



**FOR PUBLICATION**

**DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

**IMPROVEMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - PEOPLE**

**WEDNESDAY 8 FEBRUARY 2023**

**Report of the Executive Director – Adult Social Care & Health**

Results of the consultation on proposals for the future provision of the assistive technology monitoring service for community alarm only clients

**1. Purpose**

- 1.1 A report was presented to Cabinet on 10 February 2022 which sought approval to undertake a public consultation on proposals for the future provision of the Assistive Technology (AT) Service for all community alarm only clients. Following Cabinet approval, the consultation took place between 21<sup>st</sup> February 2022 and 1<sup>st</sup> May 2022. We became aware that an administrative error, which meant a number of people, were not sent the consultation letter. In order to give everyone an opportunity to give their views, a targeted consultation was re-opened for those missed clients between Tuesday 27 September 2022 to Monday 5<sup>th</sup> December 2022. Those that had previously been consulted were also offered the opportunity to give any additional comments.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to inform the Scrutiny Committee of the outcome of the public consultation and provide an opportunity for the Scrutiny Committee to submit comments to Cabinet for consideration in making its decision.

## **2. Information and Analysis**

- 2.1 The AT service (previously called community alarm and telecare service) has been in place since 2003, when the responsibility of the Supporting People programme transferred to the Council. As part of this transfer of funding responsibility, the Council was required at that time to maintain the funding arrangements for nearly 5000 people who were supported by the provision of community alarm and telecare.
- 2.2 There are 3 main types of assistive technology available, which can be used either independently or as combined assistance. They are community alarms, telecare and activity monitoring. A community alarm is fitted in someone's home and consists of a base unit and pendant or wristband. When the person needs help, they press the button and are connected to help via a monitoring centre. For those devices connected to a monitoring centre (ie. not a stand-alone pager type device), there is a monitoring charge for this service.
- 2.3 In June 2019, the Council's Cabinet made a decision to continue funding the monitoring charges for the legacy clients and approved implementation of the new eligibility criteria for new clients from 1 November 2019. Legacy clients are those clients that received a DCC funded service prior to 1 November 2019 by virtue of their entitlement to housing benefit or pension credit and were not subject to a Care Act 2014 assessment. The new criteria, implemented on 1 November 2019, limited eligibility to only those aged 18 and over, assessed under the Care Act 2014 as having eligible needs and who would benefit from use of the AT service. Eligibility for support would also be subject to a co-funding assessment, meaning some people would have to pay for or contribute to their own support in accordance with the Council's non-residential co-funding policy.
- 2.4 A report was presented to Cabinet on 10 February 2022 to request approval to consult with people who receive a community alarm only service on proposals for making changes to the eligibility criteria to ensure it is fair and equitable across Derbyshire. This is because there are currently two groups of funded clients, those who are wholly council funded legacy clients (people who have received the service prior to 1 November 2019) and the Care Act eligible clients, subject to financial assessment.

2.5 The options for consideration within the consultation were:

2.5.1 Option One – New Model:

2.5.1.1 Anyone who currently receives the DCC funded community alarm service because they are considered to be a ‘legacy client’ would no longer automatically have their monitoring charge paid for by the Council. Instead, everyone whose current service is limited to a DCC funded community alarm only would be subject to an assessment and would be reviewed in accordance with the Care Act 2014 to decide whether they are eligible to receive the service under Section 2 or Section 18.

2.5.1.2 Those people assessed as eligible for support under Section 2 of the Care Act would be provided with the equipment free of charge and would need to pay the monitoring cost directly to the provider.

2.5.1.3 Those people assessed as Care Act eligible under Section 18 and requiring a wider package of care, which included a community alarm, would be provided with the equipment free of charge but in relation to the ongoing monitoring charges, would be assessed in accordance with the Council’s co-funding policy and the individual’s personal budget would reflect this.

2.5.1.4 Those people assessed as Care Act eligible under Section 18 requiring a community alarm only and no wider package of care would be provided with the equipment free of charge, but in relation to the ongoing monitoring charges, would pay the monitoring cost directly to the provider.

2.5.1.5 The DCC funded community alarm service would continue to be provided free of charge (including equipment and monitoring charge) as part of the Council’s short term service offer. At the end of the period of short-term support, people would be assessed, as set out above, to confirm whether they are eligible to continue receiving the community alarm service in the longer term.

2.5.1.6 Anyone deemed as not eligible following the Care Act 2014 assessment and/or those who are self-funding would continue to have the ability to obtain a community alarm from available providers at their own cost and would be signposted accordingly.

2.5.1.7 Should a person become otherwise eligible for a community alarm service in future, they would be assessed as set out above.

2.5.1.8 A transition period would be offered to all people that were assessed as responsible for their ongoing monitoring charges, to identify any alternative arrangements they wish to put in place. The Council will give notice of any change in service and continue to support people during this transition.

#### 2.5.2 Option Two – existing offer:

The alternative to the proposed new model would be to continue with the current two-tier inequitable system of eligibility. Under this model, new clients would continue to be assessed against Care Act 2014 criteria and ongoing monitoring charges are paid for by the client themselves or reflected in their personal budget, whereby legacy clients would continue to be funded by the Council.

2.6 See Appendix 2 for further details of the proposals, outlined in the Cabinet Report.

### **3 Consultation**

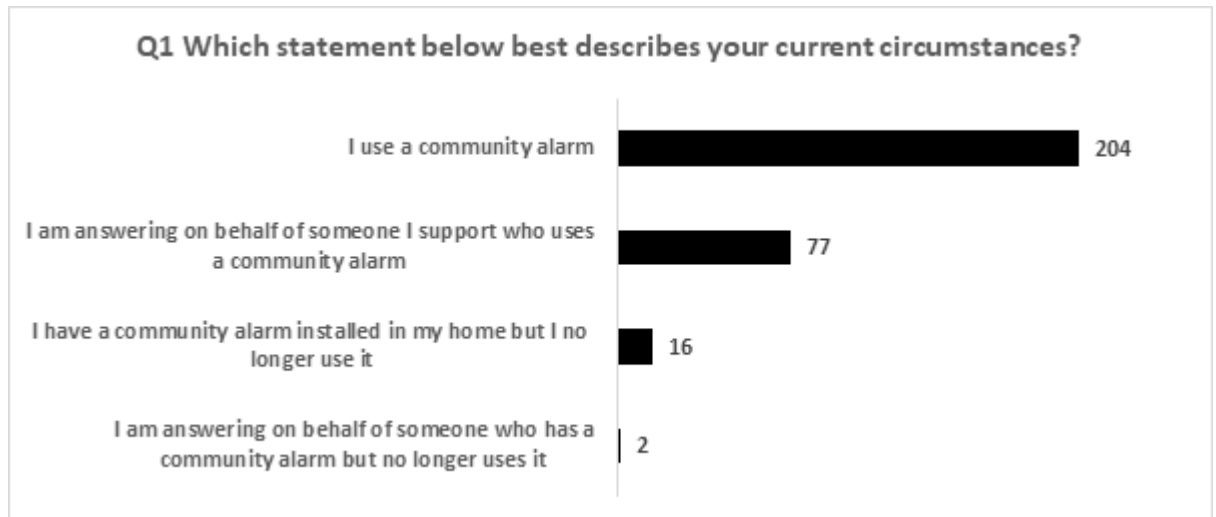
3.1 2615 people, that being all those who currently receive a community alarm only, were sent a letter following the Cabinet decision to consult on the proposals for the of the Assistive Technology Community Alarm Service, containing a link to a questionnaire in relation to the current service and the proposed changes. People were also given the opportunity to request a paper copy of the questionnaire, write to the Council, hold a telephone interview or attend one of six virtual meetings via the Stakeholder Engagement and Consultation Team.

3.2 Information regarding the consultation was available on the Derbyshire County Council Consultation webpage, which gave an outline of the proposals and the ways in which people could share their views.

3.3 The consultation used a quantitative and qualitative approach to gather people's views about the proposed changes, asking for direct responses and additional comments.

3.4 A total of 313 people responded to the consultation, representing 12% of those who received a letter, including 299 respondents who completed questionnaires, and 14 who chose to respond via email, letter, at a meeting or via telephone call.

3.5 Below is a summary of the number of people who responded:



3.6 The Stakeholder Engagement Team (SECT) themed the responses from all qualitative information gathered from the questionnaires, letters, emails, telephone calls, and meetings. Overall, 434 comments were received in addition to the quantitative data received.

3.7 The following summary considers all questions asked and responses received, including quantitative responses and themes identified during the analysis by SECT.

### Summary from responses received:

#### **3.8 Service benefits**

The questionnaire asked people to consider the main benefits of the service. Respondents considered there to be multiple and almost equally important benefits to having a community alarm, in particular feeling safe, providing reassurance and getting help when needed.

#### **3.9 Importance of technology**

The questionnaire asked people to consider how important technology was as part of the overall social care support they receive. Almost two thirds of respondents answered that using technology is 'very important' or 'important'.

### **3.10 Changes to eligibility**

There was a mixed response regarding the proposed eligibility criteria for the provision of community alarms. This can be further seen in the comments provided by respondents which shows responses are based on individual circumstances. Overall, 51.5% did not disagree with the proposals to assess all those legacy clients currently in receipt of a community alarm only, in accordance with Care Act (2014) criteria. Of these, 34.1% agreed or strongly agreed.

### **3.11 Monitoring charge**

Overall, 46.2% did not disagree with the proposals to introduce a monitoring charge. More specifically, this was 44.9% who did not disagree with the proposed changes for those with a community alarm only and 47.5% who did not disagree with the proposed changes for those with a wider package of care.

Overall, 20.8% of respondents said they would be happy to pay the monitoring charges for their community alarm, with 26.4% being neither happy or unhappy and 52.8% being unhappy to do so.

However, when asked what they would be prepared to pay in the event that monitoring charges are implemented, 51.9% said they would be willing to pay up to £5 per week, a small number of respondents said they would be willing to pay over £5. 45.4% of respondents stated they did not want to pay.

### Summary of themes from qualitative comments:

3.12 SECT analysed the comments received, theming them under the following categories in alphabetical order. In the development of the themes, some contained within them a range of responses rather than a set of tightly aligned responses. Others were responses highlighting the same issue.

#### **3.13 Agree with proposals:**

Some respondents felt that the proposals were acceptable, and they agreed. Largely, people want to continue using their community alarm but also agree this option should be available to more people who might need them.

#### **3.14 Alternatives available:**

Some people indicated that they might choose to use their mobile phone instead of continuing to use their community alarm.

- 3.15 Appreciation of service:  
Some respondents made comments that they were appreciative of the value of having a community alarm and provided examples of where this has been effectively used. They said that the community alarm provides peace of mind and is considered vital to helping people to feel safe, build their confidence and maintain their independence and avoids the need for additional services.
- 3.16 Concern for vulnerable clients:  
Some respondents felt that the proposals were a concern, and they had concerns for the new criteria being addressed. There was feedback suggesting that based on the age and/or individual circumstances of those people who currently have their monitoring charges paid for them that it would be inappropriate to leave them without this support, regardless of eligibility.
- 3.17 Confusion over monitoring charges:  
Some people appear to have been unclear about the way in which the monitoring charges would work and who would have to pay this, for example if they receive a wider package of care.
- 3.18 Disagreement with the proposal:  
Some respondents made comment that they were not in agreement with the proposals being addressed and did not want the changes to happen. Some people commented that people shouldn't have to pay, by virtue of their age or need, regardless of Care Act eligibility.
- 3.19 Distress to clients:  
Some respondents felt that the proposals were causing them some distress and anxiety, due to the uncertainty as to whether they would have to pay their community alarm monitoring charges in the future.
- 3.20 Prepared to pay:  
A significant number of people commented that paying towards monitoring charges was reasonable to maintain a good service but requested that charges should be kept to a minimum.
- 3.21 Pressure on personal finances:  
Some respondents made comment that the proposed charges could not be paid for. There was particular concern around the charges in addition to the continuing rise of the cost of living. Many respondents stated that they are already struggling to make ends meet, without the additional pressure of paying for their community alarm.

- 3.22 Regular assessment:  
Some people felt that assessments should be ongoing to ensure the correct people are receiving the service.
- 3.23 Unused equipment:  
Some respondents made comment that the equipment they have is not used.
- 3.24 Other – not falling into a theme:  
There were a number of comments captured which were of a random nature and did not fall into a theme. Some responses particularly in the questionnaire were not addressing the question posed or the proposals in general and therefore were placed under ‘other’.
- 3.25 Full details of the Consultation Report can be found in Appendix 3.

Next steps:

- 3.26 The next steps are for Cabinet to consider the responses from the consultation and the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) to decide on proposals to change the eligibility criteria. This is an opportunity for Scrutiny Committee to make comments for Cabinet to consider.
- 3.27 The Scrutiny Committee should be mindful that the EIA, which has yet to be produced, will be instrumental in the decision making as it must be given due regard by Cabinet.

## **4 Alternative Options Considered**

- 4.1 See section 2.5 above for options considered

## **5 Implications**

- 5.1 See Appendix 1

## **6 Background Papers**

- 6.1 See Appendix 2 and 3



## **7 Appendices**

- 7.1 Appendix 1 - Implications
- 7.2 Appendix 2 – Cabinet Report 10th February 2022: Assistive Technology Service
- 7.3 Appendix 3 – Consultation report on proposals for the future provision of the assistive technology service for community alarm only clients

## **8 Recommendation(s)**

That Committee:

- a) Notes the responses to the public consultation
- b) Notes that all such matters will be considered and included within a comprehensive and robust Equality Impact Analysis (“EIA”) which will be incorporated within any future Cabinet Report which may be presented in due course and further notes that in the event of this occurring Cabinet will fully consider the EIA as part of its decision making.
- c) Considers responses to the Public Consultation and provides comments to Cabinet for consideration when making its decision on the Assistive Technology service.

## **9 Reasons for Recommendation(s)**

- 9.1 An Equality Impact Analysis is being prepared to reflect the issues raised during the consultation process, which will incorporate comments from scrutiny.
- 9.2 The Cabinet will need to have regard to the comments from scrutiny thereof in any decision making.

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**Implications**

**Financial**

1.1 Will be included within any future Cabinet Report

**Legal**

2.1 Will be included within any future Cabinet Report

**Human Resources**

3.1 Not applicable for Scrutiny Committee

**Information Technology**

4.1 Not applicable for Scrutiny Committee

**Equalities Impact**

5.1 Will be included within any future Cabinet Report

**Corporate objectives and priorities for change**

6.1 Will be included within any future Cabinet Report

**Other (for example, Health and Safety, Environmental, Sustainability, Property and Asset Management, Risk Management and Safeguarding)**

7.1 Not applicable

## Appendix 2

### Cabinet Report 10th February 2022: Assistive Technology Service



AT Cabinet paper  
10.2.22.pdf

## Appendix 3

### Consultation report on proposals for the future provision of the assistive technology service for community alarm only clients



SECT Consultation  
Report .docx