

3 November 2022		ITEM: 10
Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Request to Consult for the Charging of Assistive Technology Monitoring Service		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Key	
Report of: Ian Kennard, Commissioning Manager, Adults Housing and Health		
Accountable Assistant Director: Les Billingham, Assistant Director, Adult Social Care and Community Development		
Accountable Director: Ian Wake, Corporate Director Adults Housing and Health		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

It is a statutory requirement under the Care Act (2014) for the Authority to provide Assistive Technology (AT) free of charge to eligible individuals if the item is under £1k. These devices are, at present, monitored 24 hours a day 7 days a week by an Alarm Receiving Centre (ARC) that is based in Harty Close in Grays. The purpose of this monitoring service is to support individuals living at home for longer by mitigating risks such as falling, wandering etc.

There are 2197¹ individuals accessing this monitoring service at present that are eligible for support via Adult Social Care via a variety of devices and pay nothing to access this. Adult Social Care would like to consult with individuals accessing this service around potentially charging for this so we can offset some of the financial pressures the Authority faces.

1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 **That Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee comments on and supports the recommendation to consult with individuals using AT on potentially charging a fixed fee for accessing the monitoring service subject to a means test.**

¹ Data supplied by ARC on May 12 2022

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 At present all AT is supplied via a contract held by Red Alert that costs Adult Social Care £107k per annum to fulfil its statutory requirements under the Care Act (2014) and has been in place since 2018.
- 2.2 Historically the Authority has charge £1.00 per week for Lifeline alarms that accessed the monitoring service, however this was repealed by Cabinet several years ago. No other monitoring service charges have been levied by Adult Social Care.
- 2.3 If the Authority were minded to charge for the monitoring service via a non-residential means test (as used for such things a homecare services), up to £200k could be generated in income for a flat fee of £5 per week, though this would fluctuate based on the individuals ability to pay. The current non-residential means test takes into consideration a person's ability to pay and additional expenses they may have in relation to their health and wellbeing, thus preventing putting people into poverty.
- 2.4 Other Authorities do charge for this service with Leeds declaring charges between £3.30 to £15.35 and Brighton & Hove between £20.30 to £26.30 per month² subject to a means test. This is not a universally charged service as some Authorities do not charge, others provide equipment source from Providers who then bill and other charge without a means test.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 **Undertake consultation with a view to bring the result to cabinet for a future decision on charging (recommended).**
 - 3.1.1 The consultation would enable the Authority to seek individual opinions on their thoughts on paying for access to this service. This would provide an indication of those who would be likely, if charged, that would withdraw from service to better understand of the viability and suitability of applying charges to this monitoring service.
- 3.2 **Do not consult on charging options (not recommended).**
 - 3.2.1 This would limit the services ability to achieve its savings targets closing an avenue that could generate up to £200k per annum and push the emphasis from charging to service cuts or provider negotiations.
 - 3.2.2 At present the Authority is in the lowest quintile of spend on services nationally. Therefore, pressures around National Living Wage, inflation and National Insurance uplifts should be driving prices upward. This means negotiations with Providers will have limited impact thus placing more emphasis on charges and cost recovery in order to balance the bottom line.

² Information provided from Authorities via question issued to National Association of Financial Assessment Officers (NAFAO) May 26th 2022.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 The consultation would enable a frank discourse between residents and the Authority around the funding of the services, potential risks individuals may face and further explore income generation potential.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

- 5.1 Initial engagement has taken place with Assistive Technology Leads in Thurrock. Their view is that a small charge for services would be appropriate and would not negatively impact the effectiveness of the service offer. Though they feel it would be appropriate to explore the potential impacts further with individuals directly via a consultation exercise.

6. Impact on corporate policies priorities, performance and community impact

- 6.1 The consultation around charging of Assistive Technology monitoring service will impact on:

People – a borough where people of all ages are proud to work and play, live and stay.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Mike Jones**
Strategic Lead Finance Corporate Finance

The direct financial implications are contained within the body of the report. Savings linked to the proposals have been factored into the Councils Medium Term Financial Strategy, and will be considered as part of the 2023/24 base budget

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Kevin Molloy**
Senior Contracts Lawyer Legal Services

Section 14 of the Care Act 2014 gives local authorities the power to charge for services, and any future decision to charge for the services referred to above will need to adhere to the requirements laid out in this legislation.

7.3 **Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Roxanne Scanlon**
**Community Engagement and Project
Monitoring Officer**

The proposed consultation is in line with regulations set out in the Care Act (2014) when considering charging for services. Additionally, consultation with the individuals that could be impacted by instituting charges for monitoring services will enable our democratically elected members to better weight up the potential impact and feeling towards potential charges. A Community Equality Impact Assessment will be completed following consultation to identify any negative impacts and inform any processes to mitigate these impacts as best as possible.

7.4 **Other** implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health Inequalities, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder or Impact on Looked After Children

N/A

8. **Background papers used in preparing this report** (include their location and identify whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

N/A

9. **Appendices to the report**

N/A

Report Author:

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