

**REPORT TO:** Executive Board  
**DATE:** 20 April 2017  
**REPORTING OFFICER:** Director of Adult Social Services  
**PORTFOLIO:** Health and Wellbeing  
**SUBJECT:** Sensory Support Services  
**WARD(S)** Borough-wide

**1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 To update the Executive Board in relation to the proposed model for Sensory Support Services.

**2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That**

- 1) Approval be given for the withdrawal of Halton from the commissioning of a Liverpool City Region (LCR) model of delivery for the Sensory Support Service; and**
- 2) Approval be given for the scoping of a local (Halton) model of delivery for a Sensory Support Service.**

**3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 Further to the report presented to Executive Board in September 2016 regarding the procurement of a Sensory Support service across the LCR, a number of factors have delayed the procurement process including:

- Changes to the service delivery model and amendments to the service specification
- Confirmation of budgets and disaggregation for different elements of the service
- Confirmation about local authorities and services to be included

3.2 In response to the delays in scoping of the model current contracts with Vision Support and Deafness Resource Centre were extended until 31<sup>st</sup> October 2017.

3.3 The delays have afforded Halton additional time to evaluate the proposed specification and suitability for Halton.

**3.4 Halton's Current position**

Halton currently operates a Sensory Support Service covering 3 elements: in house assessment and contracted provision from both Deafness Resource Network and Vision Support.

3.5 In House Provision is currently staffed by 2 full time equivalent staff (FTE), providing statutory assessments, and rehabilitation. The service also facilitates braille and computer support groups, some of which are delivered at the Independent Living Centre.

3.6 Vision Support undertake assessments, provide support with correspondence and welfare benefits and facilitate support groups including computer, craft, braille and activities. Vision Support also deliver and demonstrate equipment.

Services are provided by 5 staff (2 FTE).

3.7 Vision Support operates out of the Independent Living Centre, Runcorn. Whilst this site is able to accommodate the services, and is well equipped with rehabilitation kitchen and outdoor space, there are no commercial bus routes to this site, and the budget for transport costs previously met by HBC is no longer available. Therefore access to the Independent Living Centre is compromised.

3.8 Deafness Resource Centre undertakes hearing assessments, and maintains a register on CareFirst. They also provide specialist equipment, support groups, interpretation services and information and advice through outreach and drop in services. Communication courses, such as family sign sessions and deaf awareness sessions are currently funded through other sources, however Halton service users have access to this provision. Services are provided by 3 staff (2 FTE).

3.9 Deafness Resource used to also provide an advocacy service, but the Big Lottery funding for this element of the service has now ceased.

3.10 250 people in Halton are registered blind and 345 people are registered as partially sighted. 79% of registered blind and partially sighted people are also recorded as having additional disabilities. It is estimated that there are 696 people in Halton with dual sensory loss.

3.11 A consultation exercise was undertaken by LCR and highlights that Halton service users are happy with the current service they receive. A common theme across all respondents was accessibility and a local presence.

3.12 **LCR Proposal**

The LCR service delivery model is based around a two tier service.

It was originally envisioned that Tier One would provide the assessment and registration elements of the service with some short term rehabilitation. This would be a block contract, with one primary commissioned provider who would then refer onto Tier Two for other services including advice, information, advocacy, communication support and various support groups.

The model has still not been finalised, and there is lack of clarity about which elements will fall within Tiers One and Two of the new service. It is proposed that Tier Two services will be spot purchased but the mechanism for referrals and authorisation has not been agreed and it is unclear which Tier Two services will be available to each authority.

- 3.13 Consultation taken as part of the LCR scoping showed that local delivery remained a priority for people accessing services.

It is unclear if the LCR proposal will provide a local presence within each participating authority. Currently, Vision Support and Deafness Resource Centre only operate in Halton, but some other providers have much larger current contracts and operate across a number of LCR authorities. Bradbury Fields, for example, is located in Liverpool and works across Liverpool and Sefton. Should they be successful, the service may be delivered from its current location which would necessitate Halton service users travelling out of borough to access services.

- 3.14 The LCR proposal does not offer Halton the current level of sensory support service in terms of the range of provision that is currently available from within the borough. Proposed staffing levels represent a reduction in the level currently offered in Halton.

- 3.15 Existing services in Halton input onto Carefirst, a practice which would be unlikely to be maintained under the LCR contract, adding to the administration of the service locally.

- 3.16 The proposed LCR financial specification would require investment from Halton at a rate above the current budget allocated to the Sensory Support Service, not including additional investment for property costs, which would require a further investment from Halton above the current Sensory Support Service budget.

- 3.17 The LCR proposal therefore represents a service for Halton that is not financially viable, and could be considered a lesser service that is currently available.

- 3.18 **Proposed next steps**

In light of the financial viability and service limitations of the proposed LCR model for Halton, it is proposed that Halton withdraws from further negotiations with the LCR and uses this opportunity to review how sensory support services are delivered in Halton.

- 3.19 With the Board's approval, it is proposed that a small working group review current contracts and provision, liaising with the key stakeholders throughout the process, to identify a way forward for delivering services in Halton that represents value for money and quality provision.
- 3.20 Approval from the Board is sought to explore the viability of re-contracting in Halton for one Sensory Support Service. That is, that the current system of delivery (In house, Deafness Resource Network and Vision Support), come together under one contract to deliver a holistic service. A revised service specification would reflect a reduction in duplicated provision and the development of a service that is efficient and continues to provide quality, accessible provision.
- 3.21 Consideration will be given to co-locating all the aspects of the service (In house assessment, deafness and vision), which may further support a single contract and holistic service, notwithstanding the two distinct service needs (deafness and vision) and TUPE implications.
- 3.22 Proposed time scales for scoping and contracting a Halton based service are:  
Tender advertised May/June 2017, submissions by July/August 2017, contract award August 2017, service commencement in November 2017.

#### 4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 Developed by Halton Borough Council in partnership with Halton Clinical Commissioning group, SeeHear Strategy sets out key objectives and priorities to improve quality of life for Halton residents living with sight impairment, hearing impairment or dual sensory impairment. The strategy embraces a preventative pathway beginning with early detection through raising awareness of screening programs and sets out the strategic direction and priorities for health and social care services for people living with sensory impairment in Halton.
- 4.2 The strategy is clear that in achieving its objectives the key to delivery is **person centred local partnership**, working across the statutory and voluntary sector, to overcome barriers faced.

#### 5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 Current indicative budgets for 2017/18:

Deafness Resource Network	£48,240
Vision Support	£42,728
In house provision	£38,457

5.2 Financial modelling undertaken as part of the LCR sensory project indicates a contribution of £137,500 from Halton or £165,000 including costs for a local base.

This modelling is based on a reduced staffing compliment to the current service provision.

6.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

6.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

None identified.

6.2 **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

None identified.

6.3 **A Healthy Halton**

None identified.

6.4 **A Safer Halton**

None identified.

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

None identified.

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 None identified at this time

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is not required at this time.

9.0 **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

None.