

A.1 APPENDIX B

Careline Action Plan

(Internal Audit completed in February 2022)

Issue / Risk	Agreed Action	Additional Comments	Action Owner / Target Date
<p>In 2021, Careline won the contract to provide local Careline out of hours' coverage for Essex County Council (managed by Provide), using its established team and building on work already undertaken for them.</p> <p>During the timescale of the audit, it became apparent that the service struggled to provide the expanded contractual service required and consistently underperformed call response times, with one of the major contributing factors being the availability of trained officers.</p> <p>If the contract is exited without due attention to detail and evaluating all options, there is considerable financial and reputational risk to the council, which could affect budget</p>	<p>For the short term, the service will concentrate on exiting the Provide contract in a professional manner, including continuing liaison meetings and ensuring all data and GDPR obligations are carried out as required.</p> <p>Subsequently, the service will be reviewed and future strategic direction decided. Current options include a pivot to organic growth from private users, smaller contracts and continuing to work with Provide in other capacities. There are also options to explore, including integration of some healthcare services.</p> <p>Whatever options are chosen, one of the first targets will be renewed accreditation with the industry standards, TSA.</p>	<p>A financial review is now underway to identify the financial impact from exiting the Provide Contract along with the options going forward. This will include a review of the necessary capacity to meet the call handling KPI's.</p> <p>Work remains on-going in terms of the hand-over of data with the Provide which is due to be completed during April</p> <p>TSA accreditation has been secured until June 2022 on the basis that Careline is able to attain the call monitoring KPI after 19th April 2022.</p> <p>Also in order to ensure the service is able to spot changes in call volumes (and the capacity needed to answer them) a monthly report has</p>	<p>Anastasia Simpson</p> <p>15/08/2022</p>

<p>performance and future effectiveness and integrity of the Careline service.</p> <p>TSA KPI's need to be met. This requires sufficient capacity to answer the incoming calls or physically respond if necessary</p>		<p>been created on the call handling system.</p>	
<p>Service users should pay on a monthly basis, using a direct debit mandate. Where funds are unable to be taken, the Council's debtor procedure is initiated and a series of up to three letters are sent until payment is made.</p> <p>Should no payment be received, then the debt is returned to the department for further decision and action.</p> <p>Without managing debtors, there is risk of payments not collected at the due time, or at all, which has an adverse financial and resource impact.</p> <p>If long term debtors are not managed, it could lead to the</p>	<p>Outstanding debts to be reviewed and actions taken to progress these and substantially reduce the outstanding amount.</p> <p>Options may include write off, further chasing or review supply of service if longer term non-payment. In the latter event, there needs to be a formal process developed where especially vulnerable users are concerned.</p> <p>In addition, a new process involving a responsible officer will be introduced to monitor and manage ongoing outstanding debtors on a consistent regular basis, once the Corporate Debtors Policy</p>	<p>An up to date list of all debtors over 3 months is being created.</p> <p>Investigation and conversations with service users have begun.</p> <p>Those debtors that cannot afford to pay the monthly fee will be referred to Essex County Council for a free or subsidised service.</p> <p>Pending the recruitment of further administration resources the Head of Service will assume the role of SRO and manage the debt processes.</p>	<p>Anastasia Simpson</p> <p>16/05/2022</p>

<p>position of unfairly allowing some users to continue to use the service for no charge, while the majority continue to pay</p>	<p>process of automated letter has been exhausted and the debt returned to the department.</p>		
<p>It is considered best practice to reconcile between the Council's accounting system and the active Careline users. This is especially necessary as the two systems are not electronically linked and the direct debit mechanisms are independent of the Careline user database.</p> <p>Reconciling the two systems ensures only users set up on Careline and making payments receive the service.</p> <p>Without ensuring users are both paying and on Careline database, there is risk that they could be paying for service which they do not receive (and possibly rely on) or receiving a service which they are not paying for. Depending on which element is incorrect, this could be</p>	<p>Monthly reconciliations to be introduced between Careline and Agresso, in line with best practice elsewhere within the council.</p> <p>This will ensure the user system and payment system are in alignment and only users paying the subscription are receiving the service.</p> <p>There may be an option to involve IT to semi-automate the process.</p> <p>Once the reconciliation is completed this will be e-mailed to a senior officer for approval and the reply saved within a designated drive, as is common practice for other reconciliations.</p>	<p>Officers are currently exploring the opportunities for an automated system to be introduced, which will require conversations with our software supplier.</p>	<p>Anastasia Simpson</p> <p>16/05/2022</p>

considered a reputational risk (especially if it resulted in a failed call out) or financial risk (adverse financial impact).			
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The above actions are being delivered / monitored via regular meetings chaired by the Chief Executive and attended by the Portfolio Holder for Housing (including Careline) along with other relevant Senior Officers. An operational Officer Group has also been established which includes the Head of Internal Audit.