

## Record of officer decision

<b>Decision title:</b>	<b>Out Of Hours (OOH) call handling service for Adult Social Care (ASC)</b>
<b>Date of decision:</b>	18 March 2024
<b>Decision maker:</b>	Corporate Director Community Wellbeing
<b>Authority for delegated decision:</b>	<p><b>Purpose:</b> To award a contract for the provision of an Out Of Hours (OOH) call handling service for calls to Adult Social Care (ASC) services including the AMHP (Approved Mental Health Professional).</p> <p><b>Decision:</b> That: The council extends its current Out of Hours call handling contract with The Answering Service to include an Out Of Hours call handling service for Adult Social Care AMHPs customers</p>
<b>Ward:</b>	Countywide
<b>Consultation:</b>	<p>We consulted with;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Talk Community Digital and Engagement Lead</li> <li>• The Talk Community Customer Service Officer Supervisor</li> <li>• The AMHP LPS and EDT Services Manager</li> <li>• Commercial Services</li> </ul> <p>• This proposal was discussed at Commissioning Board on 27 Feb 2024.</p>
<b>Decision made:</b>	<p>The council currently has a contract with Shropshire Council for the provision of an Out Of Hours call handling service for Adult Social Care services including the AMHP services.</p> <p>This is a 2 year contract running from 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2024 with provision to extend for a further two years (1 year + 1 Year).</p> <p>The cost of this contract is £22,500 per annum.</p> <p>Call volumes are approximately 550 per year.</p> <p><b>In January 2024 Shropshire CC notified Herefordshire Council that it was not in a position to continue with contract beyond existing contract end date of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024</b></p> <p>Herefordshire Council therefore requires a replacement service from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024.</p> <p>The council currently has another out of hours service with a company called The Answering Service. This covers a wide range of services ranging from Animal welfare, Car Parking, emergency information, Floods and so on.</p> <p>This contract is managed by the Talk Community Digital and Engagement Lead.</p> <p>The proposal is to merge the council's current ASC Out of Hours call handling contract into The Answering Service.</p> <p>The merged contract will commence on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2024</p> <p><b>Cost</b> There will be a one off set up cost of £950. (This is to pay for programming their system to handle our script)</p> <p>There will be an ongoing subscription of £200 per month or £2,400 per year</p> <p>Calls will be charged at the rate of £1.10 per minute. If there are no calls then there will be no charge.</p> <p>The cost of this part of the service is dependent on two variables; the number of calls and the length of calls. Any assessment of potential cost is therefore theoretical however, a prudent assumption of costs would look like this;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the number of calls received is 600 (allowing for an increase of about 10% compared to the current level of demand)</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the average call duration will be 3 minutes each (The current average is between 2 to 3 minutes). This would give a potential cost of 600 calls X (3mins x £1.10 = £3.30) = £1,980).</li> </ul> <p><b>In summary;</b> taking the known costs (set up and subscription fee) and then adding an estimate for call charges (using an assumption that the volume of calls will increase slightly and may be of a slightly longer average duration) the overall cost of the service is expected to be in the region of £4,400 a year.</p>
<p><b>Reasons for decision:</b></p>	<p>The provision of an out of hours AMHPs call service is a statutory obligation on the council under the Mental Health Act (1983). It therefore cannot let this service lapse.</p> <p>This decision will allow for a seamless transfer of cover from Shropshire CC to TAS. The public will see no difference in the service. A script to guide the call operatives has already been written and agreed by the AMHP LPS and EDT Services Manager for the existing contract with Shropshire. This will be updated and reused for the TAS contract.</p> <p>There is also potentially, a significant cash saving to be made by switching to the new provider.</p> <p>Longer term, the decision also allows for a realignment and redesign of OOH services used by the council. The contract with the Answering Service has recently been extended by one year (to March 31 2025).</p> <p>This decision to merge the ASC service into the TAS contract offers an opportunity for the council to begin the consolidation of several of their out of hours services into a seamless single offer with a view of going to the market for a new service starting in 2025.</p>
<p><b>Highlight any associated risks/finance/legal/equality considerations:</b></p>	<p>Commercial Services have advised that, as the additional value to be added to the existing TAS represents less than 10% of that contract's value, the decision to vary the TAS contract to include the ASC OOH service can be taken by the Director without the need to consult with Legal.</p>
<p><b>Details of any alternative options considered and rejected:</b></p>	<p>Enquiries were made to the following services to ascertain whether they could include the ASC OOHs service into their existing contracts;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Taurus (OOH GP service). They were unable to add our service to their contract.</li> <li>- Connect Assist (Private call answering company) They were unable to offer us a service.</li> </ul> <p>We have also considered some other council OOH call services namely;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Progress Lifeline (call monitoring service for our traditional telecare based equipment)</li> <li>- Mole Valley Life (call monitoring service for the council's forthcoming technology predict and prevent programme)</li> </ul> <p>In both instances the contract manager did not recommend these providers as being suitable.</p> <p>We also enquired of Shropshire CC as to whether they could accommodate us in their new OOH arrangement (to be run by their local Fire Service). They confirmed that they could not provide us with a service.</p>
<p><b>Details of any declarations of interest made:</b></p>	<p>None</p>