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Lancashire Carers Service Specification

1. Introduction

1.1 Lancashire Carers Profile

Unpaid carers play a vital role in supporting residents across Lancashire and are essential to the sustainability of health and social care services.

According to Census 2021 data, approximately 112,737 people across the Lancashire County Council area provide unpaid care, representing 9.6% of the population aged five years and over. This is higher than the national average of 8.8%. More than half of unpaid carers are female and the estimated value of unpaid care provided across Lancashire is approximately £3.7 billion annually.

The Council recognises that many carers remain unidentified and unsupported and may not access support until they experience significant pressures, deterioration in wellbeing, or risk of caring breakdown.

1.2 Current Service Activity

The current Lancashire Carers Service supports a significant number of carers across Lancashire.

Current activity demonstrates:

- Approximately 48,500 carers registered on the current service database.
- Approximately 5,900 carers receiving direct support each quarter.
- Approximately 1,700 referrals received each quarter.
- Approximately 960 assessments completed each quarter.
- More than 2,100 annual reviews completed each quarter.
- More than 2,100 carers supported to access breaks from caring each quarter.

Detailed demand and activity information is provided within **Appendix G**.

1.3 Purpose

Lancashire County Council commissions services that support unpaid carers to maintain their health, wellbeing, independence and resilience whilst undertaking their caring responsibilities.

The Lancashire Carers Service will provide a countywide, integrated system of support for adult carers, ensuring carers are identified, recognised, assessed and connected to appropriate support at the earliest possible opportunity.

The service will support the delivery of the Council's statutory duties under the Care Act 2014 and contribute to wider strategic objectives including prevention, early intervention, strengths-based practice, neighbourhood working and the development of resilient communities.

The service will operate through a coordinated model that enables carers to access assessment, information, advice, community support, preventative interventions and specialist services through a seamless pathway.

The Service must support a shift towards earlier recognition of carers and ensure support is provided before carers reach crisis point. The Council seeks to improve the visibility of carers within health, social care and community settings and ensure carers are recognised as equal partners in care, support planning and decision-making.

1.4 Service Aims

The Lancashire Carers Service will deliver a person-centred, strengths-based and preventative approach that recognises carers as equal partners in care and support. The Service aims to identify carers early, respond to changing needs and help carers maintain their wellbeing, resilience and independence throughout their caring journey.

The Service must:

- Identify carers at the earliest opportunity.
- Improve access to support.
- Improve wellbeing and resilience.
- Reduce isolation.
- Prevent crisis and caring breakdown.
- Improve access to respite and breaks from caring.
- Increase support for hidden carers.
- Strengthen community-based support.
- Improve coordination across services.
- Support carers to achieve outcomes that matter to them.
- Recognise carers as equal partners in care, support planning and decision-making.

2. Policy and Strategic Framework

The Lancashire Carers Service will operate within a policy and strategic framework that reflects national legislation, statutory guidance, local priorities and wider system transformation objectives. The Service will support Lancashire County Council in delivering its responsibilities towards carers whilst contributing to improved outcomes through prevention, early intervention, strengths-based practice, neighbourhood working and partnership-based approaches.

2.1 Legislative and Policy Context

The Lancashire Carers Service will be delivered in accordance with relevant legislation, statutory guidance and local policies. The Provider must ensure that all aspects of service delivery support the Council in meeting its statutory responsibilities towards carers and are underpinned by principles of wellbeing, prevention, safeguarding, equality and person-centred practice.

The Service must support Lancashire County Council in meeting its statutory duties under:

- Care Act 2014.
- Care and Support Statutory Guidance.
- Equality Act 2010.
- Mental Capacity Act 2005.
- Human Rights Act 1998.
- Data Protection legislation.
- Lancashire safeguarding policies and procedures.

2.2 National Policy Context

The future Lancashire Carers Service aligns with the UK Government's 2026 Unpaid Carers Action Plan, Recognise, Refer, Reach, which sets out a cross-government commitment to improve outcomes for unpaid carers through earlier identification, stronger referral pathways and improved access to support.

The Action Plan recognises that carers often remain unidentified, experience fragmented services and face challenges relating to their health, wellbeing, employment, education and financial circumstances. The Government has identified three key priorities:

1. Recognising carers.
2. Referring carers to appropriate support.
3. Supporting carers to achieve their potential.

The Lancashire Carers Service must contribute to these national priorities by ensuring carers are identified at the earliest opportunity, connected to appropriate support and enabled to maintain their own wellbeing, aspirations and independence alongside their caring role.

2.3 Strategic Context

The Lancashire Carers Service forms part of Lancashire County Council's wider Adult Social Care transformation programme and wider approach to improving outcomes through prevention, early intervention and community-based support.

The Lancashire Carers Service forms part of the Council's wider approach to improving outcomes through prevention, early intervention and community-based support:

- Strengths-based practice.
- Prevention and early intervention.
- The Three Steps model.
- Neighbourhood working.
- Community-led support.
- Integration between health, social care and the VCFSE sector.

The Service also aligns with the Government's 2026 Unpaid Carers Action Plan, reflecting the principles of:

- Recognising carers.
- Referring carers to support.
- Supporting carers to reach their potential.

2.4 Strategic Outcomes

The Council intends to move towards a model that places carers at the centre of support and provides timely access to assessment, information, advice, preventative services and community-based support.

The Provider must contribute towards the following strategic outcomes:

1. More carers are identified and recognised.
2. Hidden carers are identified earlier.
3. Carers receive support before reaching crisis point.
4. Carers experience improved wellbeing and resilience.
5. Carers feel less isolated.
6. Carers can access support more easily.
7. Carers receive coordinated and person-centred support.
8. Caring relationships remain sustainable for longer.
9. Access to respite and preventative support improves.
10. Community capacity to support carers increases.
11. Lancashire benefits from a diverse, sustainable and responsive carers support system.

Strategic Outcome	Example Measures
More carers identified	Number of new carers identified
Improved wellbeing	Carer-reported wellbeing measures
Reduced isolation	Participation in peer support/community activity
Increased access to support	Time from referral to intervention
Sustainable caring arrangements	Reduced caring breakdown

These outcomes will inform service delivery, performance monitoring and contract management arrangements.

3. Scope of Service

The Lancashire Carers Service will provide a coordinated and accessible countywide offer that supports carers throughout their caring journey. The Service will ensure carers

are able to access assessment, information, advice, support and community-based opportunities appropriate to their individual circumstances and needs.

3.1 Eligible Service Users

The Service must be available to:

- Adult carers aged 18 years and over.
- Young carers transitioning to adult services.
- Former carers requiring transitional support.
- Carers supporting adults with physical disabilities, learning disabilities, autism, dementia, mental health conditions, substance misuse issues, long-term conditions or age-related needs.

3.2 Geographic Coverage

The Service must be available across the Lancashire County Council administrative area.

The current service footprint covers the North, Central and East Lancashire localities. Providers must be capable of delivering equitable access to services across all communities within the Contract Area.

Lancashire is currently subject to national Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) proposals. Consequently, the administrative boundaries and local government arrangements applicable to this Service may change during the lifetime of the Contract. The Provider will be required to work collaboratively with Lancashire County Council and any successor authority or authorities to ensure continuity of service delivery and support any reasonable changes to service geography, operating arrangements, referral pathways, reporting requirements or contractual arrangements arising from LGR implementation.

3.3 Access Arrangements

The Provider must operate a countywide single point of access. The Provider must make reasonable adjustments to ensure services are accessible to carers with communication, sensory, physical, cognitive or digital access needs.

Referrals must be accepted from:

- Self-referrals.
- Family members.
- Health services.
- Adult Social Care.
- Community organisations.
- VCFSE organisations.
- Other professionals.

The Service must be accessible via:

- Telephone.
- Digital channels.
- Community venues.
- Face-to-face support.

3.4 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The Provider must ensure services are accessible, inclusive and responsive to the needs of Lancashire's diverse carer population.

The Service must actively seek to identify and engage carers who may be less likely to access support, including but not limited to:

- Hidden carers.
- Carers from minority ethnic communities.
- Working carers.
- Rural carers.
- Older carers.
- LGBTQ+ carers.
- Carers supporting individuals with mental health needs.
- Carers supporting individuals affected by substance misuse.
- Carers experiencing multiple disadvantages.

Providers should demonstrate how barriers to access will be identified and addressed to support equitable outcomes for all carers.

4. Service Operating Model

The Lancashire Carers Service will operate through an integrated model that combines statutory assessment responsibilities with coordinated support, navigation and community-based interventions. The model is designed to ensure carers receive timely, proportionate and person-centred support whilst promoting prevention, resilience and sustainable caring relationships.

4.1 Overview

The Lancashire Carers Service will comprise two interconnected service lots.

Lot 1 – Assessment Service

Responsible for:

- Assessment.
- Review.
- Support planning.
- Eligibility considerations.
- Risk identification.
- Care Act responsibilities.

Lot 2 – Connecting Service

Responsible for:

- Delivering support.
- Coordinating support.
- Developing community capacity.
- Strengthening support systems.

The relationship between the two lots is illustrated in the Service Model Diagram contained within **Appendix A**.

5. Lot 1 – Assessment Service

5.1 Purpose

The Assessment Service will be the statutory gateway into the Lancashire Carers Service and will be responsible for identifying carers, assessing need, determining eligibility, supporting decision-making and ensuring that carers receive an appropriate and proportionate response.

The Assessment Service must operate in accordance with the Care Act 2014 and associated statutory guidance whilst supporting Lancashire County Council's ambition to deliver strengths-based and preventative interventions wherever possible.

5.2 Responsibilities

The Provider must:

- Receive referrals.
- Identify carers.
- Undertake assessments.
- Complete statutory Carer's Assessments.
- Complete reviews.
- Undertake reassessments.
- Identify eligible needs.
- Complete support planning.
- Develop contingency arrangements.
- Record activity on approved systems.

5.3 Assessment Model

The Provider must deliver the Lancashire three-step assessment model.

Detailed requirements are contained within **Appendix B**.

5.4 Service Expectations

The Assessment Service must provide a timely, proportionate and strengths-based response to referrals.

The Provider will be expected to:

- Prioritise early intervention wherever possible.
- Undertake assessments and reviews within timescales agreed with the Council.
- Identify risks to carer wellbeing and caring sustainability.
- Promote preventative support and community-based solutions.
- Work collaboratively with Lot 2 providers and wider system partners.
- Maintain accurate and timely records of assessments, decisions and outcomes.

Detailed operational requirements and performance standards will be developed through the procurement process.

6. Lot 2 – Connecting Service

6.1 Purpose

The Connecting Service will act as the central coordination and delivery function of the Lancashire Carers Service.

The purpose of the Connecting Service is to ensure that carers can access the right support, at the right time, through the most appropriate pathway, whilst contributing to the development of a sustainable and responsive carers support system across Lancashire.

6.2 Component One – Carer Support

This component represents the support available to carers.

Support must be delivered through the following five service strands:

1. Information, Advice and Guidance.
2. Wellbeing, Prevention and Peer Support.
3. Specialist Support.
4. Engagement, Voice and Co-production.
5. Emergency Planning, Safety and Practical Support.

Detailed requirements are contained within **Appendix C**.

6.3 Component Two – Navigation and Brokerage

This component ensures carers can access and navigate support effectively.

The Provider must:

- Coordinate access to services.
- Undertake managed referrals.
- Undertake warm handovers.
- Coordinate multi-agency interventions.
- Support access to respite.
- Support crisis prevention activity.
- Facilitate joined-up working across organisations.

Detailed requirements are contained within **Appendix D**.

6.4 Component Three – Community Capacity and System Development

The Provider must support development of a sustainable and responsive support system for carers across Lancashire.

The Provider must:

- Develop VCFSE partnerships.
- Maintain intelligence regarding local provision.
- Identify service gaps.
- Promote community capacity building.
- Support innovation.
- Improve support available to underserved communities.

Detailed requirements are contained within **Appendix E**.

6.5 Service Expectations

The Connecting Service must provide an accessible and coordinated approach to supporting carers following assessment or self-identification.

The Provider will be expected to deliver or facilitate access to a range of support options which may include:

- Information, advice and guidance.
- Peer support opportunities.
- Wellbeing and preventative interventions.
- Support groups and community activities.
- Access to breaks from caring.
- Specialist support pathways.
- Emergency planning support.
- Community-based solutions and resources.

Providers may determine the most appropriate delivery methods provided contractual requirements and service outcomes are achieved.

7. Partnership Working

Effective partnership working is fundamental to the delivery of the Lancashire Carers Service. The Provider must work collaboratively with statutory, voluntary, community and health partners to support the identification of carers, improve access to support and contribute to coordinated, person-centred pathways. The Service should reflect Lancashire's neighbourhood working approach by building strong local relationships and maximising the use of community assets to promote prevention, early intervention and strengths-based support.

The Provider must establish effective working arrangements with:

- Lancashire County Council.
- Lancashire Carers Advocacy Service.
- Integrated Care Board partners.
- NHS Trusts.
- Primary Care Networks.
- Adult Social Care teams.
- District and Borough Councils.
- VCFSE organisations.
- Community groups.
- Housing providers.

The Provider must actively support the identification of carers across health, social care and community settings and contribute to joined-up pathways that improve access to support. The Provider must work collaboratively with neighbourhood teams, local organisations and community assets to support Lancashire's neighbourhood working approach, promoting prevention, early intervention, strengths-based practice and community-led support.

Detailed requirements are contained within **Appendix F**.

8. Workforce Requirements

The Provider must maintain a suitably skilled, competent and resilient workforce capable of delivering high-quality support to carers across Lancashire. Workforce arrangements must support consistent service delivery, person-centred practice, safeguarding responsibilities and effective partnership working. The Provider must ensure that staffing structures, supervision arrangements and workforce development plans are sufficient to meet contractual requirements and respond to changes in demand.

Staff must receive (this list is not exhaustive):

- Safeguarding training.
- Equality and diversity training.

- Care Act training.
- Strengths-based practice training.
- Information governance training.

The Provider must ensure staff receive appropriate induction, regular supervision and ongoing professional development. Staff should be supported to understand the needs of diverse carer populations, including carers from underserved communities and those experiencing multiple disadvantages. Where volunteers contribute to service delivery, the Provider must ensure that appropriate recruitment, training, supervision and support arrangements are in place.

8.1 Safeguarding Responsibilities

The Provider must maintain effective safeguarding arrangements and comply with all relevant safeguarding legislation, guidance and Lancashire safeguarding policies and procedures.

The Provider must ensure staff and volunteers understand their responsibilities for recognising, reporting and responding to safeguarding concerns and cooperate fully with safeguarding enquiries, investigations and partnership arrangements.

9. Information Governance

9.1 Digital Systems and Data Management

The Provider must maintain appropriate systems and processes to support effective service delivery, performance reporting and information management.

The Council may require the successful Provider to utilise Council-approved systems and reporting arrangements. Further details regarding digital requirements, system access and data management arrangements will be confirmed during the procurement process.

Providers should ensure that any systems utilised support secure information sharing, accurate reporting and effective coordination of support across partner organisations.

The Provider must maintain robust information governance arrangements that support lawful, secure and effective management of information. Information must be handled in a way that protects confidentiality whilst enabling appropriate information sharing to support carer outcomes, safeguarding responsibilities and integrated working across organisations.

The Provider must comply with all relevant legislation and Council requirements regarding:

- Information governance.
- Data protection.
- Confidentiality.

- Information sharing.
- Record keeping.

Appropriate policies, procedures and staff training must be in place to ensure compliance with legislative, regulatory and contractual requirements. The Provider must cooperate with any information governance audits, reviews or assurance processes requested by the Council.

10. Performance and Outcomes

The Provider must deliver services that contribute towards improved outcomes for carers and support the strategic priorities of Lancashire County Council.

Performance monitoring arrangements will be used to assess service activity, quality, accessibility and outcomes achieved for carers.

The Provider must demonstrate contribution towards:

- Earlier identification of carers.
- Improved wellbeing.
- Improved resilience.
- Reduced isolation.
- Increased access to support.
- Improved access to respite.
- Reduced caring breakdown.
- Increased community capacity.

The Council anticipates that future performance arrangements may include measures relating to:

Strategic Outcome	Illustrative Measures
Increased identification of carers	Number of new carers identified and supported
Improved access to support	Referral and assessment activity
Improved wellbeing	Carer-reported outcome measures
Reduced isolation	Participation in support networks and activities
Sustainable caring arrangements	Reduced risk of caring breakdown
Increased community capacity	Growth in community-based support opportunities

The Provider will be expected to collect and report performance information in a format agreed with the Council and to utilise performance data to support continuous improvement and service development.

The Provider must collect, monitor and analyse equality and demographic information to support understanding of service reach, identify disparities in access or outcomes and inform targeted improvement activity.

11. Governance and Contract Management

The Provider must maintain effective governance arrangements to ensure the safe, effective and efficient delivery of services. Governance arrangements should support accountability, quality assurance, risk management and continuous improvement throughout the lifetime of the Contract.

The Provider must participate in:

- Operational meetings.
- Performance monitoring meetings.
- Contract review meetings.
- Quality assurance activity.
- Continuous improvement activities.

The Provider must nominate an appropriate contract lead who will act as the primary point of contact for Lancashire County Council and be responsible for contract performance, quality assurance and operational oversight.

The Provider must promptly notify the Council of any significant risks, service issues, safeguarding concerns or incidents that may affect service delivery, carers or contractual performance.

11.1 Complaints, Compliments and Feedback

The Provider must maintain accessible arrangements for receiving, investigating and responding to complaints, concerns, compliments and feedback from carers, partners and stakeholders.

The Provider must utilise learning from complaints and feedback to support service improvement and demonstrate how this learning has informed changes to service delivery.

11.2 Quality Assurance

The Provider must maintain appropriate systems and processes to monitor the quality, effectiveness and safety of service delivery.

Quality assurance arrangements should include audit activity, case file reviews, service-user feedback, performance monitoring and continuous improvement processes.

12. Mobilisation, Transition and Exit

The Provider must work collaboratively with the Council to ensure a smooth mobilisation and implementation of services and to minimise disruption for carers at all stages of the Contract lifecycle. Arrangements must support continuity of support, retention of service knowledge and effective communication with carers, staff and partner organisations.

The Provider must maintain plans covering:

- Mobilisation.
- Service commencement.
- Business continuity.
- Contract expiry.
- Service transfer arrangements.

The Provider must cooperate with any transition activities required at the commencement or conclusion of the Contract and ensure that relevant information, records and operational knowledge are transferred in a timely and secure manner to support continuity of service delivery.

12.1 Workforce Transfer

The Council anticipates that workforce transfer provisions may apply to some or all elements of the future service arrangements.

Relevant information relating to staffing and potential Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations (TUPE) implications will be made available during any subsequent procurement process where appropriate.

12.2 Indicative Procurement and Mobilisation

The timetable for procurement, award and mobilisation has not yet been finalised and may be subject to change.

The Council welcomes feedback from Providers regarding appropriate mobilisation periods and any factors that may influence successful implementation of the proposed service model.

12.3 Business Continuity

The Provider must maintain and periodically review business continuity arrangements to ensure continuity of support in the event of service disruption, workforce shortages, loss of premises, IT failure or other unforeseen circumstances.

Appendices

Appendix A

Service Operating Model and Pathway Diagram



Appendix A- Service
Model Diagram.pdf

Appendix B

Assessment Service Requirements and Assessment Pathway



Appendix B-
Assessment Service R

Appendix C

Five Service Strands



Appendix C- Five
Service Strands.pdf

Appendix D

Brokerage, Navigation and Support Coordination Requirements



Appendix D-
Brokerage, Navigation

Appendix E

VCFSE Development and Market Shaping Requirements



Appendix E- VCFSE
Development and Ma

Appendix F

Partnership Working



Appendix F-
Partnership Working,

Appendix G

Current Activity, Demand and Service Profile



Appendix G- Current
Activity, Demand and

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