

CASE STUDY

EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL

CareCubed provides critical evidence base to ensure value for money

The Project, Why iESE ?

The Project

- Using CareCubed for accommodation-based support for working-age clients when required.
- Rolling out CareCubed to enhance existing tools and ways of working.

Why iESE ?

- East Sussex had previously successfully used iESE's Care Funding Calculator.
- CareCubed is the only national benchmarking tool for care pricing that is widely used by providers and commissioners.
- CareCubed is backed by not-for-profit community interest company iESE and has a mission to help create a fair and sustainable market for providers and commissioners.
- iESE's public service ethos puts customer success and support at the heart of the organisation.

Results

- Continued significant cashable savings and efficiencies made through building on existing practices and enhancing the toolkit available to commissioners and brokers.

- The successful implementation of CareCubed for working-age adults means wider adoption is planned in other areas of commissioning at East Sussex.

“It is about understanding each organisation and how they run their services. If a provider says this service is not sustainable, I ask for a breakdown of their costs and CareCubed helps us analyse and sense check that.”

Laureta Lake,
Brokerage Manager Specialist Services,
East Sussex County Council



East Sussex County Council (ESCC) was a long-standing user of the Care Funding Calculator (CFC) which was discontinued many years ago and replaced with the digital platform CareCubed. The principles of the tool were already well embedded into processes and the ethos of CareCubed remains the same – to bring transparency to discussions between care commissioners and providers by generating benchmark placement pricing which gives critical evidence as a starting point for negotiations. CareCubed uses model data from multiple regularly updated sources, including considering local variations in costs such as staffing and accommodation.

Sophie Permain, Head of Commissioning for Older People’s Residential and Nursing at East Sussex County Council and the previous Supply and Development Manager for Market Resilience and Engagement at the organisation, said: “We had good experience of CareCubed’s predecessor and strong knowledge of the system’s principles in our team. In the last couple of years, it became obvious that we needed a new solution, with the very best and up-to-date data to support our decision-making and discussions with providers. We decided to move to CareCubed as it is used nationwide and offers lots of new functionality in a digital tool.”

In the first year, East Sussex used CareCubed for accommodation-based support for working-age adults for new placements and reviews. While not all cases were put through CareCubed, high-cost placements were regularly put through the tool, as well as cases where the provider believed the placement was not sustainable. This has led to immediate significant benefits for the authority.

Laureta Lake is the Brokerage Manager Specialist Services at East Sussex County Council. Her team is the single point of contact for placements and the only team with access to CareCubed. “It was agreed in East Sussex that it would be a tool to be used by specialist brokerage. Because of all the years of experience with the CFC, but also due to a very well embedded team and culture where we understand the market, costs and business negotiation and so on, the introduction of the tool was quite seamless. CareCubed has been really helpful in supporting the brokerage role, because it supports the skills and experience in our team and because it uses the latest independent market data, increasing our chances of success.”

Permain said the local market was aware of the working practices in East Sussex, meaning



the first offer from providers is often near the benchmark, which streamlines processes and helps create a sustainable market. “We don’t negotiate down every single time. If something is in the benchmark or value for money, then of course we will accept that as we need to create a sustainable market within the financial constraints that we face. Due to our years’ worth of building relationships with the providers in many cases we are getting more realistic fee quotes at the outset, but we are still able, where appropriate, to make efficiencies.”

East Sussex has already achieved efficiencies in the region of 10 to 12 per cent through the use of advanced negotiation practices, and the use of CareCubed as the most up-to-date benchmarking tool, and cashable savings of more than £1m this financial year (2024/2025).

One thing the tool has been particularly helpful for is reducing over-specification. “That is a distinct advantage of the needs section of the tool,” Permain notes. Lake agrees: “It can help make sure there are no double-funding elements when the tool is completed.”

Lake added that strong provider knowledge has helped the organisation use CareCubed effectively. “It is about understanding each organisation and how they run their services.

If a provider says this service is not sustainable, I will run it through CareCubed and ask for a breakdown of their costs. In a recent case I went through the analysis and the issue was the head office costs and the profit margin. It was helpful to allow me to go back to the provider. We get the breakdown from the providers to help us understand unique services offered, but CareCubed helps us analyse and sense check that,” she said.

Overall, Permain feels local authorities not yet using CareCubed could benefit from the insights it delivers: “I would say the benefit of CareCubed is that it gives the local authority sufficient evidence and information about costs of services to enable them to have an open conversation with the provider about the genuine cost of that service – including a fair and reasonable profit margin. CareCubed brings local authorities and providers to the table with a shared view of benchmark costs, even if providers don’t agree that those are the actual costs of running their service. No-one is saying that those are not the benchmarked costs, but you have to have quite a strong case for going above or going wildly above those costs. It provides the council with a vital layer of cost control.”

Lakes agrees that CareCubed is a beneficial tool. “I would say it helps, especially in the current financial climate. In terms of understanding our market, the costs, and having an evidence base to understand and challenge costs that look outside of expectations.”

SAVINGS FOR THE YEAR 2024/2025 ARE MORE THAN

£1m

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