services where demand may increase.
Increased number of concerns and issues at schemes where anti-social behaviour etc. already takes place – please see section 12 of this report.	Six Town Housing to deploy their responsibilities as appropriate.
Lack of savings for 2023/24	Risk accepted – there are potentially savings to be made from quarter 4.

12.0 Housing Related Issues

The issue of anti-social behaviour in sheltered schemes was raised several times throughout the consultation process. For example:

- People (not residents) have been found sleeping in communal areas and stairwells, smoking, taking drugs and leaving fire doors ajar.
- Residents had to call emergency services for someone that had overdosed.
- Some residents are letting these people in.
- Youths turning tables in the communal lounge upside down.
- Vandalism.
- Verbal aggression/abuse from particular residents.

The issue of outstanding maintenance and repair work in sheltered schemes was also raised several times, for example, a front door that anyone can open by simply pulling it, clearly adding to concerns around safety and security.

Lastly, the issue of inappropriate placements in sheltered schemes was also raised, for example, people with dementia who wander, younger people without support needs, and younger people with support needs who may have been better suited to a supported living environment.

Legal Implications:

1. The service currently provided is non statutory in that there is no legal duty stating it should be provided. This decision will lead to the withdrawal of a service, a full EIA is appended to this report.

Financial Implications:

2. The savings from the ceasing of the Support at Home service were included as part of the 2023/24 budget savings proposals approved by Budget Council in February 2023 and totalled £500k. Alternative savings will have to be found to mitigate the part year effect of the implementation within the 2023/24 financial year. Any costs of redundancy should staff not secure alternative roles within the Council or Six Town Housing will be met from within the service budget in year.

Background papers:

Appendix 1: Consultation Report

Appendix 2: Updated Frequently Asked Questions

Appendix 3: Equality Analysis

Please include a glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report.

Term	Meaning
Wider Community	Customers who do not live in the local authority sheltered accommodation schemes