

Report

Report to:	Executive Committee
Date of Meeting:	29 March 2023
Report by:	Director, Health and Social Care

Subject:	Community Alert Alarm Service
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ♦ outline the position presented to the South Lanarkshire Integration Joint Board (IJB) in respect of the level of subsidy and weekly charge for the Community Alert Alarm Service (CAAS) as part of its statutory obligation to set a balanced budget for 2023/2024

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Committee is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

- (1) that the recurrent and substantial pressure on adult and older people social care budgets be noted;
- (2) that the information provided in respect of the current level of subsidy and charging for the CAAS, including the full costs of delivery of the service, the increasing costs of delivering the service and the benchmarked position with other comparable local authorities be noted;
- (3) that a verbal update from officers in respect of any request made to the South Lanarkshire Council (SLC) by the IJB at its meeting of 28 March 2023 in relation to the level of subsidy and weekly charge for the CAAS be provided; and
- (4) that a decision be made on the level of subsidy and weekly charge for the CAAS.

3. Background

3.1. Audit Scotland has highlighted that across Scotland:-

- ♦ IJBs are facing unprecedented challenges as they seek to balance the impact of COVID-19, the remobilization of services and rising demand. This is against a backdrop of financial and workforce pressures, uncertainty over future financial settlements and social care reform
- ♦ there remains a significant overall and recurrent budget gap across all IJBs
- ♦ making recurring savings and delivering services differently is essential to sustainability

3.2. The South Lanarkshire IJB in conjunction with the Parties (SLC and NHS Lanarkshire) requires to ensure that a balanced budget is in place. The IJB met on 28 March 2023 to set a balanced budget for 2023/2024 as per its statutory responsibilities. In setting that balanced budget the IJB has to address a projected recurrent funding gap of £8.900 million across delegated social care (adult and older people services) in 2023/2024.

- 3.3. The funding deficit for adult and older people's social care in 2023/2024 is such that it has been recommended to the IJB that all of the IJB's uncommitted social care reserves funding at 1 April 2023 (£5.777 million) be used as a non-recurring contribution to securing financial balance in 2023/2024.
- 3.4. In setting a balanced budget for 2023/2024 and to protect health and social care provision, the IJB has had to consider further action that can be taken to close the social care funding gap, specifically reducing the subsidy for the CAAS in 2023/2024 noting that the responsibility for deciding upon levels of charging for social care is a responsibility of the local authority (as per the Public Bodies [Joint Working] [Scotland] Act 2014).

4. Community Alert Alarm Service

- 4.1. The South Lanarkshire CAAS is currently available on request and there is no assessment and review function or eligibility criteria to access the service. Whilst a number of the service users are actively known to Social Work Services, many people opt to access this service on the basis that it offers peace of mind and a safety net to the individual and their family.
- 4.2. The response service provided by SLC is more enhanced when compared to the "Family First" model of response service provided by some other local authorities where contact is initially made with family members, where available, or a blue light responder, if necessary. The response provided by the current SLC service model is based on Council staff as "First Responder" which adds considerably to the overall costs of the service.
- 4.3. The current annual cost (as at 2022/2023) of providing the CAAS is estimated to be circa £3.700 million per annum with approximately 5,408 users receiving the service. Similar to other services, this cost base will increase in forthcoming years due to inflation and other cost pressures.
- 4.4. Demand on the service has grown significantly, further adding to the cost pressures. Over the period 2015 to 2020, the number of calls received into the Alarm Receiving Centre has increased by 95,629 from 240,444 to 336,073, an increase of 40%.
- 4.5. The cost of the service is further increasing because of the necessity to move from analogue to digital (A2D). The current analogue system will become obsolete by the planned 2025 switch over to digital services by the UK Telecommunications industry. This means that the current analogue CAAS requires to be migrated to a digital solution. The Council has previously approved capital funding of circa £2.750 million in support of this, with the process of replacing all of the analogue equipment commenced (and as reported in capital reports). The move from A2D is also accompanied by an increase in recurring costs to the service: that is an additional cost of circa £0.324 million per annum due to the costs of SIM cards and new equipment.
- 4.6. As highlighted at 4.3, the current cost of the CAAS provided by SLC is approximately £3.700 million per annum based upon 2022/2023 figures. The current charge for the CAAS applied by SLC is £1.70 per week. Referring to the Local Government Benchmarking Family Group (LGBFG) comparator data, the SLC charge is the lowest as highlighted in the table below:-

Local Authority	Weekly Charge
Falkirk	£4.45
South Ayrshire	£4.41
Clackmannanshire	£3.90
Renfrewshire	£3.70
Dumfries and Galloway	£3.60
North Lanarkshire Council (Not part of LGBFG)	£3.40
West Lothian	£3.20
Fife	£2.80
South Lanarkshire	£1.70

Figures available are for the current year 2022/2023 and do not include expected cost increases in 2023/2024 (inflation and A2D costs).

- 4.7. It is anticipated that the charges across the LGBFG will likely increase in 2023/2024 given that other authorities are faced with the same cost pressures as the SLC service.
- 4.8. SLC currently subsidises the CAAS to the amount of £3.200 million (86% of the actual 2022/2023 revenue costs of providing the service). If service users were charged at a level that enabled full cost-recovery of the service, based on 2022/2023 costs, this would equate to a weekly charge of £13.13.
- 4.9. As above, the recurrent revenue cost of the CAAS will further increase as a result of the switch from A2D (an additional £0.324 million per annum); and with inflation at a rate of 10.1%, an additional £0.400 million in 2023/2024. The cost of the CAAS is, therefore, projected to total £4.400 million in 2023/2024. Based on the current charge of £1.70 per week, the net cost of subsidy by SLC would increase to approximately £3.900 million (an 89% subsidy for 2023/2024). Full cost recovery would require a charge of £15.60 per week per service user.
- 4.10. The South Lanarkshire IJB, as set out in the South Lanarkshire Integration Scheme, has a duty to set a balanced budget, similar to that held by elected members in relation to setting a balanced budget for the Council. In order to set a balanced budget for 2023/2024, the IJB has had to confirm actions to address a projected recurrent funding gap of £8.900 million across delegated social care (adult and older people services) in 2023/2024 and as considered at its meeting of 28 March 2023.
- 4.11. Given that CAAS is currently available on request and there is no assessment and review function or eligibility criteria to access the service, consideration was given to the following options as part of the measures to address the recurrent social care funding gap of £8.900 million:-

Ref	Option	Subsidy Rate %	Weekly Charge £	Additional Income £m
1	No change	89%	1.70	Nil
2	2022/2023 Family group benchmark average	76%	3.72	0.600
3	Family group benchmark average plus 10% (contribution to inflation/A2D)	74%	4.10	0.700

Ref	Option	Subsidy Rate %	Weekly Charge £	Additional Income £m
4	As per option 3 plus full recovery of A2D cost	66%	5.25	1.000
5	Recognise 'gold standard' service – additional £0.45 premium	63%	5.70	1.100

- 4.12. The IJB Financial Plan for 2023/2024 considered at the IJB's meeting of 28 March 2023, includes a recommendation that the IJB request of SLC a reduction of the subsidy for CAAS so as to bring the SLC rate more in line with the benchmarking family rate (as 2022/2023); reflect the increase in recurrent costs due to inflation and the switch to A2D; and to contribute £0.700 million recurrently to addressing the projected recurrent social care funding gap of £8.900 million. Due to the sequence of meetings, a verbal update on the decision of the IJB and its request to the Council's Executive Committee will be provided at today's meeting.
- 4.13. As highlighted at 3.3, the funding deficit for adult and older people's social care in 2023/2024 is such that it has been recommended to the IJB that all of the IJB's uncommitted social care reserves funding at 1 April 2023 (£5.777 million) be used as a non-recurring contribution to securing financial balance in 2023/2024.
- 4.14. If the additional income is not recoverable in full or in part in 2023/2024 for CAAS, the IJB will require to identify an alternative funding option to ensure financial balance in 2023/2024. An alternative funding solution is likely to involve reductions in levels of social care service delivery.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1. Any changes approved would be implemented effective from the beginning of the new financial year 2023/2024.
- 5.2. Arrangements would be put in place to support people who may be concerned about the increase in the charge. This would include all service users and carers being contacted individually by letter to inform them of changes to the annual service charges. A contact number would also be provided should the individual require additional information or support.
- 5.3. Furthermore, in accordance with CoSLA guidance, SLC maximises the income of all service users who are liable to make a contribution towards the cost of a service. Anyone who receives a CAAS would, therefore, be offered a financial assessment to ensure that their income is maximised. Experienced and skilled staff would also be available to assess the individual circumstances of anyone concerned about the proposed increase in the charge and intending to return the alarm. Assurance would be sought that the individual has the ability to seek assistance and support appropriately if the alarm is returned.

6. Employee Implications

- 6.1. There are no employee implications as a result of this report.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1. The financial implications are detailed at section 4.

8. Climate Change, Sustainability and Environmental Implications

- 8.1. There are no climate change, sustainability or environmental implications as a result of this report.

9. Other Implications

- 9.1. There are no other implications in terms of risk and sustainability as a result of this report.

10. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

- 10.1. There has been a benchmarking exercise undertaken with other local authorities and similar service providers to compare prices in relation to service delivery. This is summarised in 4.6 and indicates that current SLC charges are substantially lower than the LGBF Family Group average.
- 10.2. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been conducted in relation in respect of reducing the subsidy for and increasing the charging for CAAS.
- 10.3. Depending on the outcome taken by SLC, service users and carers will be contacted individually in advance of any changes to their annual charges, with the specific aim of providing additional information and contact details in the event that they require further information or support.

Soumen Sengupta

Director, Health and Social Care

8 March 2023

Link(s) to Council Values/Priorities/Outcomes

- ◆ People live the healthiest lives possible
- ◆ Accountable, effective, efficient and transparent
- ◆ Focused on people and their needs

Previous References

- ◆ None

List of Background Papers

- ◆ None

Contact for Further Information

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

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