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## NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL

## REPORT

TO: Social Work Committee	Subject:  <b>The Future of Alert Community Alarm Service - Creation of a North Lanarkshire Central Control Centre and Management Support Structure</b>
FROM: Jim Dickie Director of Social Work	
DATE OF COMMITTEE: 19 January 1999	
REPORT AUTHOR: Christine Clelland	
REF:	

**1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to describe proposals for the creation of a North Lanarkshire Alert Community Alarm Service, and to seek Committee approval for its implementation.

**2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The provision of a Community Alarm Service is aligned with the central duties of the Social Work Department as indicated in the Social Work Scotland Act, 1968. In addition, local authorities are empowered to provide telephones under the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act, 1970.
- 2.2 In April 1985 Strathclyde Regional Council, in conjunction with Motherwell District Council and Glasgow District Council, launched the pilot scheme of Community Alarm Service "Alert". The pilot scheme installed some 781 units in individual and group settings supporting 1,100 vulnerable service users and their carers.
- 2.3 The adoption of the pilot scheme as Strathclyde Regional Council policy and the subsequent investment by the Regional Council, together with District Councils, Development Corporations, Scottish Homes and Housing Associations, resulted in the expansion of the service to over 12,000 eligible clients by 1995.
- 2.4 At the point of reorganisation eleven unitary authorities decided to remain with the existing arrangements and to set up a Joint User Group. South Lanarkshire Council undertook the role of lead authority for the Alert Service.
- 2.5 A Joint User Agreement was reached, part of which determined that each unitary authority's share of the Control Centre costs would be based on the number of dispersed alarm units in use, and be reviewed on an annual basis.

- 2.6 At the point of reorganisation North Lanarkshire attracted 19.5% of the costs.
- 2.7 Between April 1996 and March 1998, five unitary councils withdrew from the Joint User Agreement. With a further two authorities withdrawing within the current financial year, 1998/99, membership has been reduced to four authorities, namely, South Lanarkshire, North Lanarkshire, East Renfrewshire and Renfrewshire, with North and South Lanarkshire being the major service users.
- 2.8 Despite a slight increase in NLCs number of dispersed units, and South Lanarkshire's continual review of costs attached to the Control Centre, North Lanarkshire Council's share of costs changed from 19.5% in 1996/97, to 39.42% in 1997/98, and to 34.84% for the current financial year, 1998-99.

### 3 CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1 Following Committee approval in May of last year, an inter department review of the Alert Community Alarm Service was undertaken by Officers from Housing, Social Work and Information Technology. The findings of the review are contained within the Social Work/Housing Review Report "The Future of Alert Community Alarm Service - Management, Funding and Operational Arrangements".
- 3.2 The main outcome of the above review was the recommendation that Council consider the creation of a North Lanarkshire Alert Community Alarm Service. This recommendation was based on the undernoted findings,
- i). A NLC Alert Service Control Centre would allow :
- Effective operational control of the North Lanarkshire provision.
  - Financial resources currently available to be targeted with greater effectiveness.
  - Efficient budget management. Resource shortfalls and operational decisions made by other Joint User authorities, continue to impact on and influence NLC Alert expenditure.
  - Structured implementation of service developments to take place on a time scale set by North Lanarkshire.
  - Maximum potential use of the Alert Service to be achieved.
  - Reduction in the length of time between a service user being assessed as eligible for provision of an alarm unit, and the service being provided.

- ii). The establishment of a North Lanarkshire Alert Control Centre is seen as a way in which to provide a truly integrated home care service which is consistent with best value principles and stated Government policy on flexible home care, as contained in the recently published "Modernising Community Care".
- iii). The running costs associated with a North Lanarkshire Control Centre could be met from within existing budgets.

- 3.3 A unitary authority planning to withdraw from the Joint User Agreement is required to give a minimum of one full year's notice of the decision to withdraw, and North Lanarkshire intimated the possibility of their withdrawal from the Alert Joint User Group in April 1998.
- 3.4 East Renfrewshire and Renfrewshire Councils have subsequently taken the decision to pursue alternative Control Centre arrangements for Alert service users within their respective authorities, effective from April 1999.
- 3.5 At the Joint User Group Meeting on 29th October, 1998, South Lanarkshire advised they had undertaken a review of their position and were planning to move the Control Centre, currently sited in Glasgow, to a location within South Lanarkshire. The consequences of such a move on the Joint User authorities are unknown.

#### **4 PROPOSED OPERATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS**

- 4.1 It is proposed that a North Lanarkshire Alert Service Control Centre be established, which will operate 24 hours per day, 365 days a year. It will be based in the Merrystone Centre in Coatbridge, also the base for the Intensive Home Care Project and the Out of Hours Support Service, which have been the subject of separate reports to Committee.
- 4.2 Together with providing support to service users linked to the Alert Service, as an integral part of the home care services within the authority the Alert Controllers working between midnight and 9.00 a.m. would, as part of the Out of Hours support arrangements, provide reassurance, advice, guidance and, when necessary, initiate appropriate response to situations presenting for home support workers and service users.
- 4.3 It is also the intention that whilst on duty, the Out of Hours Support Service Managers will provide management support for Alert Controllers and for front-line staff.

## 5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The implications attached to the establishment of a North Lanarkshire Control Centre are shown below and are split into three sections.

- i). Initial Set Up Costs
- ii). Personnel Implications
- iii). Recurring Running Costs

### 5.2 Initial Set Up Costs

5.3 The initial set up costs of a Management System would require a capital sum of in the region of £60,000.

5.4 A costed example of a Management System compatible with the system located at the Alert Control Centre in Glasgow, is shown as (See Appendix 2).

5.5 The equipment which is at present based in Glasgow and is used to provide the service to the Joint Users may in part be available to North Lanarkshire. Discussions will take place with all Joint Users to ascertain the legal position.

### 5.6 Personnel Implications

5.7 The personnel implications of the proposals in respect to management of the service, operation of the switchboard, provision of mobile alert teams and the administrative back up required by the service are shown below.

### 5.8 Management of Service

5.9 Together with management responsibility for the Out of Hours Support Service and the Intensive Home Care Service, the Merrystone Centre Unit Manager will assume overall management responsibility for the Alert Service. (See Appendix 1).

The operational management of the service will be the responsibility of the following Home Support Management Staffing:

- i) Monday to Friday 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m.  
1 Home Support Manager
- ii) Monday to Friday 5.00 p.m. to Midnight  
Saturday and Sunday 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m.  
5.00 p.m. to Midnight

Out of Hours Service Home Support Service Managers will provide the necessary support and responses for Alert Controllers and front-line staff.

iii). Sunday to Saturday Midnight to 9.00 a.m.

Alert Controllers will provide the support and guidance for front-line staff. In recognition of this, a higher grade is being recommended for these staff.

5.10 The proposed grade for the Home Support Manager is Residential Grade 23, at spinal Column Points 27-30. Costing is based on SCP 30, given that it is hoped that experienced people will apply for the posts.

#### 5.11 **Switchboard Personnel**

5.12 To allow Alert Controller cover to be provided 365(6) days per year, 24 hours per day the Service will require to operate with the equivalent of 14 WTE Alert Controller Staff, as follows:

10.0 WTE Day Shift/Back Shift Controllers

The proposed grade for the Day Shift/Back Shift Controllers is Residential Grade 12, at Spinal Column Points 16-19. The costing is based on SCP 19, given that it is hoped that experienced people will apply for the posts.

4.0 WTE Night Shift Controllers

The proposed grade for the Night Shift Controllers is Residential Grade 16, at Spinal Column Points 20-23, in recognition of the additional role to be assumed by Night Shift staff.

5.13 The above allows for two switchboard operatives at all times. However, it may be possible to run the service with only one operative on duty at certain times since the level of incoming calls will be small. The switchboard will be staffed in accordance with operational requirements.

5.14 Staff on residential scales work five days out of seven, without the requirement to pay enhanced rates for weekend working.

#### 5.15 **Mobile Teams**

5.16 There are three mobile attendant teams who provide the direct service to clients, based in three different residential establishments within the authority. Each team has six part-time mobile attendants.

5.17 Currently line management of the mobile attendant staff is provided by Home Help Organisers within the Coatbridge and Cumbernauld Teams and by the Resource Worker based at Community Care HQ at Motherwell.

- 5.18 It is proposed line management of the three teams will be transferred to the Home Support Manager for Alert.
- 5.19 While it is seen as a natural step that the Coatbridge Mobile Attendant Team relocate to Merrystone Centre, given the current patterns of demand there would be no intention to relocate the Cumbernauld nor Motherwell Teams from their current bases to Merrystone Centre.
- 5.20 It is the intended that the home care services and the alert operatives work in a much more integrated way in future. Operational experience will determine the number of teams required to cover the service and at some times it may be possible to function with less than three.
- 5.21 **Administration**
- 5.22 Administrative support will be provided by the team of admin staff identified to service the Merrystone Home Support Centre. Funding for one full-time GS2 will require to be made available within the costing of the Alert Service.
- 5.23 At the time of local government reorganisation, agreement was reached between the new unitary authorities regarding disaggregation of the Community Alarm Central Control Service. This included the disaggregation of posts. The posts disaggregated to North Lanarkshire equated to:
- |                                      |                              |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1 Assistant Organiser (fulltime) PO2 | 2 Controllers (parttime) AP2 |
| 1 Clerical Assistant (fulltime) GS2  | 2 Controllers (fulltime) AP2 |
- 5.24 The current position is that 4 of the persons holding the above posts at local government reorganisation have left the employment of the Alert Service.
- 5.25 It would be the intention to deploy remaining postholders within the Home Care Service and the existing redeployment process agreed with the trade unions would be used.

## 6 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The current budget attached to the Alert Service is sufficient to cover all related costs of creating the management infrastructure and Control Centre staffing as outlined above. See Appendix 3.
- 6.2 The provision of management support from Out of Hours Support Service Managers will be at no- cost to the Alert Service.
- 6.3 The costs associated with the provision of administrative support will be covered by the rationalisation of the various elements of “stand-alone” projects operating within the current system.

6.4 The current budget is also sufficient to cover all related costs, such as travel and subsistence.

## 7 CONCLUSION

7.1 As evidenced in the Review Report "The Future of Alert Community Alarm Service - Management, Funding and Operational Arrangements", the creation of a North Lanarkshire Alert Service Control Centre is seen as a way in which to provide a truly integrated home care service which is consistent with best value principals and stated Government policy on flexible home care.

7.2 The opportunity to tailor the service to meet the needs of persons residing within North Lanarkshire, and to action changes/developments to the service at a pace which is determined by the authority would be available.

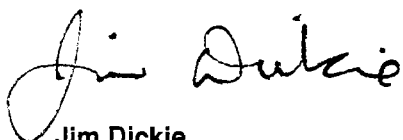
7.3 The proposals would allow for an improved service for both service users and front-line staff to be achieved within existing budgets.

7.4 Given the planned action of the three Joint User authorities, it is suggested that it would be appropriate at this point in time for the authority to determine the future of the Alert Service within North Lanarkshire, and at the earliest opportunity embark upon agreed proposals.

## 8 RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Committee is asked :

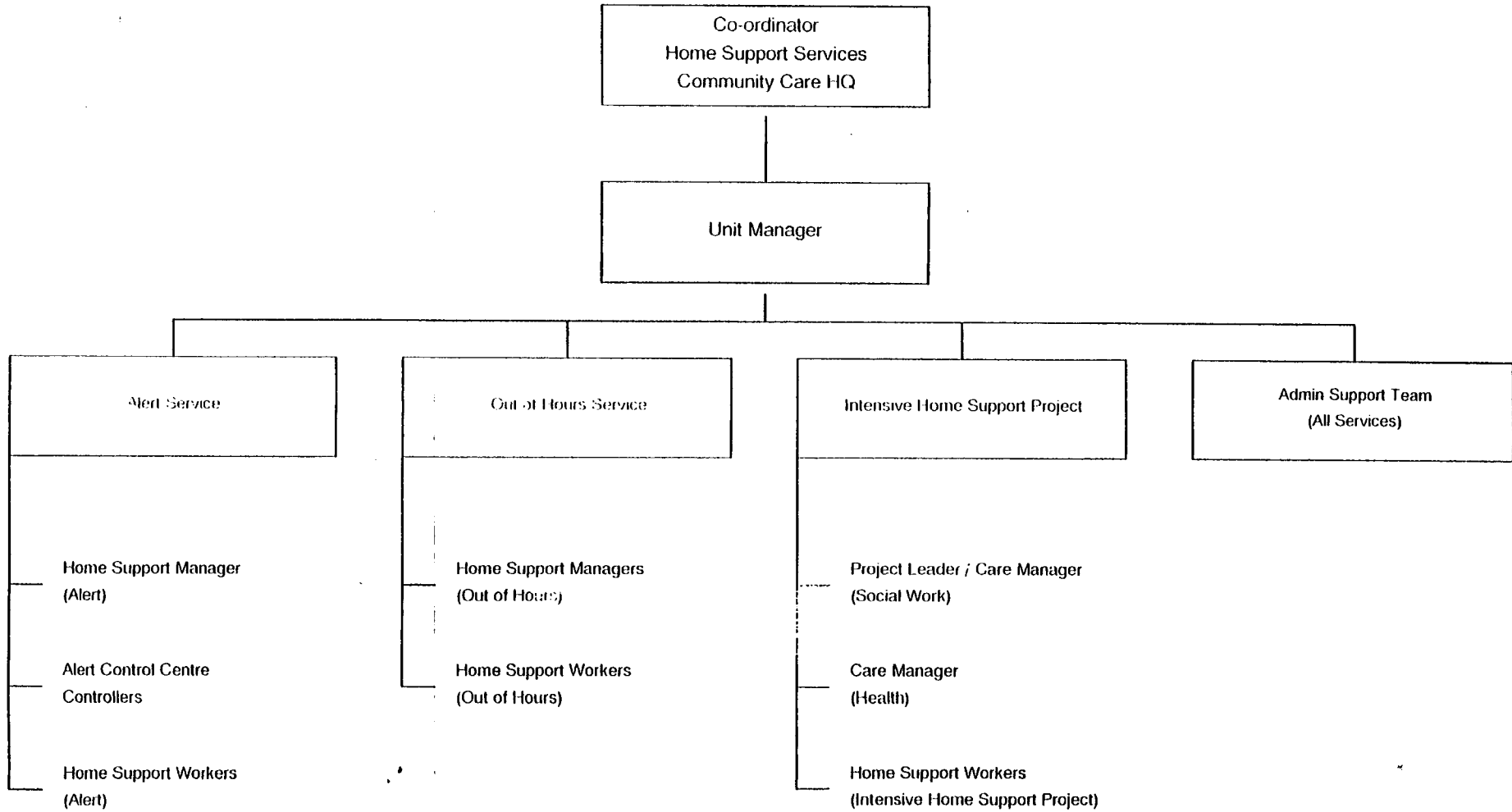
- i). To approve the proposal for the creation of a North Lanarkshire Alert Control Centre
- ii). To approve the purchase of the equipment necessary to provide the service as detailed in Appendix 2.
- iii). To approve the proposals for the management structure, and the posts identified in Section 5, point ii).
- iv). To approve that officers enter into negotiations with South Lanarkshire in order to ensure an orderly handover.
- v). To remit to the Personnel Services Committee for its interest.



**Jim Dickie**  
**Director of Social Work**

*For further information on this report please contact . Alexis Jay, Head of Social Work Services (TEL: 01698 332001)*

# Merrystone Centre





**Estimated Initial Set - up cost of Management System**

**Initial Set- up Cost :**

1)	Tunstall PNC 3 - 2 Operators and 1 Management		29,765.00
2)	Uninterruptible Power Supply Main System	4,255.57	
3)	Invoice Manager Software	2,800.00	
4)	Management Report Software	3,196.00	
5)	Data Transfer ( 3500 records @ .56p )	1,960.00	
6)	Mini Back - Up PNC 3	5,650.00	
7)	Printer	438.75	
8)	Uninterruptible Power Supply Mini Back - up PNC 3	<u>4,699.15</u>	22,999.47
9)	BT lines - 6 in number		594.00
10)	Gold Service Aftercare (2nd year onwards)		6,500.00
<b>Total Cost :</b>			<u><u>59,858.47</u></u>
<b>Furnishings and Fittings :</b>			<u><u>5,000.00</u></u>
<b>Overall Cost :</b>			<u><u>64,858.47</u></u>

**North Lanarkshire Council  
Social Work Department**

**Alert (Community Alarm) Service**

**Appendix 3**

**Use of Funds**

Merrystone Unit Manager See Committee Report of 24/11/98	25,760
Alert (Team Leader)	20,166
Controllers	242,422
Administration support	12,368
Alert Mobile Attendant Teams	214,221
Transport	25,978
Provision of Additional Equipment and Replacement of Obsolete Equipment	42,000
Furniture & Fittings	5,000
Telephone Rentals	15,000

**602,915**

**Sources of Funding**

**Social Work**

Existing Community Alarm Budgets	582,282
Home Care Review Implementation monies	20,633

**602,915**

Property costs to be funded from monies laid aside for Home Care Review Implementation.