



EXECUTIVE BOARD DECISION

REPORT OF:	Executive Member for Adults Social Care & Health
LEAD OFFICERS:	Strategic Director of Adults and Health
DATE:	Thursday, 9 January 2025

PORTFOLIO/S AFFECTED:	Adults Social Care & Health
WARD/S AFFECTED:	(All Wards);
KEY DECISION:	Y

SUBJECT: Community equipment service re-tender

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Contracts for community equipment services serving residents in Blackburn with Darwen and Lancashire are coming to an end in June 2025. This affords the opportunity to look at driving efficiencies and economies of scale in procuring a single provider and in turn driving efficiencies and streamlining policies and processes for our staff and residents. The current BwD service was commissioned by Lancashire and South Cumbria ICB with BwD as associates. Lancashire County Council (LCC) are leading on the re-procurement on behalf of the three partners.

This report sets out the progress to date, the high-level changes proposed both in the service specification and in the operational processes, the financial implications and the process for jointly managing this contract.

It is proposed that the contracting arrangements will include an overarching umbrella agreement commissioned by Lancashire County Council and the ICB as joint commissioners, with Blackburn and Darwen as associates to that commission, with the ability to join and call off following Executive Board approval.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Executive Board:

- Approves the proposed changes to the community equipment service and contracting model including introduction of simple aids to the catalogue.
- Notes that Lancashire County Council are leading this procurement on behalf of partners with an option for BwD to join the framework, subject to Executive Board approval in Spring 2025.
- Approves the proposal to align funding of equipment for people in receipt of Continuing Healthcare (CHC) funding with Lancashire County Council and Blackpool Council's approach.

3. BACKGROUND

Community equipment, such as hoists, hospital beds, bathing aids, toileting aids etc, is provided under the Care Act 2014, and as part of NHS community services and NHS Continuing Health Care

packages, to support people to remain safe and independent in their place of residence and to contribute to an improved quality of life.

The current community equipment offer in BwD consists of:

- Contract with Nottingham Rehab Services (NRS) to deliver a fully managed community equipment service including provision and maintenance of complex equipment for Adult Social Care (ASC), Health, Children's Services and Education. Equipment provided includes items such as hoists, hospital beds, and shower chairs
- Retail model for simple aids to daily living with 4 retailers based in BwD supplying equipment such as raised toilet seats, walking aids, commodes, and bath boards

Developing the Service Specification

Consultation has been completed with Practitioners/Prescribers and service users across the Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care System who have made it clear that change is required.

There are some fundamental changes to the current service specification, contracting model and operational processes which have been considered. Key proposed changes are:-

- The retail model - The items of equipment currently provided via the retail model have been incorporated into the service specification for the following reasons;
 - Improved recycling of equipment including robust decontamination and infection control processes
 - Supporting timely hospital discharge/admission avoidance
 - Ensuring a robust audit trail of orders and equipment location
 - Maintaining tighter control over spend on delivery fees
 - Achieving economies of scale on equipment prices
 - Align with the direction of travel of most other equipment services in the country
- A “click and collect” service for smaller items
- Increased recycling and reuse requirements
- One computer system to order equipment
- Improving the operational processes;
 - A standardised catalogue across all places, with ability to flex to accommodate unique local needs
 - Understanding differences in equipment eligibility and allocation policies, streamlining where possible
 - Confirmation and standardisation of the process of charging for CHC health and social care equipment costs

Procuring the services

LCC are leading this procurement on behalf of partners and are seeking to award the contract in April 2025 with a view to the new contract commencing 1st July 2025. The contract will be for a period of 3 years with option to extend for a further to 2 years (subject to funding and service requirements). The procurement process will require bidders to demonstrate how they will offer social value across the whole of the locality, including in Blackburn with Darwen. A follow up report will be submitted to the Executive Board in Spring 2025 with the outcome of the tender process.

4. KEY ISSUES & RISKS

- **Interest in the tender:** A market engagement survey has been published on The Chest to test out re-procurement assumptions and intentions.

- **Partnership working:** The work to date has demonstrated successful partnership working which will continue to mature throughout the duration of the new contract. The contract documentation has been reviewed and shaped by BwD colleagues to ensure there is clarity around roles, responsibilities and expectations of all parties. Westmorland and Furness Council are not part of the arrangement as they operate their own in house services. Blackpool Council do not wish to be part of the arrangement at this time.
- **Impact on retailers:** Retailers were engaged during the stakeholder engagement. A working group is being established to design and implement a plan to encourage self-funding of community equipment through our local retailers, where this is a resident's preference. This will support with offering choice and control, with reducing waiting lists for assessment for equipment and will support our local retailers. One element of this support for retailers will include promoting the use of Ask Sara on BwD and LCC websites. Ask Sara is a website that supports residents to identify the appropriate equipment that will meet their needs, and direct them to retailers that they can purchase it from.

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Local authorities have a duty to meet eligible needs under the Care Act 2014. Community equipment is one way in which we can meet this obligation, and is provided to promote safety and independence, used to either prevent the need for, or to compliment a care package.

The Health and Care Act 2022 amended the National Health Service Act 2006 to put in place legislative changes that include the creation of integrated care systems. The legislation sets an expectation that all those involved in planning, purchasing, and delivering health and care services work together to agree and address shared objectives and makes it easier for them to do so.

The Equality Impact Assessment checklist has been completed.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Blackburn with Darwen spend on Community equipment in 2023/2024 was £1.6 million. Of this, Council spend equated to £748,531 made up of;

- £551,66 Adult Social Care spend, of which £332,600 is from the Better Care Fund
- £128,234 Children's services spend
- £68,675 Education spend

The full extent of the financial impact will not be known until bids have been evaluated, however, it is anticipated that the joint procurement and inclusion of the retail model items in the procurement will result in the following financial benefits for BwD;

- Savings on the cost of simple aids to daily living (previously issued via the retail model)
- Savings on the costs of items previously ordered as "specials" which will be included in the new equipment catalogue as standard stock
- Savings on service charges due to reduced overheads for providers as a result of operating at scale
- Continuing healthcare funding – The ICB wish to align the approach to funding equipment for people who are NHS Continuing Healthcare funded with their approach for CHC funded residents in Lancashire and Blackpool. Currently, standard catalogue items for BwD residents who are CHC funded are categorised as either "health" items and charged to the ICB, or "social care" items and charged to BwD Council. Only "specials" are funded through the NHS Continuing Healthcare budget. In Blackpool and Lancashire, the ICB fund all equipment for people in receipt of CHC.

This is a demand led service and spend can fluctuate in line with system pressures. Nevertheless, once tenders have been received, an assessment of the cost of the contract in comparison to the available budget can be undertaken and reported accordingly.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The services commissioned by BwD under LCC framework will be conducted in compliance with the Council's Contract and Procurement Procedure Rules and the relevant public procurement legislation.

All contracts and contract variations will be in a form approved by legal officers in the Contacts and Procurement team, which will also include relevant requirements around safeguarding, holding, storing and sharing of data from this programme

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Legal resource is required to review contract documentation.

Commissioning and operational resource from the Independent Living Service will be required in early 2025 to work with partner organisations to draft service policies and procedures.

9. EQUALITY AND HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

Please select one of the options below. Where appropriate please include the hyperlink to the EIA.

Option 1 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) not required – the EIA checklist has been completed.

Option 2 In determining this matter the Executive Member needs to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision. *(insert EIA link here)*

Option 3 In determining this matter the Executive Board Members need to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision. *(insert EIA attachment)*

10. CONSULTATIONS

Engagement has been conducted with various stakeholders, including:

- A stakeholder survey completed by 81 residents, 28.4% of which were BwD residents; and
- Two workshops with Occupational Therapy practitioners.

Feedback from the consultations has informed the service model and specification.

Retailers have been engaged and received communication regarding the intention to re-commission the equipment service.

11. STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

The recommendations are made further to advice from the Monitoring Officer and the Section 151 Officer has confirmed that they do not incur unlawful expenditure. They are also compliant with equality legislation and an equality analysis and impact assessment has been considered. The recommendations reflect the core principles of good governance set out in the Council's Code of Corporate Governance.

12. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

All Declarations of Interest of any Executive Member consulted and note of any dispensation granted by the Chief Executive will be recorded in the Summary of Decisions published on the day following the meeting.

VERSION:	1
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CONTACT OFFICER:	Elizabeth Fleming, Amie Witherspoon
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DATE:	6/12/24
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BACKGROUND PAPER:	
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