

# **Decision for Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care – 17 December 2024**

## **Technology Enabled Care**

### **Report by Corporate Director of Adult Social Care**

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

1. **The Cabinet Member is RECOMMENDED to:**
  - a) Approve the proposal to deliver a new Telecare Monitoring and Response Service, by deployment of the Buckinghamshire Framework from April 2025
  - b) Note the changes from the current Telecare Monitoring and Response Service for existing users and the mitigating actions to support this
  - c) Note the opportunity to develop how the Council uses Technology Enabled Care (TEC) to support our residents to live independently at home as part of this service

#### **Executive Summary**

2. It is recommended that, following the expiry of the current Telecare Monitoring and Response contract on 31 March 2025, that the Council calls off the Buckinghamshire Framework to deliver a successor Telecare Monitoring and Response Service for 2 years from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2027.
3. The Telecare Monitoring and Response service supports people to live independently at home through providing technology to enable remote monitoring and a visiting response service. This provides assurance to Oxfordshire residents and their families and reduces the risk of admissions to hospital.
4. The cost of delivering the Telecare Monitoring and Response service is increasing and the budget for the service has also increased to account for this. The current budget for 2024/25 is £1,202,976.
5. The proposed approach for the new contract for service in point 2 will optimise existing resources and infrastructure to deliver a service that offers better value for Oxfordshire residents and the Council. This involves calling off the Buckinghamshire Framework agreement to deliver the service through their community equipment provider, NRS Healthcare Limited – hereafter ‘NRS’. As NRS are also Oxfordshire’s current community equipment provider, this will enable the Council to integrate the existing telecare and equipment services and achieve more efficient delivery of equipment to support people to live at home.

6. The recommended approach in point 2 will provide continuity of service to existing telecare users while also supporting the Council to realise its strategic ambitions to improve the use of technology enabled care to support people to live independently at home and prevent admissions to care homes and/or hospital.

## **Background**

7. The Telecare Monitoring and Response Service supports the wellbeing principle within the Care Act 2014 and helps people to live safely and independently and avoid the need for long-term residential care. It also aims to reduce pressure on health services by providing people and their families with more proactive support at home, rather than by conveyance and/or admission to hospital.
8. In the current Telecare Monitoring and Response provision, the provider completes assessments, installs the main telecare base units and pendant alarms in people's own home as well as some other sensors, and provides the call monitoring service. As part of call monitoring, there is a two-level response service consisting of either a telephone response or a visiting responder.
9. The contract was awarded by the Council after an open market procurement in April 2018. The contract was for a period of 5 years with an extension clause of 2 years (1yr + 1yr). The contract value was a fixed price for the term of the contract. The Council agreed to extend the contract for a further 1 year, from 1 April 2024 and ending 31 March 2025. There is no further option to extend.
10. The Telecare and Monitoring Service is delivered in 2 separate contracts: the equipment is supplied and maintained in the wider Integrated Community Equipment Service and the Telecare Monitoring and Response Service is separate. This split model was originally driven by cost considerations. However, while this model may have offered greater value at the point of procurement, it carries inherent challenges in terms of delivery and relationship management between the providers.
11. As part of collaborative working arrangements across the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West (BOB) Integrated Care System (ICS), the Council has access to the Buckinghamshire Framework for equipment and for telecare. This Framework was developed to further support joint working across the ICS, optimise opportunities to share resources, deliver efficiencies and further strengthen the linkages between health and social care in the community equipment landscape. Buckinghamshire and Berkshire West deliver both their Community Equipment and Telecare services through this framework.
12. The expiry of the current Telecare and Monitoring Service contract is an opportunity for the Council to consider how to provide a more effective and efficient Telecare Monitoring and Response service. The Council has,

therefore, been exploring opportunities to call off the Buckinghamshire Framework to provide the Telecare Monitoring and Response Service from 1 April 2025. This removes the requirement to go out to tender as would otherwise be required under Contract and Procurement rules, instead using an existing contract to deliver the service for Oxfordshire residents from April 2025.

13. This contract opportunity also allows the Council to develop its ambition to support more people through Technology Enabled Care (TEC) and embed this into Adult Social Care in Oxfordshire.

## Contract Procurement Options

14. A telecare and monitoring service is strictly not part of the Council's core responsibilities under the Care Act. It might be possible to let the contract expire on 31 March 2025. However, this would not be in line with the Council's ambitions around the Oxfordshire Way to support independence and preventative support that enables people to remain in their own home. It would leave Oxfordshire residents with no Telecare Monitoring and Response Service from 1 April 2025 and likely impact hospital admissions.
15. Alternatively, the Council could extend the current Telecare and Monitoring Service Contract exceptionally by a direct award to allow for an open market procurement of a successor provider. This would retain the complexity of the split service noted at paragraph 10 which has in part driven some of the cost pressures in the current model.
16. The preferred option is to allow the existing **contract to expire on 31 March 2025 and deploy the Council's option to call off against the Buckinghamshire Framework to provide a successor Telecare Monitoring and Response Service for 2 years from 01 April 2025**. Please refer to paragraph 17.
17. **Deployment of the Council's option to call off from the Buckinghamshire Framework offers several additional benefits.**
  - (a) Changes to the service would include a charging model based on a flat rate rather than payment by activity, which has reduced the cost projections for the new service. The financial implications of this are outlined in section 28.
  - (b) Establishment of a 2-year TEC Development Manager role specific to Oxfordshire. The postholder would work in partnership with the Council to support the development of the TEC service. The Council's ambition is to improve how we use technology and adopt a more proactive and personalised TEC service, beyond our more reactive telecare model, to better support people to live independently in their own homes.
  - (c) The new service proposal would otherwise feature the same 24/7 monitoring and response coverage, installation and annual reviews of telecare equipment.

18. There will be some minor differences to the service for existing users, including changes to the responders' ability to provide personal care and medication management in an emergency. Oxfordshire is an outlier in providing this as part of telecare and this aspect of the service is also not frequently used. Commissioners are working with the Principal Occupational Therapist to manage the transition to the new service and communicate this clearly to service users and the provider.
19. There is an opportunity within the Framework call off for the Council to further develop the model and the business and technology options as part of negotiation.

## **Corporate Policies and Priorities**

20. The Council's Strategic Plan for 2023-2025 focuses on prioritising the health and wellbeing of residents, supporting carers and social care system, and partnership working. Further, the Oxfordshire Way highlights how the Council wants Oxfordshire residents to lead safe, healthy, happy lives.
21. The Telecare Monitoring and Response Service enables people who may be vulnerable to access support. As such the Council should continue to commission services to support people to maintain their independence, provide assurance to people and their families that they can remain safe and secure in their own home, and enable access to support should they need assistance.
22. The recommended approach outlined in paragraph 17 would contribute to the Council's and system priorities including:
  - Information and guidance on options available to support independent living;
  - supporting hospital discharges where appropriate;
  - preventing or reducing hospital admissions;
  - increased safety and potential reduction in anxiety for people living in the community;
  - working in partnership with other services commissioned in Oxfordshire.
23. Telecare services are part of the Council's Technology Enabled Care (TEC) offer to support people to live independently at home. The expiry of the Telecare service contract is an opportunity to widen the scope of this service to champion more preventative approaches to support Oxfordshire residents, expand the scope of remote support in people's homes (including Telecare Monitoring and Response services), embed the use of assistive technology and extend the range or reach of the Council's offer. This is being explored as part of Council's wider Technology Enabled Care programme.
24. The Buckinghamshire Framework was intended to be a stepping stone towards more integrated, BOB-wide working for community equipment. Calling off the framework for telecare further supports this. Alignment with other Local

Authorities in the BOB footprint in how the Council delivers equipment reflects the broader strategic ambition for BOB ICS.

25. The Integrated Community Equipment Services contract with NRS which in part covers the delivery of the Telecare Monitoring and Response service as set out above was extended by 3 years from April 2023 and will now expire in March 2026. There could be an opportunity to call off the Framework for Community Equipment more broadly. This option is being explored by commissioners as part of the procurement process.

## **Dependencies**

### Digitalisation

26. The BT OpenReach Digital Switchover and the changing of analogue telephone services to digital connectivity will impact on telecare equipment. All analogue equipment must be switched over so that it is compatible with digital requirements by 31 January 2027. A key decision to allocate resource and staffing to the switchover project was made in April 2024.
27. The switchover to digital is an opportunity that can be incorporated into the next steps for Telecare services.

## **Financial Implications**

28. The service would be funded through the existing Telecare Monitoring and Response Service budget.
29. The new service would cost between £881,373 and £949,810 per year, dependent on activity levels in the first few months. This annual cost is less than the £996,045 spent on the service for 2023/24.
30. Following receipt of approval to proceed with this option, we can further negotiate costings with NRS to ensure the best value for money for the Council.

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## **Legal Implications**

31. Buckinghamshire Council tendered (2021/S 000-029462) for a single supplier framework for the provision of Integrated Community Equipment Services – namely, the Buckinghamshire Framework. A four-year contract was awarded to NRS which began on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2022. Call-off terms are for 5 years with an option to extend for up to two further years. The framework is accessible to contracting authorities that fall under the NUTS code UKJ1 (Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Milton Keynes). The Council intends to

award a call-off contract in accordance with the call-off process of the framework.

32. The Legal Contracts team have been involved in reviewing the suitability of the Buckinghamshire Framework and will be involved in finalising the call-off contract under the Framework.

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## **Staff Implications**

33. The transition to the new service and ongoing contract management will be managed by existing staff in the Commissioning, Procurement and Quality Improvement teams.
34. Legal advice regarding the impacts of Transfer of Undertakings - Protection of Employment (TUPE) transfers for existing Careium staff has also been sought.

## **Equality & Inclusion Implications**

35. The equality and inclusion implications have been considered. The Telecare Monitoring and Response service supports the strategic priority to tackle inequalities in Oxfordshire, by delivering a service which support vulnerable groups and helps them lead a better quality of life.

## **Sustainability Implications**

36. Initial projections for the service forecast a decrease in the requirement for in-person response visits to people's homes. This will contribute to the reduction of the Council's carbon footprint and limit travel within the county. Longer term ambitions to utilise more technology, such as remote monitoring devices, will further reduce the need to travel.

## Risk Management

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Impact</b>	<b>Likelihood</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>
Joining up the telecare and equipment contract services with different end points may create a dependency that could complicate future arrangements.	If NRS do not continue the equipment service beyond March 2026 then the service may be unsustainable.  The service may need to be separated back out in two years' time.	High	There are separate agreements for the services. NRS do not have a right to terminate either agreement and specific exit provisions could be built into the call-off contract.
NRS could identify more (or more expensive equipment)	Costs for telecare equipment could significantly increase.	Medium	There are standard equipment lists in place via the equipment catalogue. Quarterly audits of equipment to monitor appropriateness of TEC prescriptions will be conducted.
May not get value by not testing the market.	Paying more than is required	Low	Buckinghamshire tested market when establishing the framework. Benchmarking with other authorities in the region indicates comparable service costs.
Increasing exposure to the risk of NRS's organisational failure due to cashflow issues following the costs of responding to the cyber attack earlier this year.	Loss of critical services	Medium	The latest publicly available financial information is historic so in order to assess their current financial position the Council has asked for cash flow statements/forecasts. Contingency arrangements for the telecare service would include direct use of the sub-contractors.

## Consultations

37. The Council has engaged with our providers on this proposal and will continue to work together to ensure a smooth transition from 1 April 2025.
38. As the service develops, the Council will seek direct feedback from service users to assess the impact this service has had on their lives. The Council will engage around transition within the Telecare and Support service. The Council will also engage more widely with current service users and the wider public about the intention to make greater use of technology-enabled care as part of our strategy development

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Annex: Nil.

Background papers: Nil.

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