
Meeting of the Adult Social Care Select Committee – 20th November 2024

Report of the Director of Adult Social Care

The Dudley Telecare Service

Purpose of report

1. To provide an update to members regarding the implementation of the digital alarm receiving centre (ARC), charging policy and our progress towards the replacement programme as part of the analogue to digital switchover.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that Select Committee Members: -
 - Note the delay to increase the telecare service charge from October 2024 and that the charge will increase from April 2025.
 - To scrutinise the analogue to digital switchover programme and progress to-date.

Background

3. Dudley has a population of approximately 323,495 people. By 2031 it is projected, the population will increase by 13,990 (4.4%), seeing a rise in the 65 and over age group, with the 85+ age group increasing by 70%.
4. A new charging policy for Telecare came into effect from 1st April 2023, seeing all customers connected to the service, regardless of their tenure, charged for the service they receive. A further uplift had been proposed of 4.88% for October 2024, however, this has been delayed until April 2025, to provide time for the customer base to stabilise.

5. To ensure we adhere to the MTFs plan, we propose to implement an uplift to the Telecare monthly equipment hire and service charge by 9.88% from April 2025. The current monthly charge is £21.30 +VAT, if the suggested uplift is approved, this will see the monthly charge rise to £23.40 + VAT.
6. Telecare have MTFs to achieve in 2024/25 of £0.400m. Following a functional review, additional MTFs of £0.200m has been agreed for 2025/26, with a further £0.104m in 2026/27.
7. The 9.88% uplift in April 2025 would generate additional income in 2025/26 of £0.117m.
8. Adult Social Care staff through the ongoing development of a strength-based approach, must consider technology to support individuals and carers to maximise independence and make best use of resources.
9. A national move to digital, enforced by phone providers across the country has meant that all Telecare solutions must switch from the current analogue system to digital by 2025. To undertake this, and to ensure the safety of those connected already to the service, Telecare has procured a new digitally enabled alarm receiving centre (ARC) to ensure those connected remain so without any discontinuation of service.

Award of new Digital ARC

10. The procurement concluded in May 2024 and the tender awarded to Enovation.
11. The timeline to go live is forecast for early December 2024.

Analogue to Digital

12. A steering group has been set up to provide oversight, membership includes Adult Social Care, Housing, Procurement and Digital and Technology ahead of the national switchover. The next phase is to explore a procurement framework to purchase the telecare equipment.
13. We attend the regular information sessions provided by the Local Government Association and Technology Enabled Care (TEC) Services Association, to gain updates on the telecommunication upgrade plans

and best practices, to support the implementation of our replacement programme.

14. We have worked with the major network providers such as Virgin and BT to complete data sharing agreements to safeguard the Telecare customer base. This will minimise un-announced and bulk migration switchovers, and allow a partnered, planned approach.
15. BT have delayed the forced migration to 2027 for their customers.

Technology Enabled Care

16. The Adult Social Care Digital Transformation Fund has allowed the Black Country Integrated Care System (ICS) access to funding to assist with:
 - Adoption of a Digital Social Care Record (DSCR) across the Care Home Sector.
 - Sensor Based Falls prevention technology.
 - Other technology (not already being funded through other national allocations i.e. Remote Monitoring and Supporting Independence Through Technology (SITT)).
 - The task is to reach targets during the 3 year duration of the programme, concluding in March 2025.
17. Currently Dudley, working alongside the ICS and other local authorities, are working through delivery of the above schemes, and it is expected that the System will deliver the following throughout the life span of the programme:
 - 85% of adult social care CQC registered providers will have adopted a digital social care record by March 2025.
 - 20% of social care provider will have acoustic monitoring solution or equivalent care tech in place by March 2025. This would be targeted at the 20% most at-risk residents with social care providers. The mandate for this was limited to year 1.
 - Full deployment of at least one other type of care tech, driven by the benefits case and local need. Supporting Independence Through Technology (SITT) has been agreed as the other type of Care Tech and must be piloted by March 2025.

Progress so far

18. There has been agreed focus with the ICB on Digital Social Care Records (DSCR) and Supporting Independence Through Technology (SITT).

Digital social care records –

- We have achieved circa 80% applications for the DSCR and expect to exceed our target of 85% by March 2025 through our monthly discussions with providers.
- We are working directly with Tiled House, Intermediate Care Unit in Dudley, as an exemplar to uncover problems and provide solutions.

SITT –

- The Bid Award was announced on 15th January after the review of bid submissions. Connected Care Services (Ethel Care) will be the contracted supplier.
- After extensive testing of the Ethel Care system and several software updates, we went live with the pilot on the 9th September 2024.
- The evaluation period will conclude by mid-February 2025, whereby a decision will be made to procure the services into business-as-usual or revert to the previous way of working.

New Initiatives

19. Commercial opportunities are being explored to realise the medium-term financial strategy. They include exploring call monitoring opportunities for other organisations that have not invested to remain compliant, following the analogue to digital switchover.
20. We are also exploring the potential delivery of the corporate lone worker system, which is currently outsourced, following the implementation of the digital ARC.
21. Funding has already been secured to support the Ethel care project through the installation and decommissioning of equipment by Telecare staff, with a further business case being submitted to fund virtual wellbeing calls that will replace in person care visits.

Challenges

22. We continue to work with staff to develop their digital skills and undertake all training required to fully maximise the efficiencies a digital ARC can provide. Training is extensive and will require time to fully onboard and embed, promoting the culture that is required across the team, ensuring we are ready for the analogue to digital switchover, and the changes required to reach our full potential as a service.

Finance

23. The Dudley Telecare Service is funded through the general fund, private income, and the Housing Revenue Account for all Sheltered Housing Schemes and the out of hours services provided by Telecare. Additional investment for the replacement programme and SIM card costs in the future is being progressed with Housing, Adult Social Care and Commercial colleagues and any recommendations regarding future charges will be progressed through Cabinet and the appropriate Select Committee.
24. To make best use of resources we have already started to:
- Buy hybrid equipment, so that once the switchover is completed, the digitally enabled equipment will already be in situ in the customer's home, but equally currently works via analogue.
 - We are utilising all 'appropriate' appointments to replace analogue equipment with hybrid to ensure each visit is maximised. This will reduce the number of future visits required for 'replacement only'.
25. For the 2024/25 financial year, based on the following client numbers and discount rates:
- 1,187 council tenants (56% with CTR discount).
 - 2,855 private tenants (15% with CTR discount).
26. It is expected that we will see an over-achievement on private tenant income of £0.022m and a shortfall on council tenant income of £0.242m against target. Net position is a shortfall of £0.220m.

27. We are currently on target to offset this income shortfall with savings against vacancies and other expenditure within Telecare and Access Front of House.
28. Since the February update there has been a net reduction in clients of 143 (+20 private tenants, -163 council tenants). This is due to the 50% discount ending for existing council tenant clients.
29. Previously a target was applied to assume a +15% increase to the telecare client base, assuming that the client base would stabilise and increase after the initial loss of clients from the charging strategy.
30. This has been removed at present from assumptions. Telecare are currently managing the risk of the digital switchover for all active clients and therefore not actively promoting the service. It is anticipated that the switchover will be complete by the end of the calendar year.
31. At this point new targets will be explored to help maximise client numbers and income in 2025/26.
32. Assuming the same client numbers as 2024/25, with the 9.88% uplift applied, there is predicted to be a shortfall on income of £0.297m in 2025/26. This includes estimated full year income of £0.030m as a result of charging for installation.
33. If 2.08 FTE vacant posts remain held until at least 31/03/26, and DFG capital funding is maximised in year for purchase of new hybrid equipment, £0.221m of the above shortfall can be offset with expenditure savings. This leaves a net pressure of £0.028m.
34. Telecare would need an additional +118 new clients for the full year to offset the remaining pressure of £0.028m. This assumes 56% have CTR discount applied.

35. We are proposing a 3year uplift plan from 2026 with the following options:
- 3% inflation for 3 years from 2026/27 would generate additional income of £121k (2% of this is likely to be assumed in our council targets)
 - 5% inflation for 3 years from 2026/27 would generate additional income of £206k (additional £85k to 3% option)
 - 10% inflation for 3 years from 2026/27 would generate additional income of £432k (additional £226k to 5% option/additional £311k to 3% option)

Further details/breakdown of this can be found in (Appendix 1.0)

36. There is ongoing work between Accountancy and Telecare to ensure all customers in receipt of the service are paying. There is a discrepancy at present between the number of active telecare customers and number of clients billed on Unit4 Business World. This does add risk to the forecast, and we are cross checking data sets to understand why this is and ensure the data sets match up.

Law

37. Dudley Telecare Service supports statutory responsibilities. Section 2 of the Care Act 2014 states: where the local authority provides or arranges for care and support, the type of support may itself include support such as assistive technology in the home or equipment/adaptations, and approaches to meeting needs should be inclusive of less intensive or service-focused options.
38. Section 4 of The Care Act states that local authorities should facilitate local markets to encourage a sufficiency of preventative, enablement, and support services, including support for carers to make caring more sustainable where services such as Telecare are utilised to assist people achieve more independence and support the outcomes they want.

Risk Management

39. Working closely with all stakeholders in the Analogue to Digital Steering Group, we can identify risks throughout project and ensure we take



actions to mitigate any risks identified. The main risk identified, is to ensure our customers remain connected throughout the switchover, minimising any loss of service provision. The actions taken to mitigate this risk, is a data sharing agreement, with both major network providers, BT and Virgin.

Equality Impact

40. The service is available to anyone in need, living in the borough of Dudley, and shall be delivered in line with the councils Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion strategy 2022-2025, to adhere to equality legislation.
41. To provide a positive impact on marginalised groups is evidenced throughout the report, such as those protected by equality legislation based on their age, being a carer, and supporting an ageing population.

Human Resources/Organisational Development

42. All necessary changes to the operating staffing structure were completed as part of the previous telecare review through consultation with those affected, involving recognised trade unions, ensuring Council HR policy and Procedures are adhered to.

Commercial/Procurement

43. Systems and equipment continue to move forward with the imminent nationwide telephony shift from analogue to digital by 2025. We are working with colleagues in Housing, Procurement, Commercial and the Corporate Steering Group, to ensure the procurement of the digitally enabled equipment for the replacement programme is realised.
44. We continue to manage the outcomes and financial impact of the implementation of the Telecare Charging Policy, giving time for the customer base to recover.

Environment / Climate Change

45. We continue to maximise each visit made to our customers, taking the opportunity to switch out old analogue TEC once the primary reason for the visit has been addressed, during the analogue to digital upgrade. Doing this reduces the need for 'upgrade only' visits in the future,

as we recognise this is considerably more environmentally friendly and cost effective, supporting the council's vision to address climate change. We will also plan and minimise travel for all planned installations/upgrades, to reduce our carbon footprint.

Council Plan

Financial sustainability, efficiency and providing best value.

46. Telecare is working within tighter spending controls, as shown in sections 21-23, making savings against vacancies and other expenditure.
47. The procurement of our new Digital ARC will enable operational efficiencies and allow the opportunity to explore how the new cloud hosted solution, which will reduce reliance on our own ICT department, can support the wider council with their lone worker solution, which is currently outsourced.

Delivering for our customers, residents and communities

48. Digital TEC is now being deployed from Telecare gives greater choice and control over how those connected to it remain independent in their home. Digital TEC no longer requires a land line which, we know previously prevented some taking the service due to its additional cost.

M. Bowsher.

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Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Annual price increase uplift options