

BRIEFING NOTE

AGENDA ITEM NO. 10

FROM: Paul Davies – Executive Director Social Care and Inclusion
TO: Social Care and Inclusion – Scrutiny and Performance Panel

DATE: 10 January 2012

UPDATE TO SCRUTINY PANEL RE COMMUNITY ALARMS CHARGING

Purpose

The purpose of this briefing note is to update scrutiny panel on the Community Alarms Charging project.

Background

The project commenced in September 2011 and is being phased in during the financial year. The charges were approved as part of the 2011/2012 budget approved by Council on February 24 2011.

The charges levied are for the response service being provided and not for the equipment

Payment mechanisms and call management

Service users are able to pay by:

Telephone - Credit Card / Debit Card

Cash, cheque, postal order, Credit Card / Debit Card at the first stop shop

By post – cheque or postal order

Standing order

All calls are now managed at the response centre which means the payment and all associated queries are managed at one central point of contact.

Statistics and Work Completed to date

- 5283 bills have been issued to date
- Of the 5283 total 4519 bills were issued in September 2011 the payment year running from the 1 September 2011 to 31 August 2012
- During the month of December 2011 and January 2012 a further 764 will have been issued
- There are potentially another 600 bills to be issued before March 31 2011
- 1411 people have either paid in full or partially. 2677 payments have been made in total
- Income raised to date is £140,000

- 780 people have requested deactivation of the alarm (91 of those would like to keep it but have stated that they don't wish to meet the charge)

Follow ups with individual service users

Follow ups are taking place targeted at those service users:

- Who will pay the charge after receiving further equipment – e.g. a key safe or a smoke alarm
- Would like further advice and Income maximisation from Welfare rights

Process for deactivations

- No deactivations are taking place for vulnerable people who use the service and yet say they do not want to meet the charge. These service users are being followed up in various ways e.g. through the Neighbourhood Community Officers
- A large proportion of the people who have requested deactivation say that they will not be left vulnerable and have adequate support from their family or via other means
- Where service users insist on deactivation are not vulnerable and have never used the service they are being asked to sign a disclaimer
- All returned equipment is being recycled and will save on future equipment purchases

Housing schemes

The numbers of community alarms being billed within Housing schemes has been greatly reduced to the following reasons

- The large decommissioning programmes taking place within certain Housing Associations e.g. Accord and WHG
- Where the Community Alarm service provide support to Housing Schemes (e.g. Extra Care Housing) the support usually works on an adhoc basis tailored to each individual schemes needs (e.g. the CAS service providing Bank Holiday Cover or cover during the evenings). In cases such as these the service user already pays the Housing Association for the response service through their service charge hence its unfair for them to pay the £12.50 monthly as they would be paying for the same service twice. In cases such as this the Joint Commissioning Unit are attempting to negotiate a block payment from the Housing provider reflecting the support provided by the Emergency response service to the Housing provider

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