

Report to CABINET

Extension of a Section 75 agreement with NCA

Portfolio Holder:

Councillor Barbara Brownridge, Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing

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Cabinet - 15th December 2025

Reason for Decision

To approve the extension of a section 75 agreement with the Northern Care Alliance NHS Foundation Trust, to deliver the clinical elements of the integrated children's and families' service.

Recommendations

Cabinet is asked to consider and agree:

- a) the extension of the section 75 partnership agreement with the Northern Care Alliance NHS Foundation Trust to deliver the clinical elements of the integrated children's and families service for a period of 2 years with an option to extend by a further 1 year.
- b) to delegate authority to the Director of Public Health, in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member, to approve any future extensions to the Section 75 agreement where there is budget available.
- c) to delegate authority to the relevant officers to negotiate and execute any revisions of the Section 75 agreement.
- d) to delegate authority to the relevant officers to harmonize the 0-19 specification with Bury and Rochdale to allow for greater consistency, whilst ensuring that an appropriate locality schedule reflects the current delivery model in Oldham.

Extension of a Section 75 agreement with NCA

1 Background

- 1.1 Oldham Council and the Northern Care Alliance NHS Foundation Trust (NCA) have an established working arrangement to deliver integrated children and family services under a Section 75 agreement. This agreement has been in place since 1st April 2022 and is set to run until 31st March 2026. All elements of the integrated children's and families service are funded through the Public Health settlement.

2 Current Position

- 2.1 Cabinet approval was sought and gained in March 2021 to develop a shared delivery model with our local NHS partner, aligned to the longer-term strategic drive to further integrate services and family support within local education, health and care systems. The aim was to "Ensure the right care and support in the right place by the right person at the right time as close to home as possible". The partnership was designed to draw on the strengths of each of the partners - NHS for clinical elements of the service, and Council with connections with local communities.
- 2.2 The partnership was formally established on the 1st of April 2022 between the NCA and Oldham Council through a Section 75 agreement to jointly deliver the Public Health mandated functions through the 0-19 service.
- 2.3 As part of a recent redesign, the service has been rebranded as Oldham Integrated Children's and Families service. This service is jointly delivered as a place-based model between the NCA and Oldham Council Children's services which operates out of Family Hubs. The integrated service under common management includes:
- Health Visiting Service
 - Family Hubs Core Offer
 - Early learning offer
 - Early years SEND support
 - Targeted team – providing more intensive support
 - Oral Health Improvement 0-5 year olds
 - School Nursing Service
- 2.4 The Public Health settlement covers the financial cost of this mandated service in full, including NCA, Oldham Council Children's Service and the family hubs buildings.
- 2.5 The Local Authority has a responsibility to commission public health services for children and young people aged 0-19 including the Healthy Child Programme. This is delivered through Oldham's integrated children's and families service, including universal health visitor reviews at key milestones – new birth visit, 6-8 week review, one year review and the two to two and a half year review. In addition to this, the Local Authority is expected to commission school nursing, National Child Measurement programme (NCMP), plus targeted support.
- 2.6 The NCA currently provide 0-19 services to Bury, Rochdale and Oldham through three separate approaches. Although all areas are operating through a different delivery model

and under different contractual arrangements, there has been an ask from the provider to work towards a harmonized specification, with locality schedules to outline the local variation. The intention is to help streamline NCA oversight processes, have greater consistency within the north east arc of Greater Manchester, and to agree a standardised performance framework across all three localities. As all areas are broadly working to deliver the mandated and nationally prescribed Healthy Child Programme – this is considered achievable. Oldham’s schedule of delivery will reflect our nuanced approach to deliver through an integrated approach in partnership with the Local Authority, and any additionality.

- 2.7 A Section 75 Partnership Agreement is a legal mechanism used to deliver integrated services to deliver more efficient and coordinated care. The section 75 agreement completes between Oldham Council and the Northern Care Alliance on the 31st March 2026. The partnership is considered to be effective, and both Oldham Council and NCA are pursuing their respective governance routes to extend this provision.
- 2.8 This paper seeks approval to extend the Section 75 agreement for an initial 2 year period (1st April until 31st March 2028), with an option to extend by a further 1 years (until 31st March 2029), where both parties agree, and financial provision is available.
- 2.9 To monitor staffing levels and service delivery, the partners meet on a monthly basis through the governance oversight group.

3 Options/Alternative

- 3.1 **Option 1** – To extend the section 75 partnership agreement with the NCA for the delivery of the integrated children’s and families service.

Pros – the partnership already exists, the staffing model is stable, and this requires minimal Council capacity to enact this option

Cons – this doesn’t provide any option to test the market

- 3.2 **Option 2** – Do not continue with a mandated Public Health function of the Healthy Child program

Pros – There will not be a cost to the Council for this option.

Cons – This option leaves the children and families of Oldham in a vulnerable situation with the absence of health visitors, school nurses or targeted team for complex families. Not for filling a mandated function leaves the Council open to legal, financial and reputational risk.

- 3.2 **Option 3** – To go out to the market and procure a service

Pros – It may be possible to find a more advantageous provider.

Cons – This would be more disruption for staff working within this service, that have already been restructured, and residents would experience likely service disruption. There is a risk that due to the limited market in children community services, that a full procurement exercise would be completed and no contract awarded – this would leave the Council in a difficult position, and residents with no child assessments of child health, growth or development.

4 Preferred Option

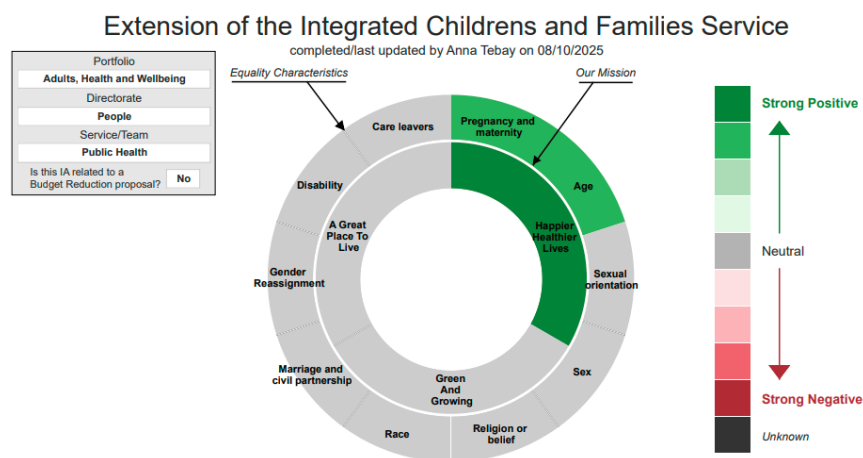
- 3.3 4.1 Option 1 is preferred - To extend the section 75 partnership agreement with the NCA for the delivery of the integrated children's and families service.

5 Consultation

Regular dialogue has taken place between NCA, and localities where they provide children's community services including Oldham, Rochdale, Bury and Salford. Contract completion dates all align for these services, and there is consideration for a harmonized approach moving forward to deliver a consistency across the areas.

6. Equality Impact, including implications for Children and Young People Co-operative Implications

6.1 The impact assessment represents the impact of the recommended option (Option 1).



7. Key Decision

7.1 Yes

8. Key Decision Reference

8.1 HSC-14-25

9. Background Papers

9.1 None