

## 2025/26 Budget Equality Impact Assessment

### 1. The Project

<b>Directorate:</b>	Adults and Housing
<b>Theme or area:</b>	Recommission Care Link
<b>Lead Officer:</b>	Gerald Hunt
<b>Date:</b>	26 November 2024

Budget Reference	Budget Proposal	2025/26 Budget reduction (£)	2026/27 Budget reduction (£)	2027/28 Budget reduction (£)
ASH17	Recommission Carelink Service	£230,000		

#### Description of the project:

Carelink has been the council's telecare and monitored alarm service since 1996. The service was outsourced as part of the wider services contract tender to Agilisys in 2014. Carelink offers a service consisting of an alarm receiving centre, staffed 24/7 by Agilisys and North Somerset CCTV staff, that receives calls through an alarm unit and pendant that is installed in people's homes. The current service operates equipment that will not be compliant with the analogue and digital switchover and without substantial capital investment the status quo will not be viable. This is a critical transformation to deliver to enable future utilisation of technology enhanced care (TEC) as the current equipment is restricting future delivery.

#### Summary of changes:

We are recommending running a procurement process for a digital monitored alarm service, that will replace North Somerset Council's Carelink service. The contract would commence on 1 October 2025 in line with the end of the current Agilisys contract.

This service transfer will invoke a TUPE transfer which may result in redundancies for Agilisys and North Somerset Council Carelink CCTV staff.

**Are any of the proposals within this theme a continuation of a previous medium-term financial plan saving?**

Yes      No

**If yes, please insert reference number and year of assessment?**

<b>Budget Proposal</b>	<b>Year of assessment</b>	<b>Budget Reference</b>

**If yes, please describe what steps you have taken to review the equality impacts from previous years?**

## 2. Customer equality impact summary

**Will the changes proposed in this project have a disproportionate impact (or bias) for any of these groups?**

Insert X into one box per row, for impact level and type.

H = High, M = Medium, L = Low, N = None

+ = Positive, - = Negative

Protected or significant group	Impact Level				Impact type	
	H	M	L	N	+	=
Disabled people (Including the consideration of neurodiversity)			X		X	
People from different ethnic groups				X		X
Men or women (including those who are pregnant or on maternity leave)				X		X
People who are LGBTQ+				X		X
People on a low income			X		X	
People in particular age groups			X		X	
People in particular faith groups				X		X
People who are married or in a civil partnership				X		X
People who are undergoing gender reassignment				X		X
Other significant groups, for example: Armed Forces Community, care experienced young people, carers, parents. Please specify: Carers, People living in rural areas			X		X	

### 3. Explanation of customer impact

There are currently approx. 2,066 Carelink customers. Despite our rising ageing population, numbers of Carelink customers have continued to fall with a consequent impact on income levels. Most of these customers are re-charged for their service.

Approximately 400 customers also receive home care, and the council is fully funding the fees for 10 Carelink customers.

A transfer would provide a more stable and secure technology platform, improving the safety and reliability of the service, short and long term. From a customer point of view, they may see a transfer as being a negative due to the reputation and length of time that Carelink has existed for. We are satisfied that by using the approved national Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation framework agreement, we will secure an experienced and reliable national telecare provider. We will fully support any transfer to minimise the impact on people wherever possible. This includes ensuring that additional services such as the Carers Emergency Response and close working with Response 24 and Sirona as managed carefully to ensure no disruption.

There may be impacts on the service due to the digital switchover, but these would occur regardless and therefore are not considered an impact of deciding to transfer the service.

#### **Please describe how you will communicate these changes to those impacted.**

North Somerset Council and Agilisys will write to all existing Carelink customers.

Further reassurance can be provided by Carelink call handlers directly through contact with Carelink. Care Connect and SPA will be informed when any communication is going to be sent out and will receive a copy of the communication. Once the contract has been awarded, the successful provider will write to all customers introducing themselves. A communications plan will be required to be submitted as part of the contract tender.

### 4. Staff equality impact summary

<b>Are there any staffing implications for this proposal?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
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#### **Explanation of staff impact**

11.2 Agilisys staff and 3 North Somerset Council staff currently run the Carelink service and would be affected should the change in contract result in redundancies.

North Somerset Council posts are filled permanently.

A decision to transfer the service to an external supplier may mean that although TUPE would apply, it may not be viable for all staff to be retained due to most equivalent services being run from national locations that will not be near enough to North Somerset for staff to travel.

Agilisys and North Somerset Council have informed staff of the recommendation and are holding briefing sessions for anyone who would like to discuss further. Any impact will be unknown until contract award in April/May 2025.

## 5. Cumulative equality impacts

**Is this project linked to or likely to have an impact on any other service areas?**

Currently Carelink provide support to Community Meals on a Saturday and Sunday. Alternative options are being considered for this support.

Please refer to the Equality Impact Assessment for Community Meals – ASH22.

## 6. Action Plan

**Are there any further actions that should be taken because of this Equality Impact Assessment?**

Issue Identified	Planned Action	Lead Officer	Time for review
Concerns about the change of provider from users of the Carelink service and staff	Effective communications plan working with Agilisys, Place directorate and when known, the new provider	Kate Bolger	Monthly until contract commencement date
All risks associated with the contract transfer	To be picked up as part of the commissioning exercise/tender	Kate Bolger	Monthly until contract commencement date

## 7. Review and Sign Off

### Service Manager Review

**Is a further detailed equality impact assessment needed?**                      **Yes**                      **No**

Please note that if this assessment indicates a potential 'medium' or 'high' impact on any protected or significant group a further, more detailed assessment will be required.

**If 'yes', when will the further assessment be completed?**

This EIA will be reviewed as a part of the contract tender process when future options for the service are fully understood.

**Approved: Gerald Hunt, Assistant Director Commissioning, Partnerships and Housing**

**Date: 2 December 2024**