

Domiciliary Care Performance Update - Q3 & Q4 23/24

Introduction

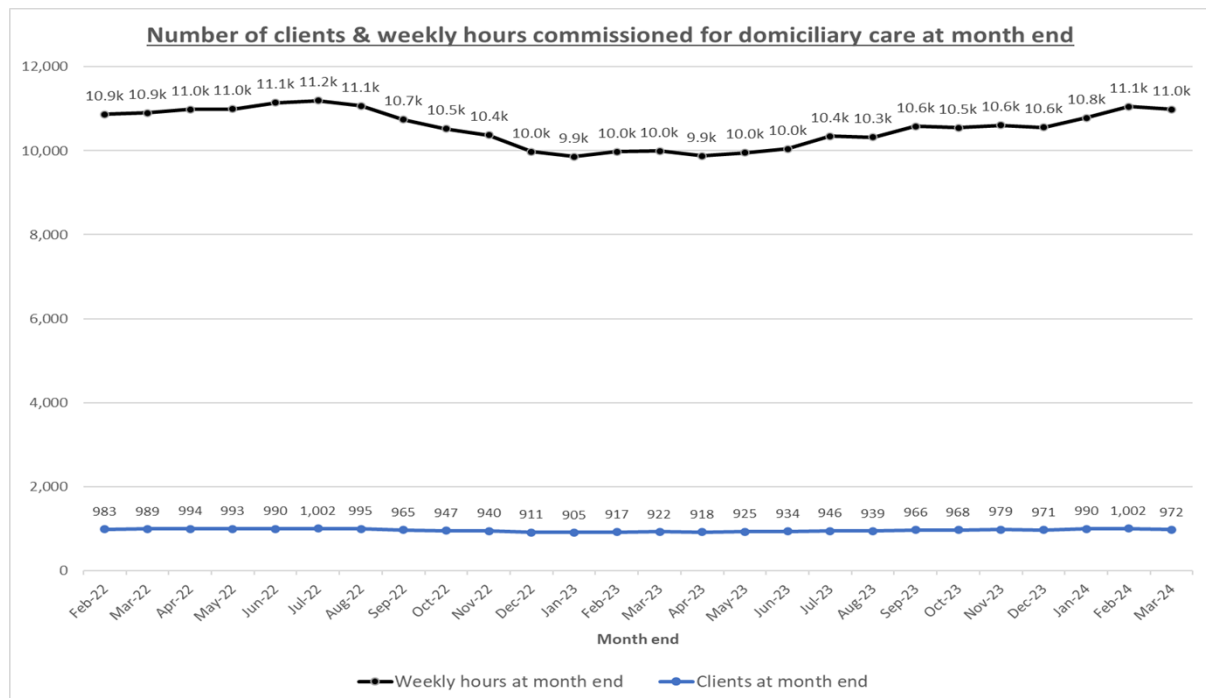
At its meeting on 24th January 2023, the Committee considered the current position in relation to domiciliary care in the county and the ongoing challenges that the Council (similarly to all Local Authorities across both Wales and the UK) is facing with having sufficient capacity to meet demand. This is linked to the significant workforce challenges that the sector is facing, and the consequent difficulties in recruiting and retaining sufficient numbers of care workers. The Committee asked for a regular update on performance to provide assurance going forward.

It was consequently agreed that the key metrics would be reported into the Committee on a regular basis. The last update was provided to the Committee on the 28th November 2023, this is the fourth update on the Metrics that will be provided on data up to the middle of March 2023.

It is important to highlight that we have seen an improvement across the board in terms of all 4 key metrics referenced below, particularly since August 2023. This can be aligned to the relaunch of the Domiciliary Care Framework and the addition of 4 new care providers that has built further capacity into the sector.

Consequently, we have seen an overall growth in the number of hours commissioned for domiciliary care and a reduction in hours & people waiting across community & hospital sites which is very positive.

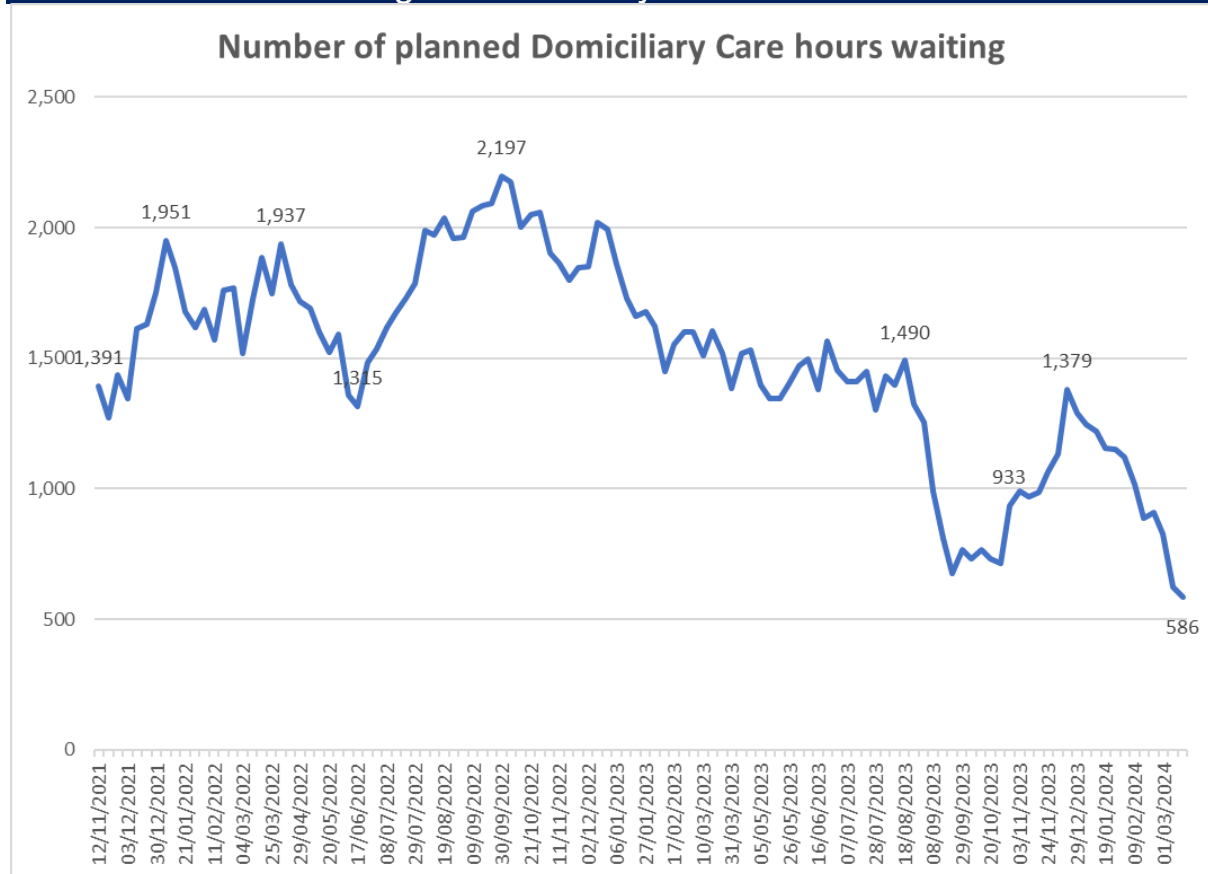
Number of hours commissioned for domiciliary care



Commissioned hours were at their peak in June 2022, and then sharply declined due to the ongoing workforce shortages in the sector. The graph above clearly indicated a trend between February 2022 and November 2022 of a continued decline in the number of hours commissioned, this was due to ongoing workforce shortages in the sector. We saw a levelling off between November 2022 and June 2023 with hours remaining around 9.9k to 10k which indicates a period of recovery was undergone.

The data since June 2023 indicates a positive picture in a gradual increase in the number of hours commissioned and would suggest that the Domiciliary Care framework re-launch and the additional provider capacity this has brought in as a result, is having an impact. The above graph demonstrates that Q4 23/24 has seen a return to a similar level of commissioned hours as was seen in June 22. Whilst the overall picture is positive, we continue to face ongoing recruitment and retention challenges within the sector.

Number of hours waiting for domiciliary care



Due to ongoing recruitment and retention issues, demand for domiciliary care continues to exceed supply. There is, however, an improving picture in terms of the re-launch of the Domiciliary Care framework and with the introduction of the Community Assessment Service which provides a domiciliary care assessment & rightsizing service for those individuals who are likely to have some form of long term care needs.

Whilst there has been a significant decline in those waiting for domiciliary care since August 2023, September 23 to December 23 saw a significant increase in the

number of people/hours waiting for domiciliary care. This correlates to a very difficult and challenging winter. Data demonstrates that we are seeing a gradual decline in hours waiting since January 24. This trend can be seen reflected in the same period last year.

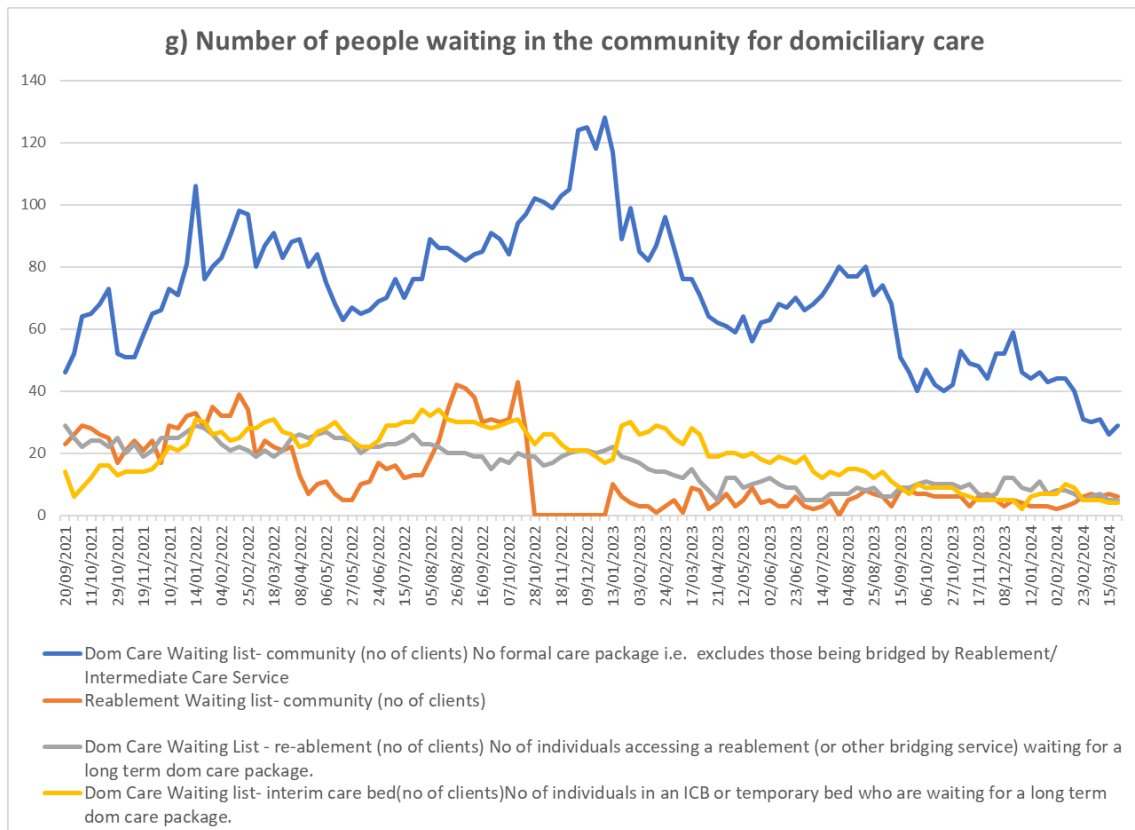
The above would suggest that the Home First approach that is being progressed and utilisation of Intermediate Care services in the Community are decreasing overall demand going through commissioned care overall, but winter (particularly September to December months) continue to bring unprecedented demand that is making it a challenging position to manage with the increasing pressure on the system.

At the last update, we noted a significant decrease in the numbers waiting for social work assessments following the launch of the Home First pilot in March 2023. This trend has continued since with a sustained reduction in the number waiting for social work assessments. This pilot demonstrated overall that there has been a 50% reduction in the number of assessments waiting and the numbers of referrals being passed through to long term social work teams. The impact of the pilot has informed a realignment of social work in Carmarthenshire with the development of an Intake and Assessment model that went live on the 6th November. Our waiting lists for assessment are now at the level they were at in July 2022 and improving month on month, which provides assurance that there is not hidden demand within those waiting for assessment.

We continue to make best use of the hours that we have available through our systematic review of existing packages of care. This is helping overall to reduce the number of hours that are waiting for care and enabling us to support more people more quickly.

Whilst it is hugely positive that there are less people waiting for care, and the number of hours needed has decreased, there is still a significant amount of unmet need that continues to need to be monitored to ensure that people remain safe whilst they continue to wait for care. However, it is important to note that the trends are going in the right direction.

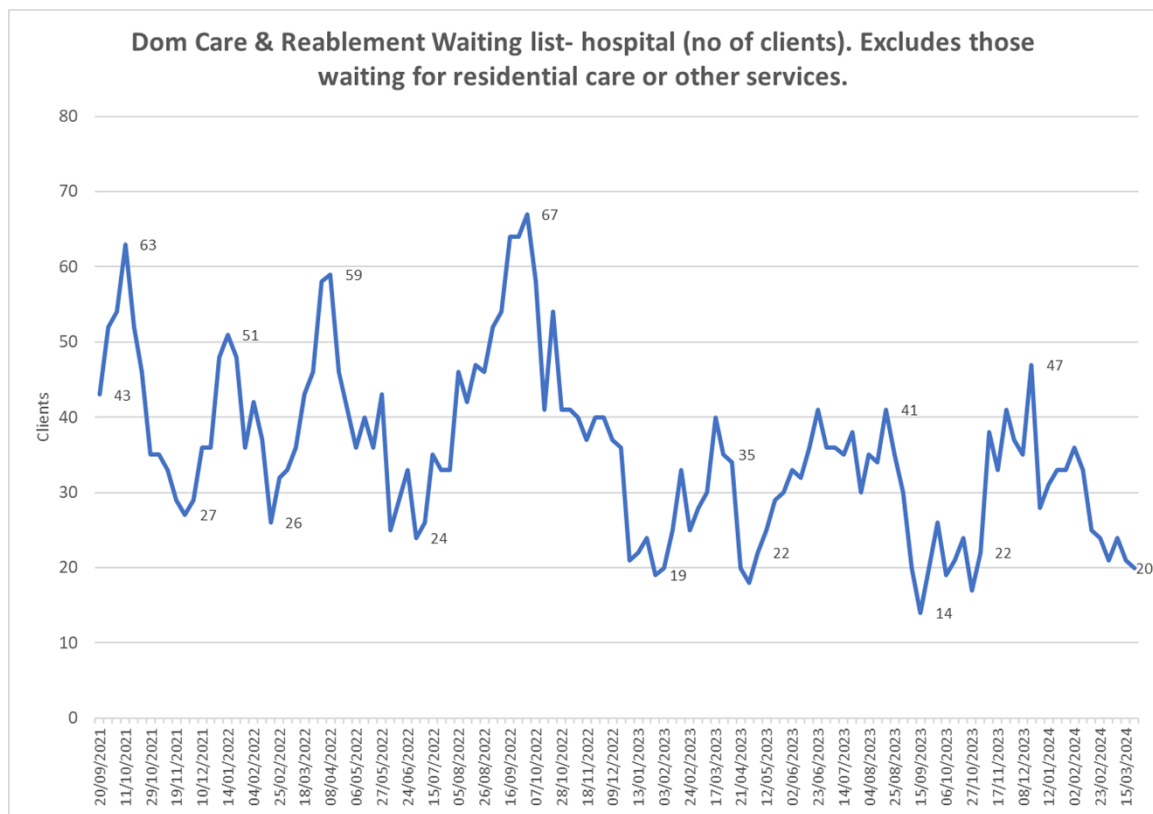
Number of people waiting in the community for domiciliary care



The data above shows those waiting for care unsupported in the community, as well as those in some form of bridging service (reablement pending long-term care, or an interim care bed).

The data shows that those waiting for care unsupported peaked in November 2022, but there has since been a decrease which mirrors the overall reduction of those waiting for care. The numbers waiting for reablement have been very low since October 2022. This will be in part due to the embedding of the service alongside the Intermediate Care Multi-Disciplinary Team which focusses on quicker discharge from hospital, as well as the service becoming more resilient in terms of staffing capacity. Those waiting in interim beds has stayed fairly consistent but is also showing a reducing trend overall. Those in some form of bridging service has decreased slightly. It remains a challenge to move people on from interim/bridging services, as inevitably those unsupported in the community or those needing to leave hospital become a higher priority in order to ensure that they are safe, and capacity is released for others. However, now that the overall numbers of people waiting for care are reducing (see below), there may be some opportunities to try and prioritise these individuals.

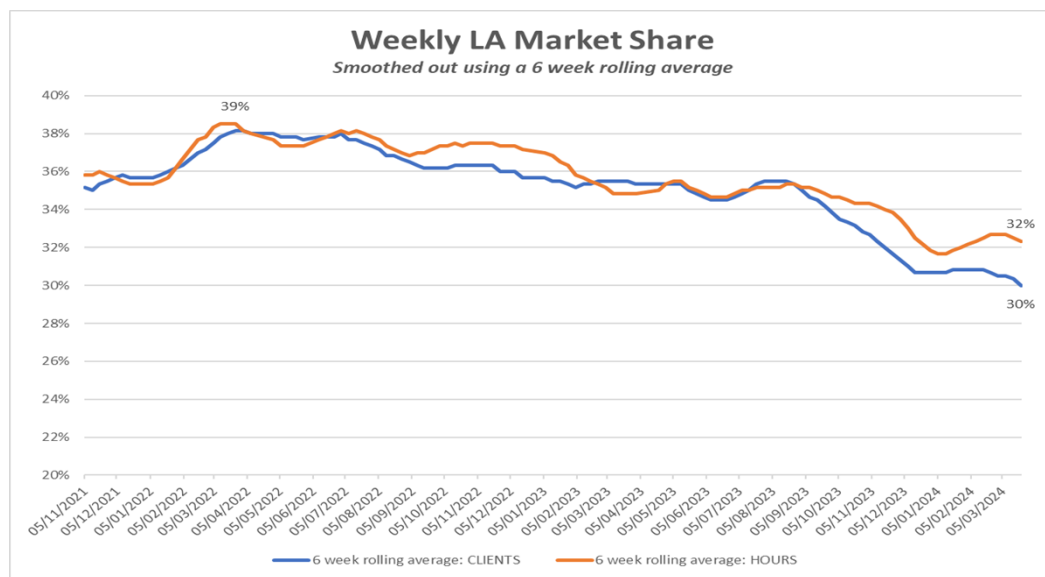
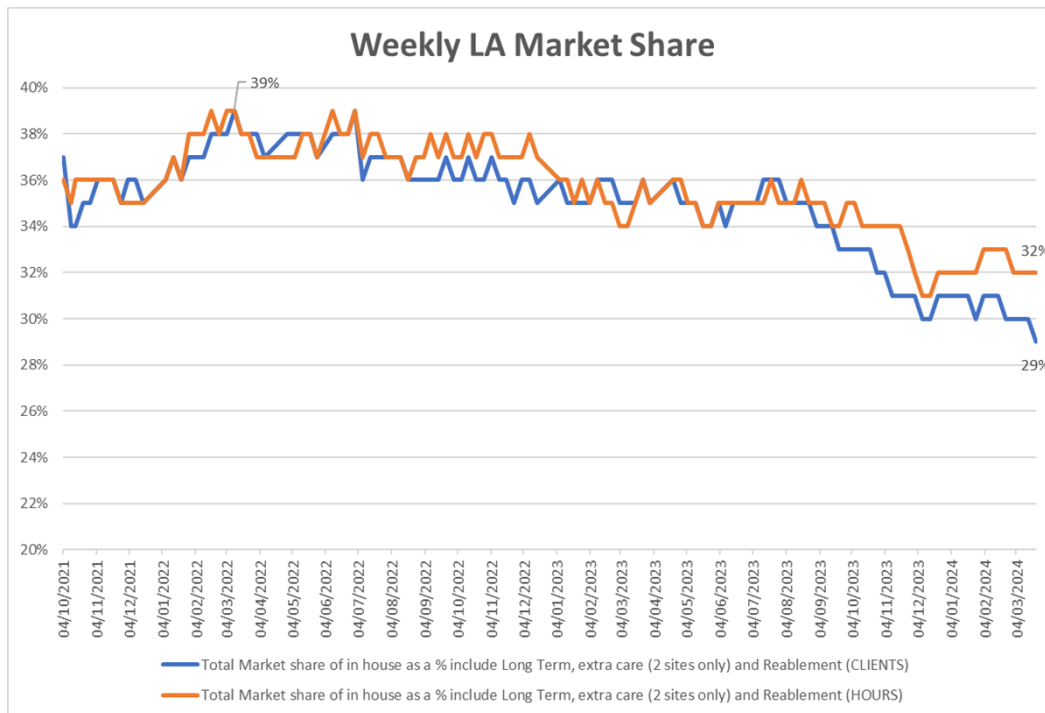
Number of people waiting in hospital for domiciliary care



The trend mirrors the issues that we have had with availability of domiciliary care capacity, and the downward trend of those waiting since September 2022 mirrors the overall reduction of those waiting for domiciliary care. Post August 2023, the overall number waiting in hospital significantly reduced as more care hours became available across the sector and the numbers waiting from that point onwards overall reduced. Whilst this did rise over the Christmas period, this was followed by a continued decline from January 24 onwards.

Numbers waiting for domiciliary care in hospital between Q1 23/24 (April – June) and Q2 (July – September) have halved which provides further evidence that our Home First approach is having the positive impact in that more people are being discharged for assessment via preventative Intermediate Care services rather than waiting for assessment & commissioning of long term care in hospital. Whilst we saw a deterioration during December, this trajectory has continued post Christmas into Q4 23/24.

Domiciliary Care - In House vs External Providers



The impact of the pandemic has taken its toll on our home care workforce, and this undoubtedly has been our greatest challenge over the last year. We have continued to have trouble recruiting Homecare staff. Within this context, our Homecare Team have shown great resilience in continuing to provide care in people's homes. However, following a robust and sustained recruitment programme, January 2024 has seen an increase in the number of applications for Homecare Posts, a trend which has continued throughout Q4 23/24. We are also seeing an increase in the number of overseas workers applying for posts via sponsorship, which we have

not been able to support. Conversion rates from application to appointment remain lower than we would have hoped for.

Routinely, the in-house home care service provides approximately 37% of the overall domiciliary care market in Carmarthenshire, but you will note in the graphs that this has dipped slightly in recent months. The service is focussing on strategies that promote expansion, but the recruitment and retention challenges has impacted on this objective. We are revisiting the structure, patterns of service delivery and employing a robust approach to sickness management to enhance our capacity and share of the market. Our aspiration going forward, is to grow the in-house service to provide 50% of the market longer term which will include supporting those with more complex needs. This strategy will ensure that we are able to have greater resilience within the domiciliary care market.

We have successfully established a triage arrangement for intermediate care with health colleagues and this is already having an impact on hospital flow and reducing waiting lists. We have also progressed an aggressive recruitment campaign, streamlined our recruitment processes, introduced additional capacity to support recruitment and improved the grading structure for home care staff, which now means that our rate of pay is amongst the best in Wales. Key to developing our in-house service is to also increase productivity so that it is more cost effective and work is underway to address this.

Mitigating the risk in the System

As things develop, there is still a need for us to manage the risk to those waiting for care. We are therefore continuing to review those waiting for care, to ensure that needs have not changed, and people remain safe through regularly keeping in touch calls by dedicated Care and Support Coordinators.

We are also continuing to use the releasing time to care methodology to actively reduce care packages where appropriate and release hours to support others. As part of the budget savings proposals, it was agreed that we would look to increase the capacity within the review team on an invest to save basis. This will allow us to increase the pace at which we can do reviews, and consequently release more care hours to support others whilst providing less intrusive care and promoting independence of those already in receipt of care. Recruitment has commenced to introduce additional therapists into this team.

A fortnightly meeting now takes place to review long hospital waits. This allows us to challenge and review and ensure that all options have been considered. This had had a considerable impact on reducing those with a long wait in hospital. In addition, there are twice weekly hospital escalation panels where all difficult cases are escalated. This systematic review of long stay patients has significantly reduced those with a length of stay of over 100 days which will have a positive impact on social care commissioning.

We also offer Delta CONNECT and direct payments to both the person needing the care and also to the carer who is providing the care to support individuals, with their own needs, whilst they are caring for someone waiting for care.

All of the above is helping us to manage the risk. We are cautiously optimistic that the latest set of data is demonstrating that our new approaches are having the impact that we need to ensure that residents in Carmarthenshire who need it are supported at home in as timely a way as possible.

Financial Implications of Current Position

The growth in the number of hours commissioned for domiciliary care is approximately 11% for 2023-2024. The annual cost of this is approximately £1.7m. This is partially offset by the reduction in hours delivered by our inhouse service. There is a projected underspend in the inhouse service of £42k (as at December 2023 budget monitoring) due to staff recruitment issues.

Overall, the growth in hours delivered for 2023-2024 is 8%. The corporate budget setting process allocated demographic growth for this area of 0.381%