

**REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR FOR PROMOTING INDEPENDENCE
AND PUBLIC PROTECTION****COLLECTION OF SERVICE CHARGES FOR TELECARE****Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to recommend a change to the policy for collecting telecare service charges. The change will enable the council to extend its provision of telecare to a wider group of service users, supporting their independence and reducing the need for social care.

Information and Advice

2. Telecare is a more advanced version of the community alarm or 'Lifeline' service which has existed primarily in sheltered housing for a number of decades. Telecare links a range of home safety and personal hazard sensors in a vulnerable person's home to a 24 hour monitoring centre. The monitoring centre can receive alerts from the sensors and arrange an appropriate response, such as contacting the person through the main telecare unit in their home to provide advice and reassurance, or calling an ambulance if there is a medical emergency.
3. Telecare sensors are available to monitor a range of risks in the home, including:
 - Falls
 - 'Wandering' by people with dementia
 - Night time incontinence
 - Poor medication compliance
 - Night Time epileptic seizures
 - Flood, fire and carbon monoxide gas.
4. A number of studies of telecare have demonstrated that it can help to provide more cost effective care for vulnerable older and disabled people, including people with dementia and learning disabilities. For example, a 2011 report, *Telecare and Telehealth: Progress and Opportunities in the East Midlands*, commissioned by the East Midlands Joint Improvement Partnership examined the impact of telecare provided to 642 people across the region. The report found that annual savings for social care were between £449,512 and £499,458.
5. Following a tender process, Nottinghamshire County Council entered into a contract with Tunstall Healthcare Limited to provide a countywide telecare service

from October 2011. The service supports a number of Adult Social Care, Health and Public Protection (ASCH&PP) savings business cases, including:

- Alternatives To Residential Care
 - Reduced spend on Learning Disability & Mental Health Community Care
 - Reduced spend on Older Persons Community Care.
6. When the new telecare service commenced in October 2011 it was targeted at service users who met the Fair Access to Care (FACS)¹ eligibility criteria for the provision of social care support. Under the Department Of Health rules, no charge can be made to the service user for the provision of telecare equipment, but a charge for ongoing service costs, such as the provision of the 24 hour telecare monitoring service, is permitted. Since October 2011, a charge of £2 per week has been made for the ongoing service provision and this has been included in the personal budget amount which has been identified to fund the service user's social care support.
 7. The inclusion of the £2 per week service charge in the personal budget, means that any service user contribution to this charge is collected using the process which already exists under the Fairer Contribution policy for home care and other non residential services.
 8. In order to enable people to remain independent and to reduce the number of people needing ongoing social care support the Council agreed to provide greater access to telecare and other assistive technology services. This included providing telecare to service users who do not currently meet the FACS eligibility criteria for the provision of social care support, but who nevertheless are at risk of meeting these criteria in the near future, if there is any further decline in their health or well being. Telecare can help to reduce the risk of such a decline and it is therefore important that it is provided as a preventative service to maintain independence at home. Key target groups, would include people receiving reablement services, people returning home from a hospital stay, people receiving short-term intermediate care services and people in the earlier stages of dementia.
 9. In order to provide telecare to people who do not meet the FACS eligibility criteria and who are not in receipt of a personal budget, the Council needs to consider the issue of how ongoing service charges for telecare will be collected. The existing Fairer Contribution procedures cannot be used as they only apply to FACS eligible service users. Given this, it is proposed that charges are collected directly by Nottinghamshire County Council's contracted service provider, Tunstall Healthcare Limited. The service charge made by Tunstall would be set at the current rate of £2 per week to ensure equity of charging to all service users irrespective of whether they meet, or do not meet, the FACS eligibility criteria.
 10. Adopting this change in collection policy will mean that a flat rate charge for telecare will be applied irrespective of FACS eligibility, in the same way as other

¹ [Prioritising need in the context of Putting People First: a whole system approach to eligibility for social care - guidance on eligibility criteria for adult social care, England 2010](#)

FACS neutral services, such as meals at home. This change will have a financial implication for some current FACS eligible service users where their personal budget for social care services includes the £2 per week fee. The precise number of service users who would be affected by this change would not be known until the day of implementation, but is estimated to be around 60 people. To ensure that these service users are not disadvantaged in any way, it is proposed that they are transitionally protected, with the £2 charge remaining as part of their personal budget allocation. This will ensure that their assessed contribution to the telecare element of their personal budget will continue to be subject to the Fairer Contribution policy, in the same way as if the change outlined in this report had not taken place. The cost to the authority of this transitional protection is estimated to be a maximum of £6,240 per annum, but this will decrease in future years as the number of protected people, who still require the telecare service, reduce. Furthermore, the net cost will be somewhat less than this, as some service users will be paying the full contribution to their personal budget.

Other Options Considered

11. The option of completely waiving the ongoing weekly service charge has been considered. However, this would increase costs to Nottinghamshire County Council by an estimated £30,000 for 2013/14, and this cost would increase by approx £15,000 per annum as the service expanded. Given the ongoing and increasing impact on the authority's finances this option is not recommended.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

12. Enabling Tunstall Healthcare Limited to collect charges for telecare directly from service users will have the following benefits:
 - It will enable telecare services to be provided to more vulnerable older and disabled people, enabling them to maintain independence in their own home for longer.
 - It will reduce demand for statutory health and social care provision, providing efficiency savings for Nottinghamshire County Council and value for money for local council tax payers.
 - It will avoid the need to establish a new collection process within the authority, and the associated costs.

Statutory and Policy Implications

13. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of finance, equal opportunities, human resources, crime and disorder, human rights, the safeguarding of children, sustainability and the environment and those using the service and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Implications for Service Users

14. The proposed change will enable an increase in the number of vulnerable older and disabled people, who can benefit from telecare to maintain their independence at home. Telecare will also provide piece of mind and reassurance to carers. Approximately 60 current telecare service users would be financially affected by up to £2 per week by the proposed change. However, this report recommends that these service users are transitionally protected, with the £2 per week telecare service charge remaining as part of their personal budget allocation, and continuing to be subject to the Fairer Contribution policy for home care and other non residential services.

Financial Implications

15. The proposed collection of telecare service charges by Tunstall Healthcare Limited will reduce the ongoing financial pressures on the authority of providing an expanded telecare service, as outlined in paragraph 11 of this report. The cost of transitionally protecting the estimated 60 service users who currently receive telecare as part of their personal budget allocation will be a maximum of £6,240 per annum, with this figure reducing over time as people's circumstances change, and they no longer require the service.

Crime and Disorder Implications

16. Telecare bogus caller buttons can help to reduce doorstep crime by enabling service users to call for assistance from the 24 hour telecare monitoring centre. Conversations with doorstep callers can also be recorded if the service user presses a discreet button and these recordings can be used as evidence in criminal prosecutions for doorstep crime.

RECOMMENDATION/S

It is recommended that:

- 1) approval is given for the collection of telecare service charges from service users who do not meet the Fair Access to Care eligibility criteria at the current rate of £2 per week, to be undertaken by Nottinghamshire County Council's contracted service provider, Tunstall Healthcare Limited.
- 2) Transitional protection is provided to any service users who, at the time of implementation of recommendation (1), have the telecare service cost included in their personal budget allocation.

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Constitutional Comments (LMc 11/07/2012)

17. The Policy Committee has delegated authority within the Constitution to approve the recommendations in the report.

Financial Comments (RWK 11/07/2012)

18. There are no direct financial implications, in terms of either additional expenditure or income, to the County Council as a result of the proposals set out in the report. The wider use of telecare is expected to reduce overall future spending on social care by providing more cost effective support to older people and younger adults with disabilities.

Background Papers

None.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

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