

REPORT

Item No: _____

SUBJECT:	Introduction of the charge for the Community Alarm Service.
TO:	Integration Joint Board
Lead Officer for Report:	Chief Officer
Author(s) of Report	Manager, Adult Services
DATE:	07.08.20

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This paper is coming to the IJB

For approval	<input type="checkbox"/>	For endorsement	<input type="checkbox"/>	To note	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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2. ROUTE TO THE BOARD

This paper has been:

Prepared	<input type="checkbox"/>	Reviewed	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Endorsed	<input type="checkbox"/>
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By: members of the Core Management Team

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

Members of the IJB Performance, Finance and Audit Committee are asked to:

- Note the progress on the introduction of the charge for the Community Alarm Service
- Request an update on progress of the charge for the Community Alarm Service in March 2021.

4. VARIATIONS TO DIRECTIONS?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/>
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5. BACKGROUND/SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

5.1 Background

5.1.1 Since its inception in 1999, there has been a rise in the number of users of the CAS of some 500%. This growth in number of people with a community alarm reflects the positive balance of care in North Lanarkshire and the growing complexity of health and social care needs people supported in the community. The increase in the number of people with a

community alarms has, however, required increased staffing levels and the purchase of additional equipment.

- 5.1.2 There are a number of ways in which assistance and support can be provided depending on the individual circumstances of the call. These include:
- Providing reassurance
 - Contacting a friend or family member to visit
 - Arranging a home support worker to attend
 - Contacting GP or Emergency Services
- 5.1.3 The service has planned to meet increased demand and respond to other challenges around digitisation by undertaking a review of the service eligibility criteria and has introduced enhanced working with the third sector and greater use of natural supports. Reports on these developments have previously been tabled both at the Adult Health and Social Care Committee and the Integration Joint Board.
- 5.1.4 The service is registered with the Care Inspectorate and in addition to the core functions of screening, call handling and response to community alarm calls it also call handles for the Social Work Emergency Service and Home Support out of hours service.
- 5.1.5 The North Lanarkshire Council budget setting meeting on 24th February 2020 approved a weekly charge of £3.40 for the community alarm service, which is consistent with the average charge in Scotland as per 2019/20 Audit Scotland Local Government Overview report. The total annual value of the approved charge is £1.410m.
- 5.1.6 The agreed charge will support the Council and the Integration Joint Board to continue to deliver this service to a high standard through having the appropriate staffing and financial resources to meet the needs of those who use the service.
- 5.1.7 The Council introduced a charge for the CAS in April 2016 which was subsequently rescinded in March 2017. As part of the 2016 operating model, residents who resided within sheltered housing properties did not pay the charge directly and instead this cost was met by the Housing Service. This was due to the system being hardwired within each property and there was no technical solution at the time to remove alarms if the individual did not wish to continue with the service. There is now a technical solution to enable the removal of the Community Alarm from individual tenancies if a resident within a sheltered housing complex makes the choice to cease the service.
- 5.1.8 In accordance with COSLA guidance, North Lanarkshire Council maximises the income of all service users who are liable to make a contribution towards the cost of a service. Therefore anyone who receives a Community Alarm Service and incurs a charge will be offered a financial assessment to ensure that their income is maximised.

5.2 Process for Implementation of the charge

- 5.2.1. A group has been established to progress the implementation of the charge for CAS. Membership of this group includes officers from:
- Community Alarm Service
 - Adult Social Work service
 - Social work and Corporate IT
 - HSC Communication Team
 - Financial Inclusion Team
 - Social Work Business & Resources Management
 - Chief Executive's Office - Finance

- 5.2.2. The CAS implementation group has met regularly and has been progressing the plan for implementation of the charge. While the original plan was for an April implementation date, the prioritisation of other activity in the early stages of the Covid response has caused a delay. It is important that sufficient time and energy is invested in the setting up of relevant systems including putting in place capacity to deal with enquiries and the need for advance communication with service users. It is now planned to implement this charge in September 2020.
- 5.2.3 The letter informing people who have a community alarm of the introduction of the charge is attached at Appendix 1 and will be sent out in August 2020. Based on the learning from 2016, the letters will be sent out in batches, to help to control the volume of enquiries back to the service.
- 5.2.4 An Elected member briefing note has been prepared and is attached at Appendix 2. This will be shared with members before the service user letters are distributed.
- 5.2.5 A dedicated telephone line has been established to be used if people are concerned about the financial impact of the introduction of a charge or are considering returning their community alarm. Experienced and skilled staff will be available to ensure support for income maximisation and an assessment of the person's individual circumstances takes place to ensure people can remain safe at home. The line will be open from 08:45–16:45 Mon–Thurs, and 08:45–16:15 on a Friday.
- 5.2.6 Based on learning from undertaking the exercise in 2016, 7 staff will be in place to support the line, with additional capacity in place for the first week which will see the peak demand. Two Home Support Managers will also be available to support the escalation of any concerns raised from the calls.
- 5.2.7 Forms for benefits maximisation, along with a stamped and addressed envelope, will be sent out with the service user letters to allow individuals to commence benefits maximisation. The Financial Inclusion Team has been involved in the implementation group and will have sufficient capacity to meet demand. In 2016, over 800 individuals were supported to maximise their income through the approach.
- 5.2.8 In 2016, those wishing to return an alarm were offered options including dropping them off at specified points, including Council offices, health centres and first stop shops. Unfortunately due to Covid 19 we do not have the option of the public accessing both Council and health buildings without an appointment. Learning also shows us that individuals may have concerns that having the alarm still within their property and switched on may mean that they will incur a charge and so may want to have the alarm removed timeously. We anticipate up to 1400 alarms could be returned through the exercise.
- 5.2.9 It is proposed to have a more structured approach with people having a range of options:
- Collection of the alarm by a member of staff or volunteers from their own home
 - Ability to drop off at Council or NHS buildings using locked receptacles or an appointment system (for example, health centres already have established 'safe zones' for the safe collection of prescriptions)
 - For those wishing to post the alarm, a stamped and addressed jiffy bag will be mailed out
- 5.2.10 Discussions are ongoing with NHS colleagues and the final details will be confirmed at the Health and Social Care Partnership recovery group on 12th August.

6. CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The implementation of the Community Alarm Service charge commences in September 2020, following the budget decisions taken by North Lanarkshire Council in February 2020.

The Integration Joint Board agreed to delay the implementation of the charge in March 2020 due to the impact of Covid-19.

- 6.2 A communication and implementation strategy is in place to ensure the smooth delivery of the change, building on the learning from the previous exercise in 2016.

7. IMPLICATIONS

7.1 NATIONAL OUTCOMES

The Community Alarm Service impacts across the range of national health and wellbeing indicators.

7.2 ASSOCIATED MEASURE(S)

7.3 FINANCIAL

This paper has been reviewed by Finance:

Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/>
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7.4 RISK ASSESSMENT/RISK MANAGEMENT

The introduction of the charge is included in the service risk register, with a working group in place to deliver the change.

7.5 PEOPLE

The service user communication ensures support is provided to enable all to have a benefits maximisation check

7.6 INEQUALITIES & FAIRER SCOTLAND DUTY

EQIA Completed & Fairer Scotland Impact Assessment Form Completed:

Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/>
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8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

9. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – service user letter

Appendix 2 – Elected Member briefing



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CHIEF ACCOUNTABLE OFFICER (or Depute)

Members seeking further information about any aspect of this report, please contact Morag Dendy on telephone number 01698 332075.

Appendix 1: Service user letter

Our Ref: **SWIS number**
Your Ref: **SWIS number**
Tel: 01698 403278
E-Mail: CommunityAlarmCharging@northlan.gov.uk
Date:

Adult Health & Social Care (CAS)
North Lanarkshire Council
Civic Centre
Motherwell
Lanarkshire
ML1 1AB
www.northlanarkshire.gov.uk

Introduction of a Service Charge for the Community Alarm Service

This letter is to advise you that a charge will be introduced for all households who use the Community Alarm Service. The introduction of a charge is necessary to maintain the service to the standards that you have come to expect. Prior to the charge introduction, North Lanarkshire was one of only two remaining areas in Scotland not charging for this service and the new charge has been set in line with the Scottish average.

The charge for the alarm service will be £3.40 per week (49p per day) and will start on 14th September 2020. Your first bill for this can be expected week commencing 28th October, and will cover the period from 14th September until 11th October 2020, totalling £13.60, and thereafter you will receive a further bill every 4 weeks. Information on ways to pay will be included with your bill.

If you would like to discuss the introduction of the charge or **do not want** your Community Alarm Service to continue, please either; email your name and contact telephone number to the email address at the top of this letter and someone will call you; or contact the helpline on 01698 403 278. Lines will open daily from Tuesday 25th August between 08:45–16:45 Mon–Thurs, and 08:45–16:15 on a Friday.

If you do not contact us your service will continue as normal and you will receive your bill automatically as detailed above.

The Community Alarm Service plays an important role in supporting people to remain safely within the community. The introduction of the charge ensures we can continue to deliver the same high standard of service our service users expect. It is vital that we are in a position to meet this demand while protecting this important service for our most vulnerable residents.

We understand you may have some concerns around the introduction of charges in these uncertain times. We can arrange for someone to check your income is fully maximised and you are receiving everything you should be through a financial assessment. For this, we require you to complete the enclosed form and return it in the enclosed Freepost envelope. On receipt of this someone will be in touch with you to ensure your income is maximised.

Please note that the Community Alarm Service will not be able to provide advice or assistance about charging or benefits so please do not either press

the alarm or call the Community Alarm Service for advice in relation to this matter. Please use the dedicated helpline as noted above on 01698 403 278.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ross McGuffie', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ross McGuffie
Chief Officer
Health & Social Care North Lanarkshire

Enc.



Health & Social Care
North Lanarkshire



Appendix 2: Elected Member Briefing

Date :	24th August 2020
To :	Elected Members
From:	Ross McGuffie Chief officer
Subject:	Introduction of a Charge for the Community Alarm Service.

1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 As part of the Council's budget planning for 2020/2021 the Social Work Service submitted a proposal to re-introduce a charge for the Community Alarm Service. This proposal was subsequently agreed by members during the budget setting meeting on 24th February. The total annual value of the approved saving was £1.410m.
- 1.2 The approved charge for the service is £3.40 per household per week. (At the time the proposal was prepared this was the average charge for a Community Alarm Service in Scotland). The agreed charge will support the Council and the Integrated Joint Board to continue to deliver this service to a high standard through having the appropriate staffing and financial resources to meet the needs of those who use the service.
- 1.3 The Council had previously introduced a charge for the CAS, in April 2016, which was subsequently rescinded in March 2017. As part of the 2016 operating model residents who resided within sheltered housing properties did not pay the charge directly and instead this cost was met by the Housing Service. This was due to the system being hardwired within each property and there was no technical solution at this time to remove alarms, if the individual do not wish to continue with the service. There is now a technical solution to enable the removal of the Community Alarm from individual tenancies if a resident within a sheltered housing complex makes the choice to cease the service.
- 1.4 In addition to the financial context noted above the social work service has seen a rise in the users of the Community Alarm Service since its introduction in 1999 of some 500%. This growth, and the need to support people at home

who are living longer with more complex health needs, has meant a need to increase staffing levels and the purchase of equipment to meet demand.

- 1.5 The Council and Integrated Joint Board recognises that the Community Alarm Service are key services along with home support, district nurses, G.P's etc who support the most vulnerable residents in North Lanarkshire to remain living safely in their homes.
- 1.6 The introduction of the charge, £3.40 per week (49p per day) for the Community Alarm Service will allow the Council and the Integrated Joint Board to continue to deliver these services to a high standard.
- 1.7 In accordance with COSLA guidance, North Lanarkshire Council maximises the income of all service users who are liable to make a contribution towards the cost of their support.

2 PROCESS FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CHARGE

- 2.1 Service users will receive letters week beginning the 24th of August 2020, advising them of the introduction of the charge.
- 2.2 The charge for each of the services will be implemented from the 14st September 2020 with people who use the Community Alarm Service receiving their first bill from 21st of October 2020.
- 2.3 All service users will be offered a financial assessment to ensure that the person's income is maximised.
- 2.4 We have set up a dedicated helpline for service users staffed by experienced staff who will assist people with any questions that they have around the introduction of the charge from 24th September 2020 which will be staffed between 08:45 – 16:45 Monday – Thursday and 08:45 – 16:15 on Friday.
- 2.5 A question and answer information sheet will be on the Councils website and a copy is attached for information. I have also attached a copy of the letter which is being sent to users of both services for ease of reference.

For further information on this please contact Jim McCreanor Community Social Work Manager or Dennis McLafferty, Manager, Adult Services.

FAQ: Community alarm service introduction of charges to safeguard service

What is the Community Alarm service?

Our service allows people to call for assistance in an emergency at any time of the day or night, by pressing a button to contact a 24/7 response centre. Staff can arrange for relatives, the home support service or health services to attend as required

The service is available 24-hours-a-day, 365 days each year and receives around 400,000 calls each year.

Why are you introducing a charge?

We are introducing the charge to ensure we can continue to deliver the same high standard of service our users expect. It is essential that we are in a position to meet this demand while protecting this important service for our most vulnerable residents.

Since the introduction of the service in 1999, there has been a rise in users, year on year, from around 2,000 to the current number of more than 9,000 – an increase of almost 500%. Demand for this service will only become greater due to an ageing population and we must be in a position to meet this demand, protect the service.

This charge will safeguard the service for our most vulnerable residents.

What was the price previously?

Since April 2017 North Lanarkshire is one of only two local authority areas in Scotland providing the service free of charge. The £3.40 (49p per day) charge per household is in line with the national average.

Are you letting service users know about this change?

We are writing to everyone using the service – more than 9,000 residents - to advise them of this change, and to reassure them that the high standard of service they currently receive will be maintained. Our letter also provides an opportunity for residents to arrange a financial assessment to ensure their income is maximised.

I've received a letter about the Community Alarm service charge. What do I do?

Your service will continue as normal if you do not contact us. The charge for the alarm service is £3.40 a week (49p per day) for each participating household and starts on Monday 14 September.

Your first bill will be sent out on the week beginning Monday 26 October. This will cover the period from 14 September to 11 October and will total £13.60. Bills will then be sent out every four weeks. Information on ways to pay will be included with your bill.

What if I no longer want to use the service?

If you do not want your Community Alarm Service to continue please email your name and phone number to CommunityAlarmCharging@northlan.gov.uk and someone will call you.

You can also contact the helpline on 01698 403278. Lines will open daily from Tuesday 25th August between 08:45–16:45 Mon–Thurs, and 08:45–16:15 on a Friday.

It is important to note that if you do not contact us you will still receive the service and be charged for it.

What if I can't afford to pay?

We can arrange for someone to check your income is fully maximised and you are receiving everything you should be. To help us with this we need you to complete the form we sent to you as part of your information pack and return it to us. Once we receive this, someone will contact you.