
Decision Maker:	EXECUTIVE with pre-decision scrutiny from the Adult Care and Health Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee (12 th March 2024)
Date:	27 th March 2024
Decision Type:	Non-Urgent Executive Key
Title:	The Public Switch Telephone Network (PSTN) requirements to upgrade the Adults Carelink Service
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Chief Officer:	Kim Carey, Director of Adult Services
Ward:	All Wards

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides an analysis of the work required and requests capital investment, and resources to complete the upgrade of all the devices currently in operation for the Bromley residents that use the Council's Carelink Service to support the Council's statutory obligation to support vulnerable residents as directed by the Care Act - 2014.
- 1.2 The Public Switch Telephone Network (PSTN) will close in December 2025. This in effect means that there will be a switching off the old analogue telephone network. It will be replaced with an all-digital fibre-based network and is consistent with an imperative for digital transformation of all related services including telecare.
- 1.3 This report outlines recommendations of the resources required to meet the digital upgrade before the end of 2025.
- 1.4 The Director for Adult Services has been consulted on the analysis of options in this report.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Executive is asked to:

- 2.1 Note the options explored and analysis in this report.

- 2.2 Approve the plan and budget for the phase of work (procurement and transition) as set out in Section 8 of this report. This will incur costs estimated at £416k in total (£139k in 2023/24 and £277k in 2024/25).
- 2.3 Approve delegation of authority to the Portfolio Holder for Adult Care and Health and to the Director of Adult Services for agreeing any relevant decisions to enable the implementation and delivery of the recommendations in this report that are agreed by Executive.
- 2.4 Consider the preferred procurement option of a new call handling platform to replace the current service provider contract which expires in November 2024.

Impact on Vulnerable Adults

1. Summary of Impact: Risk to life
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Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: Existing Policy
 2. Making Bromley Even Better Priority:
(5) To manage our resources well, providing value for money, and efficient and effective services for Bromley's residents.
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Financial

1. Cost of proposal: £416k one-off
 2. Ongoing costs: Estimated within section 7 of this report
 3. Budget head/performance centre: Adult services
 4. Source of funding: Executive Capital funds (one-off costs)
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Personnel

1. Number of staff (current and additional):
 - x2 WTE BR6 Fixed term 12-month contracts
 - x1 WTE BR5 Fixed term contract 12-month contract
 - x1 WTE BR10 project management 12-month contract
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Legal

1. Legal Requirement: Statutory Requirement
 2. Call-in: Applicable
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Procurement

1. Summary of Procurement Implications: Proceeding to procurement via compliant framework route. Access to wider source of external providers via a contract exemption report for procurement of digital products
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Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected): 844 residents
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Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? Not Applicable
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments: Not Applicable

3. COMMENTARY

- 3.1 Analogue dispersed alarms are becoming increasingly unreliable and will need to be changed to digital devices by the end of 2025. These are currently about twice the price of the units that they will replace, and will also require subscriptions for cloud management services, and an ongoing SIM contract. The latter will be required to provide an alternative connection in the event of a power outage. Another consequence of the digital changeover will be that routers, modems and digital switches that will not operate without the trickle charge that used to be present on telephone wires. It provides an opportunity for Bromley Council to take advantage of these technical changes to improve its offer to its residents that will improve performance by moving away from a reactive alarm service to a more prevention-based arrangement based on data.
- 3.2 The analogue equipment used by the Carelink Service in the homes of residents will need to be replaced with alternative (digital) equipment to ensure that communication errors do not occur, but also to take advantage of the "always on" functionality that will enable new applications to be realised. It is predicted that digital devices will fail to communicate in the event of a power outage, so a secondary communication channel will be necessary using mobile networks and a SIM contract.
- 3.3 The number of people living alone in Bromley is predicted to increase by up to 30% over the next 20 years. By 2030 it is estimated that there will be 19,000 over 75's living alone. This is likely to fuel the growth in the number of service subscribers, provided that the benefits of the council's service are promoted.
- 3.4 Telecare services and the Assistive Technology (AT) industry is changing rapidly in terms of hardware, data storage and analysis, as platforms and monitoring centres are having to transform into all-digital providers. This adds to the cost of providing services and preparation for the digital switch over. There is now a much larger choice of new digital alarm hubs and sensors, lifestyle, activity and physiological parameter monitoring, and integration of data that can be used in predictive technology systems. These will be the basis of prevention opportunities. But these more advanced digital elements are more costly and when used with a global system for mobile communications, such as Global System for Mobile communication (GSM), either for back-up or for primary communication, they require an ongoing revenue cost.
- 3.5 Consideration needs to be given to the structure of the current LBB Carelink Service and resourcing to support and enable a level of activity that was based on identified need and established some years ago. It consists of, and is structured around, an outsourced delivery model with monitoring and overview taking place at a high level. It is essential that the client and in-house expert service is appropriately resourced to deliver any new structures and models.
- 3.6 Options for further consideration based on the factors of:
- Establishing arrangements in the time available before the end of the current PSTN timeframe – Dec 2025
 - Minimising disruption and risk to provision of services to residents provided by the Council
 - Minimising costs of addressing identified change
 - Improving agility for the council
 - Providing sufficient flexibility for changes to scope of services and delivery arrangements including the operating model

3.5 **Service Profile / Data Analysis**

- 3.6 The current Carelink Service consists of 1 Whole Time Equivalent (WTE) Team Supervisor (Operations Manager) (BR12), 5.79 WTE night mobile officers (BR6*), 5.58 WTE day mobile officers (BR6*), 1.0 WTE AT Technician (BR9) and 2.4 WTE admin (BR5 & BR7).
- 3.7 The current Carelink Service provides a 24 hr - 7 day a week monitoring and full response service to residents of the Borough. This consists of both Adult Social Care and private paying clients. All emergency alerts that are generated by a client in their own place of residence are received via the Alarm Response Service (ARC) operated by Careium. The call is triaged, and an appropriate response is made by an operator. This results in either the London Ambulance Service (LAS) being called directly, or a call is put through to the mobile officers in Carelink. The mobile officers respond to emergency calls from residents across the Borough.

4. **OPTIONS APPRAISAL**

4.1 Option One: No Change

Continue as is with the current operating model. Carelink mobile officers complete a dual role and continue to install new installations of digital equipment, complete maintenance checks and respond to alerts. Without capital investment to procure new digitally ready devices, clients will continue using existing analogue devices in operation. With predicted failure of these devices with the PSTN switchover there will be a risk to life and reputational damage to the council.

Frequently planned installations for new residents and maintenance checks are postponed due to the prioritisation of attending to an emergency visit. This can often generate a delay for days depending on need when there are increases in emergency visits. This results in delays to the new installation of devices, customer dissatisfaction and reduced revenue for the Council.

There is not the current budget to procure the extra digital devices for residents that require the exchange. Existing allocated alarm budgets for Carelink are formulated on the ongoing need for new analogue devices for new clients, not for the procurement of digital devices.

- 4.2 Option Two: One off costs to fund the procurement of 900+ digital devices. No resource for additional staff to complete required works. This will significantly increase the risk to residents; highly likely they will not have a reliable device post 2025 that will pose a risk to life.

- 4.3.1 Option Three: Costs for staff resources and one off costs for the procurement of digital devices is the preferred option. This will support the required re-modeling of the current service to ensure there are dedicated staff to complete all maintenance and digital upgrades within the desired timeframe by the end of 2025, along with the necessary project management to plan and co-ordinate works.

- 4.3.2 This would involve a full procurement exercise to select the required and appropriate suppliers, based on a new procurement contract.

- Service requirements and service levels
- Value for money
- The Council's use and access to the most valuable digital technology

- Assurance that the Council is employing the most cost-efficient and effective service model to provide the Council's requirements and are consistent with:
- The new corporate strategy 'Making Bromley Even Better'

They also provide the flexibility to adapt to rapid changes in technology and the current and emerging challenges facing the Council.

5. MARKET CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1 The alarm service has been restricted in terms of equipment provided, favouring Tunstall equipment initially, with a recent increase in Doro equipment being used since Careium has been providing monitoring services (ARC). This made sense from the perspective of minimising training, but at the expense of choice for customers.
- 5.2 The supply of equipment and delays in the procurement of digital upgrade impact the ability to offer the service. Supply chain issues have resulted in delays in being able to procure a digital upgraded version. Alternative digital hubs (dispersed alarm unit) required procurement to meet the immediate need of the service and residents. This resulted in a market research exercise to acquire other digitally ready products that have, for example, included the Eliza digital hub from Doro (trading as Careium in the UK). These are at a cost of £189.00 from the company Doro with a £4.00 ongoing monthly SIM cost. New digital hubs plug into a power point and operate via a SIM, no phone line is required.
- 5.3 A review and decisions regarding charges for the Carelink Service is required for the financial year beginning 2024. All new digital products require an annual SIM cost charge, this is a change from the one-off charge for procuring an old analogue type of device.
- 5.4 New products are expanding at an exponential rate in the digital market space with the timeline for analogue switch off by the end of 2025 the required end date for the completion of works to ensure a digital service is in place. To offer the best service, it is important that there is a wide and varied range of products available to residents to meet identified individual need.
- 5.5 Results from marketing testing priced the required digital upgrade from different providers at between 200k – 300k.

For example; standard pricing with devices from different companies:

OYSTA:

1000 units @ £133 = £133,000

Monthly SIM cost @ £8.65 x 12 - £103.80 per year, per device = £103,800

Year 1 overall cost = £236,800

Careium:

1000 units @ £180 = £180,000

Monthly SIM cost @ £4.00 x 12 - £48 per year, per device = £48,000

Year 1 overall cost = £228,000

6. SOCIAL VALUE AND LOCAL / NATIONAL PRIORITIES

- 6.1 The white paper on the 7 September 2021, People at the Heart of Care: Adult Social Care reform and announced a commitment to investing £5.4 billion over 3 years solely for Adult Social Care reform.

- 6.2 The Government launched Transforming for a Digital Future, the 2022 to 2025 Roadmap for Digital and Data, with an ambition to transform public services, deliver world-class technology and attract and retain the best digital talent. The roadmap charted a clear set of priorities, focusing on the biggest digital opportunities. It was written by leaders across Government, who came together to identify HMG's collaborative next steps in digital and address recommendations identified in two reports in 2021: Organising for Digital Delivery and The Challenges in Implementing Digital Change.
- 6.3 The engagement with potential suppliers and the framing of the procurement specification and requirements are therefore being designed to ensure the Council achieves value for money on a whole life basis in terms of generating benefits not only for the Council, but also to society.
- 6.4 'Historically, most landline telephone services have been delivered over the PSTN. The PSTN has been in place for many decades and includes copper wires, and equipment dedicated to supporting call services. Over the last decade, however, telecoms companies have built modern internet protocol (IP) based networks which can support both broadband and landline telephone services. While some providers have maintained two separate networks – the PSTN for call services and a separate IP network for broadband – others have replaced the PSTN and carried phone calls over broadband. To date, these changes have been largely invisible to customers, as providers have not upgraded all parts of their networks or have chosen to emulate how traditional call services work in customers' homes.' Ofcom 2019.
- 6.5 With the greater use and demand on digital devices, a new call handling platform is required to meet this need. The current provider Careium deals with analogue type devices, with the move to wearable digital devices, significant connection delays to these new products are being incurred.
- 6.6 This will impact on the overall cost for the procurement of devices. Where more expensive types of digital hubs will need to be purchased due to the limitations of the current call handling platform. Greater flexibility and interoperability are required in the call handling platform to future proof the needs of residents in Bromley
- 6.6 Although the migration to digital is an industry led initiative, the government is working together with the telecoms industry to ensure all sectors of the economy are protected and prepared. This includes regularly engaging with telecoms providers, tracking preparedness across all affected sectors, and working closely with Ofcom.

6.7 The overall 10-year vision for Adult Social Care includes developing opportunities to build on, and achieve, a future vision in specific areas:

- How we can empower those who draw on support and care, unpaid carers, and families our strategy for the social care workforce?
- How we will make sure the proposals in this white paper are effectively delivered to support Bromley's vision?
- Housing, embedding innovation and technology

7. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Not Applicable

8. POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

8.1 Planning for the end of the current PSTN has provided an opportunity to review existing arrangements and service support models to ensure they continue to meet and provide:

- Service requirements and service levels
- Value for money
- The Council's use and access to the most valuable digital technology
- Assurance that the council is employing the most cost-efficient and effective service model to provide the Council service requirements

and are consistent with:

- The new corporate strategy 'Making Bromley Even Better'

8.2 The Programme Team will work with colleagues in Procurement and other services to ensure alignment of the procurement and the consequent arrangements to support the Council's objectives:

- Help the Council achieve its social, economic and environmental aims and targets set within its existing policy framework; the Transforming Bromley Programme, Local Plan and Portfolio Plans and its duty to promote social, economic and environmental well-being.

8.3 This supports the move in transforming the current alarm response service to adopt and incorporate a more preventative approach. This is a move away from the reliance on analogue devices to establish a digital alert-based telecare service.

8.4 Technology Enabled Care (TEC) is the component of Assistive Technology (AT) that uses telecommunications and digital devices to connect people with their families, friends and, in extreme circumstances, the emergency services.

9 PROCUREMENT RULES

9.1 Use of digital devices to upgrade the existing Assistive Technology (AT) catalogue to support the move from analogue to a digital system by 2025.

9.2 This has been agreed to award contracts via exemption from competitive tendering (up to a value of £100k per provider) to pilot the options for assistive devices to support with the procurement of products to move from analogue to digital. The report justifies and clarifies the position in expanding the range of digital products offered for residents, whilst ensuring there is a variety of equipment to meet identified need.

10. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

10.1 Indicative costings, one-Off costs:

Procurement Feb 2024 to Dec 2025	FY23/24	FY24/25
Digital equipment x 844	£114,460	£114,460
12 months SIM charges	£0.00	£44,592
x1 Assistive Technology Mobile Officer 5 days a week - FTC 12 months	£0.00	£27,248
X1 Assistive Technology Mobile Officer 5 days a week - FTC 12 months	£0.00	£27,248
X1 Project Manager x 5 days a week – FTC 12 months	£0.00	£38,806
X1 Business support officer x 5 days a week – FTC 12 months	£24,843	£24,843
Total Costs for 23/24 and 24/25	£139,303	£277,197
Total Costs	£416,500	

Ongoing revenue cost will continue to contribute to the overall Adult Social Care Budget.

The budget requested within this report is to provide the digital devices that are not reliant on the PSTN lines for our vulnerable adults. This project and budget are part of the wider PSTN program that is managed by the AD of Digital and IT. The overall budget provisioned for PSTN program was £1m and the budget requested in this report is part of that budget.

11. PERSONNEL CONSIDERATIONS

11.1. Not Applicable

12. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

Non-Applicable Sections:	Impact on Vulnerable Adults and Children/Policy/Personnel/Property/Carbon Reduction/Customers/Ward Councillors
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	