WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET : 20TH SEPTEMBER 2007

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF ADULT SOCIAL SERVICES

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY – INVESTMENT PLAN

Executive Summary

This report and associated paper (Appendix 1) provides a project evaluation on the development of the Assistive Technology Service and the proposal for mainstreaming the telecare and telemedicine. The report also asks members to agree the commencement of the tendering process for the monitoring, maintenance and response service currently provided under contract by Wirral Partnership Homes and Wirral Handypersons Service. This involves a key decision which was first identified in the Forward Plan dated 1st September 2007.

1 Background

1.1 In 2001, The Department of Health produced a health and local authority circular (HSC 2001/008: LAC (2001)13) on integrating community equipment services. Reference was made to the emerging electronic assistive technology originally based on extensions to community alarm services (eg smoke and flood detectors, falls monitors etc). Much of the initial innovative work on telecare was carried out in housing environments.

1.2 Since publication of the 2001 circular there has been growing interest in the provision of remote technology to support housing, community safety and health options as well as supporting domiciliary care packages. With the development of intermediate care, long term conditions management and alternatives to acute hospital admission the technology has moved further.

1.3 In Summer 2004, a decision was made to include Government funding for preventative technologies (Preventive Technologies Grant) during the period 2006-2008. £30m to be available in 2006-2007 and £50m in 2007-2008. Wirral received £221,000 in 2006/07 and £368,000 in 2007/08. In January 2006, the Government published the White Paper 'Our health, Our care, Our say' which included specific references to telecare as part of a preventive approach.

1.4 'Building Telecare in England' (DH, 2005) stated that the Preventive Technology Grant should be used to increase the numbers of people who are supported to remain independent with telecare. It was expected that most of the beneficiaries would be older people. However, before advantage can be taken of telecare, local authorities needed to ensure that infrastructures are in place to deliver. These include:

- Staff training and development
- The supply and management of equipment
- The supply of relevant 24 hour/seven day contact services
- The supply of 24 hour/seven day care response services.

1.5 The grant was intended to pump prime these processes and changes in the delivery of mainstream services using the existing infrastructure such as community alarms service as the platform for telecare services. For this reason Wirral had to look beyond the Preventive Technology Grant to the overall development of Assistive Technology Service including telecare and telemedicine. Wirral's 'Preventive Technology Plan' (agreed at Cabinet 27.4.06) went beyond simply the purchasing of a range of equipment for the next two years to setting a framework for service development.

2 Progress to date

2.1 During 2006/07 a range of telecare and telemedicine equipment was identified to be commissioned as part of an individual's health and/or social care package. These included for example, bed and chair occupancy sensors, falls and flood detectors, pressure mats, and telemedicine monitoring units which monitor vital signs – blood pressure, pulse, oxygen levels, weight and lung capacity.

2.2 At the same time 150 assessors across Wirral Hospital Trust, Wirral Primary Care Trust and the Department of Adult Social Services, (Social Workers, POPIN staff, Hospital Occupational Therapists, Community Occupational Therapists and Community Matrons) were given full training on the commissioning of telecare and telemedicine.

2.3 Wirral Partnership Homes were commissioned to provide the monitoring, installation and 24 hours response service and Wirral Handypersons service were commissioned to fit the equipment.

2.4 A 'SMART' house was developed in a one bedroom flat in 'Flambards' on the Woodchurch estate. This facility is fully equipped with the range of technology and provides assessors, people who use services, the public and other professionals an opportunity to view and try out the equipment in a home environment.

2.5 At this point 74 people over the age of 65 have now benefited from equipment. In addition a further 8 people on Community Matron's case load have had telemedicine monitors installed in their homes. This figure will increase by a further 12 by October 2007. Telemedicine is particularly relevant in supporting people with long term conditions and the avoidance of hospital admissions.

2.6 Training is being expanded to Wirral Partnership Home 'Support Link Service' and other Registered Social Landlords who provide support to

older people through warden type services and the Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service advocate for the over 65's.

2.7   Telecare and telemedicine also play a part in reablement services such as intermediate care both bed and community based.   Occupational Therapists have been trained within the Wirral Enablement and Discharge Service and discussions regarding training home care staff within the developing Home Assessment and Rehabilitation service is to commence shortly.

3   Project Evaluation

3.1   Project evaluation has shown that the infrastructure has now been developed to support and expand the Assistive Technology Service, it has therefore achieved the outcome identified within 'Building Telecare in England'.

3.2   The evaluation has shown that the commissioning of telecare equipment has been low, with assessors identifying a range of factors influencing this. However, the distribution of equipment is gaining momentum and already there is evidence that Wirral's telecare service is effectively supporting older people and there carers. The report highlights cases where telecare has resulted in a more a cost effective option for the Department of Adult Social Services.

3.3   Although the potential of Telecare to support the independence and well-being of older vulnerable people is established in a number of studies, its development remains characterised by isolated research activity, pilot studies and ad hoc schemes based around more mainstream community alarm services.

3.4   The recent Wanless Social Care Review, 'Securing Good Care for Older People' (2006), acknowledged that there was a lack of rigorous data on the cost implications of telecare due to the nature of the current evidence based on small scale, short-term trials and evaluations, and even fewer attempts at modelling the potential cost effectiveness of the introduction of telecare on a larger scale. According to the Wanless Review, however, there is enough evidence to suggest that telecare services should shift into the mainstream, despite the difficulty in predicting the impact on costs.

3.5   The project has already shown that the distribution of telecare is contributing to key LAA targets both in terms of reducing falls and supporting people at home.

3.6   Telemedicine is now being successfully implemented within Wirral Primary Trust through the Community Matron Service and a project evaluation is underway in this area, however it is too early to establish the benefits in terms of patient care and efficiency.

4. Future Strategy

4.1 The paper proposes a three year investment strategy to support the mainstreaming and further development of telecare and telemedicine. This strategy outlines a five point plan that will maintain and support the current commissioning approach expanding commissioning arrangements to the areas of mental health and learning disabilities. However, it also describes a targeted approach to implementing telecare and telemedicine to people with long term conditions at particular points within the care pathway. This will mean the technology is provided early on and will support the self management of these conditions as well as supporting risk management and providing monitoring and assessment information to clinicians and social care professionals.

4.2 The same staffing infrastructure funding will remain in place not only to continue to support and expand the range of professionals commissioning telecare and telemedicine, but to continue product evaluation and increase the range of technology available. Their expertise will be used to develop the packages of technology to be implemented along care pathways. They will also continue work alongside the Registered Social Landlords expanding the service further into this area. Finally, they will continue to play a key role in the expansion of telemedicine and the contract monitoring arrangements with successful provider of the monitoring, installation, maintenance and response service.

4.3 The report also provides a risk analysis of the impact of decommissioning the service.

4.4 Wirral Partnership Homes currently provides the monitoring, installation and response service. This contract ends in March 2008 and WPH are aware that the Council intends to re-tender for the service.

4.5 Central Procurement have been involved in the procurement process. The new contract will be a block contract for a period of three years commencing on 1.4.08.

5 Financial Implications

5.1 The future strategy provides a hypothesis of the efficiency savings likely if the three year plan is implemented. This will be in the region of £470,000 per annum (gross £811,200). There will also be a notional saving to the Primary Care Trust in the region of £800,000.

5.2 The investment plan identifies a total investment required for the service to continue for the next three years of £1,058,716. This has been apportioned between the Primary Care Trust and the Department of Adult Social Services.

Department of Adult Social Services - £785,373
(Funding for telecare)

Wirral Primary Care Trust - £268,343
(This includes funding for telemedicine
monitors and one fifth of telecare provision
issued through health service ie Hospital and
Community Therapists)

5.3 The annual investment from the Council's Community Care budget is £262,000. If the forecast annual savings are confirmed at £811,200 this equates to a return on investment of 310%.

5.4 Wirral PCT will shortly provide confirmation of their funding intentions.

6 Staffing Implications

If the option for decommissioning the service is supported current staff within the Assistive Technology Service will return to their respective posts.

7 Equal Opportunities Implications

The Preventive Technology plan and project has focussed primarily on vulnerable older people. The future development of this service as it becomes mainstream will start to focus on people with learning disabilities, mental health needs and other vulnerable groups. The Preventive Technology Plan comprehensively outlines the benefits of telecare/telemedicine in supporting vulnerable people remain in their own homes by providing increased confidence, supporting early discharge from hospital, supporting falls prevention and enabling greater choice and independence.

8 Community Safety Implications

Some telecare equipment provides additional safety and security options for people who wish to remain at home.

9 Local Agenda 21 Implications

The construction, delivery and removal of telecare and telemedicine packages is subject to the same ethical processes as any other care package. Some telecare equipment gathers information about the lifestyle and activities of the individual in their home. These packages will have specific ethical considerations around informed consent.

10 Planning Implications

None

11   Anti Poverty Implications

Assistive Technology provides a range of equipment solutions which support both people who use services and their carers. In some cases this means that the person or their carer is able to resume part or full time employment.

12   Social Inclusion Implications

Many of the equipment solutions provided by the Assistive Technology Service support the remote monitoring of an individual's wellbeing.   In many cases this means that carers feel less social isolated and have confidence to maintain or resume their usual lifestyle.

13   Local Member Support Implications

The Assistive Technology Service will be a Wirral-wide service

14   Background Papers

'Preventive Technology Plan' Social Care and Health Select Committee – 15.3.06

'Preventive Technology Plan' Cabinet – 27.04.06

Assistive Technology Service – Progress update – Social Care, Health and Inclusion Overview and Scrutiny Committee 19.9.07

15   Recommendations

That

(1) outcomes from the Assistive Technology Project Evaluation be noted;

(2) the three years strategy and associated investment Plan be supported; and

(3) the tendering process for the monitoring and response service begin in October 2008 with the award of the new contract in April 2008.

KEVIN MILLER
Director of Adult Social Services

Jennifer McGovern
Joint Commissioning Manager – Older People/Physical and Sensory Disabilities
ext no   3652

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