
LIFELINE PROJECT UPDATE

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To update Scrutiny on the progress of the lifeline project, following on from a verbal update on 14 January.

Summary

2. Work undertaken since the January update is as follows:-
 - (a) Progress on application for attendance allowance as a mitigating action;
 - (b) Commenced the EIA by working with private providers as a starting point;
 - (c) Review of the charging policy for Lifeline;
 - (d) Review of the SLA and costs associated with the CCTV provision for call monitoring and response;
 - (e) Spend Analysis.
3. This work is still in progress and is anticipated to be completed by June/July 2014.

Recommendation

4. It is recommended that :-
 - (a) Scrutiny acknowledges the content of this report.

Murray Rose
Director of People

Background Papers

None

Elaine Taylor : Extension 6082

S17 Crime and Disorder	None
Health and Well Being	The service will help vulnerable tenants to maintain their tenancy and this will include those who are making the transition from various support services
Carbon Impact	None
Diversity	Removal of the subsidy will affect a range of vulnerable tenants
Wards Affected	All wards with Council Tenancies
Groups Affected	All clients currently in receipt of the subsidy, in particular the over 65's.
Budget and Policy Framework	The service will become self-funding service
Key Decision	No
Urgent Decision	No
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	Ensuring that every pound is spent wisely and that the councils scarce financial resources are used to provide service to the most vulnerable when needed
Efficiency	The service's aim is to deliver financial efficiency by removing a subsidy which is no longer a legislative requirement

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

5. The Lifeline project is anticipated to save the council £336,919 per annum, phased over a three year period. These savings will be achieved by removing the General Fund contribution to the service (previously the Supporting People subsidy).
6. This subsidy is currently given to approximately 1900 Lifeline clients, which is about 57% of all service users.
7. Due to previous removal of subsidy paid to this service of £160,000, the impacts of which are still being felt by clients until the end of 2014/2015, it was decided to delay the impact of removing this second subsidy until 2015/2016, to allow both the council and other housing suppliers to mitigate against the potential impact and to allow time to conduct an EIA across the large number of affected users..
8. The work undertaken prior to the verbal update in January 2014 were all actions that did not involve passing costs on to the clients.
9. This work has not only contributed to the savings identified in the MTFP for 14/15 but has also lowered the cost of the service and therefore the final impact that would be felt by the client in 2015/2016:-

(b) Removing shortfall in spend from the budget;

- (c) Reviewing of the staffing structure and removing posts to reduce the costs to service users;
- (d) Reviewing and revising job description which has enabled us to review the Housing Benefit Eligibility and gain a better service for the tenants in warden controlled accommodation;
- (e) Assessing the number of clients who did not currently receive Attendance Allowance with the idea of using this benefit as a way of mitigating against the increase in cost for the client in 15/16.

10. Since the January update to following progress has been made:-

- (a) The benefits take up campaign has commenced and work has taken place to engage Age UK to assist in this piece of work:-
 - (i) The Lifeline team have a rolling programme of reviews for each of the Lifeline Clients, with approximately 75 reviews taking place each month. As the review approaches, the team are identifying those clients not currently in receipt of Attendance Allowance, who may be eligible.
 - (ii) Age UK are assisting the client with the application and helping the client to complete the application form and track the progress of the application
 - (iii) They have started with the private clients who are the most vulnerable clients. There are 177 clients in receipt of the subsidy, with 113 of those already in receipt of Attendance Allowance. Of the 44 remaining, 14 clients have been referred to apply for Attendance Allowance.
- (b) A review of the charging policy is underway to ensure that this reflects the cost of installation and removal.
- (c) Work has started to review and revise SLA between Lifeline and CCTV and the new SLA is hoped to be in place in April 2014.
- (d) Work has also commenced to review the charges paid to CCTV and comparing the costs and level of service with alternative providers and the results of this will form part of the Options Appraisal for this project.
- (e) A spend analysis has been undertaken for the service area and the largest spend contract is currently being prepared to go out for tender.

Equalities Considerations

11. The EIA has commenced and is being approached in a phased way:-

- (a) Phase 1 being to talk to the housing suppliers to allow them time to think about what mitigating actions they could put in place to lessen the impact on their clients. The majority of the initial meetings have taken place and we are awaiting feedback from some suppliers.

- (b) Phase 2 is to undertake EIA directly with a sample of affected tenants and some representative groups. It is hoped that this will commence in April/May 2015 and the results of this will also form part of the final report for this project.

Outcome of Consultation with Housing Associations

- 12. Meetings have taken place with eight of the nine external Housing Associations. Of those, four have direct contracts with DBC Supporting People Section and the remaining five providers have properties in Darlington, where DBC lifeline delivers the service to their tenants, through individual agreements and are subsidised through an internal SLA with the Supporting People Section.
- 13. Where DBC has direct contracts, the providers have stated that they would wish to carry out consultation with their tenants and would welcome support from DBC staff. This consultation would also include the required Equalities Impact Assessment.
- 14. Their views so far on the action they would take at the end of the contract with DBC are as follows:-
 - (a) Two providers will pass the cost of the current service to those tenants affected at the end of the contract.
 - (b) One provider will give their tenants the options available and the tenants will vote on how they want the service to be delivered in the future.
 - (c) One provider is considering the current cost of the service and the split of the warden time between HB and Supporting People Subsidy and will consult with their sheltered housing tenants on the warden service they currently deliver, prior to making a final decision.
- 15. Where Housing Associations have properties in the borough, but DBC Lifeline deliver the service through individual agreements with the tenants, their views were as follows:-
 - (a) Three providers said the Community Alarm provision was not a condition of the tenancy; therefore tenants could to decide to have the Lifeline removed and end their agreement with DBC if they wished.
 - (b) One provider has confirmed that the Community Alarm provision is a term of the tenancy, but they themselves do have an alternative service which tenants may choose to receive if the tenant wishes to end the agreement with DBC.
 - (c) One provider currently does not have an alternative service, but in the future there may be an alternative available as they are merging with another larger housing provider. They wanted to discuss this further within their organisation and report back in due course.

16. All providers were happy for DBC to send letters to their tenants and they would also provide contact details to be included in the letter.
17. All the providers consulted did comment that they valued the time DBC was giving in relation to the changes proposed, as it did give them appropriate time to consider the impact and the options available for each organisation.

Risks

18. There is a risk that the Lifeline Service loses a great number of contracts/clients by removing the subsidy. If this occurred the service would need to consider a number of actions. These could range from reviewing costs and staffing structure to ensure sustainability and affordability for remaining clients and undertaking an active campaign to recruit more clients; to having a de-stabilised service and being forced to offer a cheaper, lower level of service to enable lifeline to retain the business and keep the Lifeline service stable by being able to complete with the housing associations offer.

Additional Information

19. Further work on the EIA, the risks and the options available will be provided once the remainder of this work has been undertaken.
20. The Lifeline service offers a number of benefits to both Adults Social Care and a number of Health areas including Primary Care, Acute Services and Emergency Services, including helping the prevention of admission to hospital via the Lifeline response service.
21. The development of the Better Care Fund and implementation of the Care Bill will look at how this service is integrated into the prevention agenda going forward.

Conclusion

22. It is anticipated that the final report on this review will be completed by June/July 2014.