



ADULT AND COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
7 NOVEMBER 2022

CONSULTATION ON ELIGIBILITY FOR CARE TECHNOLOGY SERVICES

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF ADULTS AND COMMUNITIES

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to seek the views of the Committee on a proposed consultation on the eligibility for care technology services that were previously provided on a discretionary basis.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

2. The relevant policy framework is the Adults and Communities Department Ambitions and Strategy for 2020–2024.

Background

3. The newly transformed County Council Care Technology (CT) service has been in place since 25 April 2022. Following the launch, demand for the service has been strong and is growing.
4. The service is currently on track to meet or exceed its current targets for new CT users (of 1,450 in year one). The new equipment being provided includes falls and seizure sensors, linked to 24-hour monitoring services; sensor pads in respect of personal care and alerts for people who are at risk of wandering.
5. The CT service is provided on an eligibility basis. This is defined as a person being assessed as having eligible needs under the Care Act (2014) or is likely to do so in the next six months. The person must also be over 18 and live in Leicestershire. If a person is not eligible, then they are signposted to alternative support.
6. The Council has an amount of legacy equipment that has been previously provided on a discretionary basis, particularly to people who are deaf or hearing impaired. Calls continue to be received regarding repairs/maintenance of this legacy equipment. This equipment includes doorbells, smoke detectors and loop systems.
7. Since the launch of the new CT service, a discretionary repair and maintenance service has been provided, but this is not sustainable as demand increases for statutory provision.
8. It is proposed that requests for repairs and maintenance for legacy equipment are considered as part of a care and support review and be subject to Care Act eligibility criteria to ensure fairness across the service and those it supports.

9. When a person who is deaf or hard of hearing is assessed as having eligible care and support needs and care technology can help meet their outcomes, then a service will continue to be provided for them as part of the new service offer provided by the County Council. For example, where a deaf person is eligible and susceptible to falling, then the assessor would look to install both a falls protection device and a hearing loop system.
10. However, should a person who is deaf or hard of hearing be assessed as not having eligible needs for local authority funded social care, any future maintenance or repair of equipment would not be provided by the County Council. The person would instead be signposted to alternative support, as would be the case for any person who is not eligible. The legacy equipment would not be removed by the County Council unless a person specifically requested its removal.
11. Since 2018, installations and repairs/maintenance of this legacy equipment has been provided to 1,306 service users who are deaf or hard of hearing. Requests for repairs and maintenance are generally to replace batteries or replace defective equipment.
12. Over 90% of current demand for services for the deaf or hard of hearing concern a request for a repair or equipment maintenance.

Consultation

13. It is proposed that a four week public consultation is undertaken from 11 November to 9 December 2022 to seek feedback on the proposed cessation of the universal discretionary repair and maintenance services provided and to instead apply the same eligibility criteria to all who approach the service for support.
14. In particular, the consultation will specifically seek the views of members of the deaf and hard of hearing community in Leicestershire who have used the former Assistive Technology services that were provided on a discretionary and/or universal basis.
15. In the interim, the repairs and maintenance service will be provided by the CT service until at least the end of March 2023.

Resource Implications

16. The consultation process will involve the Council's Communications Team, Data and Business Intelligence Team, and the Chief Executive's Policy Team, alongside the Adults and Communities Department.
17. The Director of Law and Governance has been consulted and provided information confirming that the approach being taken is in keeping with the Council's statutory duties under Section 9(1) of the Care Act 2014 and that the extension of the eligibility criteria to all persons ensures that all persons in need of support qualify on an equal or comparable basis.
18. The Director of Corporate Resources has been consulted on the content of this report.

Timetable for Decisions

19. The consultation will take place from 11 November to 9 December 2022.
20. Following analysis of the results, it is intended that a report on the outcome of the consultation will be presented to the Cabinet in January 2023. The Committee will be sent a copy of this report and any comments received will be submitted to the Cabinet meeting.
21. Subject to the Cabinet's agreement the proposed approach will be implemented from 1 April 2023.

Conclusion

22. The Committee is invited to comment on the proposed consultation.

Background papers

Adults and Communities Department Ambitions and Strategy for 2020–2024 - <https://bit.ly/3yOxuZA>

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

23. None.

Equality and Human Rights Implications

24. Ensuring services based on eligibility will mean the withdrawal of universal/discretionary services previously offered by the former Assistive Technology Team. This is likely to impact people who are deaf or hard of hearing in particular, as the former service had a focus in this area.
25. Under the new service, where a person, including anyone who is deaf or hard of hearing, is assessed as having a care and support need and the Care Act eligibility criteria are met, care technology services would continue to be offered.
26. Those considered not eligible will be directed to alternative support available in the same way as anyone else not eligible under the criteria
27. An Equalities and Human Rights Impact screening assessment has been undertaken and concluded that there are no specific impacts on other protected characteristic groups. The Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment will be reviewed again following feedback from the consultation and this will be presented alongside the report to the Cabinet in January 2023.

Officers to Contact

Tracy Ward
Assistant Director, Integration, Access and Prevention
Adults and Communities Department
Tel: 0116 3057563
Email: Tracy.ward@leics.gov.uk

Steve Pugh
Head of Service – Access and Digital
Adults and Communities Department
Tel: 0116 305 6941
Email: steve.pugh@leics.gov.uk