

# **Commissioning of TELS reactive call monitoring service, adult social care out of hours service and lone worker services**

**Decision maker: Cabinet member health and adult wellbeing**

**Decision date: Friday, 17 September 2021**

**Report by: Senior Commissioning Officer**

## **Classification**

Open

## **Decision type**

Non-key

## **Wards affected**

(All Wards);

## **Purpose**

To approve the re-commissioning of a reactive call monitoring service, incorporating technology enabled living (TELS) reactive call monitoring, adult social care out of hours (OOH) and the lone working service. These services are currently provided separately and combining them will provide a simplified contract arrangements and potential efficiencies and quality improvements in service delivery. It is proposed that a contract is awarded for two years, with options to extend for two further years.

## **Recommendation(s)**

That:

- a) The commissioning of a reactive call monitoring service comprising TELS call monitoring, out of hours and lone working services, via a competitive tender process is approved, to a maximum total value of £340k, for a maximum period of four years; and**
- b) The assistant director for all age commissioning, is authorised to take the operational decisions required to award a contract, on completion of a satisfactory and compliant tender process and to ensure its implementation.**

## Alternative options

1. Not to continue the services. This option is not recommended as it would leave around 2,450 vulnerable people without potentially vital support provided by the services. The call monitoring is an essential tool for those residents needing additional support to live independently. In addition there would be no safe or effective management of emergency and out of hours calls, which would prevent the appropriate meeting of statutory obligations around assessments, including under the Mental Health Act 2007 by approved mental health professionals (AMHPs)
2. Directly award a new contract to the current providers to continue to deliver the services for a further period of two years. This option is not recommended as the call monitoring service has not been tendered competitively since 2013, which raises significant risk of a procurement challenge. The reactive call receiving market is competitive. In practice the proposed decision can be completed within the time available, so that continuation of existing contracts would be unnecessary.

## Key considerations

3. The commissioned reactive call monitoring service provides the 24hr manned response for the technology equipment prescribed by the Independent Living Services team in the council, most commonly involving a pendant and alarm unit.
4. The purchasing, installation and maintenance of technology enabled living (TELS) equipment is managed separately through the Integrated Community Equipment Service (ICES) contract with NRS, and it is proposed this will continue as originally contracted.
5. The reactive call monitoring service commissioned by the council supports around 2,450 people on average, through approx. 2,100 call monitoring alarm systems, installed in homes across the county. There is a current contract cost of 0.44p per week, per connection, following an initial period of six weeks which is free of charge in line with requirements of the Care Act 2014.
6. The service was originally tendered as part of the much larger reablement contract in 2013 and began in 2014. The call monitoring element of the reablement service remained outsourced with Connexus (formerly Herefordshire Housing Limited), once the wider service areas within the contract were brought back in house in 2016.
7. The current contracting arrangements are via a direct award originally to Connexus but the contract is now with Doro Care UK, following the sale of the business by Connexus in October 2020. The direct award to Connexus was undertaken to allow future plans for the use and approach of technology to be progressed and agreed. There was initially a one year direct award in 2019/20, followed by a further two year direct award in 2020, to cover the period until March 2022.

8. The council was aware of the sale of the telecare business by Connexus and agreed to a novation or assignment of the contract, on the basis there was insufficient time and detail known about the sale to undertake a procurement exercise. This transfer was problematic for a variety of reasons, disrupting service for a small number of customers and involving significant work for council staff to resolve issues. Key elements of performance of the service by the current provider have been disappointing. Although performance is improving, there are ongoing issues which take up significant operational and commissioning time.
9. The council is committed to using TELs to its full potential to help people be independent, healthy and transform their experience of care and support. This approach reflects the council's County Plan as well as the commissioning intentions approved within the council's Market Position Statement.
10. The longer term aspiration is that technology services will help target support to the most vulnerable people by predicting risk, promote independence and reduce reliance on formal cost intensive packages of care.
11. Some short consultancy work was commissioned in 2021 to devise and develop this longer term model of technology delivery, augmenting and enhancing the current reactive services to include proactive, more preventative support.
12. The discussions regarding the potential to innovate and look at system wide solutions are reaching the final proposal stages, but the timescales will not align in order to implement concurrently with the existing reactive monitoring service.
13. The current reactive service is provided to disabled people, older frail people and those at risk of falls, along with learning disabled people and people with a sensory impairment. It is therefore vital that the right service is procured with the minimal disruption to the customer who should have the best quality service we can procure.
14. Over the lifetime of the contract, it is expected that there will be growth in demand for the TELS service linked to the growing older population, with a predicted increase of around 5% per year in those needing support from adult social care between now and 2036.
15. The average monthly increase in the number of connections in the existing call monitoring service rose by 8% from 2019/20 to 2021/22 and the year to date average number of connections has increased by 5% compared to last year. Therefore an increase of a minimum of 5% needs to be factored in to the budget.
16. A re-procurement exercise provides an opportunity to undertake a comprehensive update of the service specification to strengthen the service including the industry standard responses and wider prevention and signposting which could link to Talk Community.
17. It is proposed that the adult social care out of hours call handling contract is included in a new conjoined service. This takes calls overnight and at weekends and relays them to approved mental health professionals (AMHPs) to undertake assessments under the mental health act and handle wider adult social care emergencies. The lone worker support contract would also be incorporated. Currently this is focused around the AMHP team but will be gradually extended to cover other teams providing out of hours support.

Both these current contracts will expire in March 2022, in line with the TELS call monitoring and procuring them together as one will ensure continuity and deliverability and enable efficiencies.

18. Requirements for the new service will be developed to ensure flexibility and must include the monitoring of new digital technology and opportunities to work collaboratively on the digital rollout and piloting of new technology.
19. The contract period proposed is for a two year period, with options to extend for a further two years at yearly intervals, with appropriate break clauses. This will allow alignment, whilst the longer term model and approach to technology is developed across both health and social care.
20. It is proposed that the council procures the new service via an existing compliant framework operated by Consortium Procurement, which has a number of national leading organisations, already prequalified for tender submissions. The framework has been reviewed and is considered fit for purpose to cover all the elements the council would require. Potential bidders therefore have already completed robust preliminary quality checks in order for them to be approved on the framework. This will reduce the timescale required to procure to ensure milestones are reached and a new contract in place for 1 April 2022. The summary timetable includes;

17 September 21	Service design and procurement documents completed
24 September 21	Procurement commences via framework
18 October 21	Clarification period closes
2 November 21	Deadline for tender submissions
16 November 21	Completion of tender evaluation
2 December 21	Award of Contract
Mid December 21	Commence new service mobilisation
31 March 22	Mobilisation of services complete.

## **Community impact**

21. The proposed tendering of TELS, out of hours service and the lone working service will directly support the ambitions of the council's County Plan (2020-2024) by using technology to support homecare and extend independent living, with technology cited as a key component for promoting and supporting wellbeing, particularly for those with high levels of need. In addition, the council's Market Position Statement also clearly supports the optimisation of effective and appropriate TEL provision.
22. The council is committed to providing a healthy and safe environment for all individuals affected by the council's activities. Therefore the council seeks to ensure that the work it and its partners undertake, does not adversely affect the health, safety or welfare of vulnerable adults or the workforce supporting them. The commissioning of a call monitoring service supporting use of TELS equipment is designed in part to protect the health and safety of residents in their own homes.

23. During the early stages of the new contract, there will be consideration for how Talk Community can contribute towards the support of service users, particularly in relation to those calls linked to loneliness or high frequency service users.

## **Environmental Impact**

24. The council provides and purchases a wide range of services for the people of Herefordshire. Together with partner organisations in the private, public and voluntary sectors we share a strong commitment to improving our environmental sustainability, achieving carbon neutrality and to protect and enhance Herefordshire's outstanding natural environment.

25. The environmental impact of this proposal has been considered through the service specification and includes appropriate requirements on the contractor/delivery partner to minimise waste, reduce energy and carbon emissions and to consider opportunities to enhance biodiversity. This will be managed and reported through the ongoing contract management. By using technology and it will minimise travel unless necessary to ensure the individual is safe.

26. Prospective bidders will be asked to demonstrate their commitment to the council's environmental commitment as part of the procurement process.

27. The telecare equipment will be collected and reused through the existing contract to supply and install via the integrated community equipment service (ICES), where recycling is a key performance indicator. Robust management will be in place to ensure any equipment is collected and reused as soon as there is no longer a need for it. There is a clear policy around repairing to ensure as much of the equipment as possible is reissued rather than purchasing new items.

## **Equality duty**

28. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

29. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and

demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services. Our providers will be made aware of their contractual requirements in regards to equality legislation.

30. The service supports the council in discharging its equality duty as it supports many individuals with protected characteristics including those with a disability or the most vulnerable. It is also advancing equality of opportunity by providing a service which enables people to remain in their own home, therefore positively contributing to the equality agenda
31. The Equality Act 2010 established a positive obligation on local authorities to promote equality and to reduce discrimination in relation to any of the nine 'protected characteristics' (age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; marriage and civil partnership; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation). In particular, the council must have 'due regard' to the public sector equality duty when taking any decisions on service changes.

## **Resource implications**

32. Annual spend on the monitoring service is around £50,000. As this is a demand led spot purchase, this can vary on an annual basis, although it has remained relatively static over the last 15 months at around 2,100 connections per month.
33. Service users are offered the service free of charge for the first six weeks and then a charge of £2.86 per connection per week is implemented, generating around £250k per annum in income that contributes to the operation of the telecare assessment and management functions within the council's independent living services (ILS) team as well as the externally commissioned call monitoring service.
34. There is a small risk that a new procurement exercise may increase the costs of the reactive call monitoring service as they have been static for a number of years with the exception of an increase of 1p per week in 2019/20. Through informal research, it is understood that recently awarded contracts in other local authorities of a similar size have been at around the 45p per week mark.
35. The additional elements being proposed for inclusion in the procurement are the adult social care out of hours service and a lone worker monitoring service.
36. The cost of these elements currently are; £20,199 per annum for the adult social care out of hours service and £1255.56 per annum (£104.93 per month for nine licenses) for the lone worker system for the AMHP out of hours workers. There are also wider teams within the prevention and support services division requiring access to a lone worker system. As above, the annual costs of the call monitoring service is in the region of 50k with the expectation this will rise with increased demand.
37. The service is funded through council resources and offset by income as outlined above.
38. The anticipated annual costs for each element of the procurement are highlighted below

Revenue or Capital cost of project (indicate R or C)	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	Future years	Total
<b>Revenue expenditure</b>				<b>£000</b>		
<i>Monitoring service</i>		52	55	58	61	226
<i>Lone worker service</i>		3	3	3	3	12
<i>Out of hours service</i>		21	21	21	21	84
<i>Procurement fees</i>	1	0	0	0	0	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>323</b>

## Legal implications

39. The proposed contract will be procured through a Public Contracts Regulations 2015 compliant framework and therefore the procurement exercise will be in accordance with the council's contracts procedures rules.
40. The contract awarded will be in the form required by the framework.

## Risk management

41. The risks arising from not adopting the recommendation in this report are outlined below;

Risk / opportunity	Mitigation
If the recommendation is not approved it would create the risk of there being with no contact or services in place. This could lead to an increase in long term care and hospital admissions and failure to meet statutory duties under the Care Act 2014	The evidence of the impact of not approving the recommendation is clearly outlined in the report. Some of our most vulnerable service users would be at significant risk and there would be impact upon wider independence and wellbeing. There is no effective mitigation for having no reactive call services.
Continued service delivery without contracts in place would represent a breach of procurement regulations and the council's own contract procedure rules. In such a busy competitive market, risk of legal challenge would be high.	The proposed competitive re-procurement of all three services provides full mitigation of this risk.

The cost to deliver the service may increase	Market research suggests that this risk is minimal given prices adopted following procurements elsewhere. It is a competitive market and there will be appropriate weighting of price in the tender.
Disruption to customers and services in transferring provision to a potential new provider.	All bidding providers will need to present robust plans for preventing and mitigating any disruption as part of mobilisation plans and risk management. The council has recent experience of a transfer of customers for these services and has taken significant learning from this.
There is little market interest in delivering all three elements of the services together.	This is unlikely as the framework the council is intending to use covers all of the areas involved. Furthermore, there is no incompatibility between the three services.
Insufficient time in which to procure and mobilise a new service	Timescales have been agreed and there is confidence in procuring and mobilising within them.

42. Risks will be managed at a service level and regular reports to the Commissioning Programme Board and through the directorate leadership team in liaison with other relevant service areas. Risks will be escalated to Directorate level as required.

43. The proposed decision provides an opportunity to ensure continuity of service for a significant number of vulnerable people, whilst allowing time to develop a more comprehensive, economic approach which helps manage demand for care and support in the long term.

## Consultees

44. At this stage consultation is not required as the services provided to existing service users will remain unchanged.

45. In the longer term, alongside the existing customer satisfaction surveys carried out through the integrated community equipment service as the equipment provider, the new provider of the monitoring service will also be required to undertake satisfaction surveys throughout the lifetime of the contract.

## Appendices

None

## Background papers

None



**Please include a glossary of terms, abbreviations and acronyms used in this report.**