

Report to Cabinet



Date of Meeting	29 June 2021
Portfolio	Adult Care and Wellbeing
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Public/Private Document	Public

Careline Policy

Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Careline service is a community alarm service provided by Rochdale Council's Adult Care Service, with a contracted provider (Eldercare) delivering the monitoring and response elements of the service.
- 1.2 Careline is a fully chargeable discretionary service, but one which supports the Prevention offer within Adult Care and which national evidence suggests can prevent or delay the need for other care and support services.
- 1.3 There are currently approx. 1,600 people who purchase the service and the aim is to increase take-up over the coming years. There are options for service users to buy Careline type services from the private sector, although none of these locally currently offer the option of a mobile responder, which the service we provide does, however, we need to ensure that our service offer is competitive with those within the private sector, both from a cost and quality perspective.
- 1.4 Providing information on our service is essential to attract new service users and also to ensure those currently buying the service from us have clarity and transparency as to the benefits and limitations. We need to develop formal terms and conditions, but prior to this, we are required to have an approved formal policy in place.

Recommendation

- 2.1 That the draft Careline policy is considered and approved to go out for public consultation.
- 2.2 Following consultation, members agree any issues or changes arising from consultation, be delegated to the Director of Adult Care in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

Reason for Recommendation

- 3.1 Custom and practice has determined how we have made decisions and delivered the Careline service in recent years. We have developed decision making through learning from complaints, good practice guidance from the Telecare Services Association (TSA) and sharing information and experience with other local authorities and providers of similar services.

- 3.2 During 2020, the Careline service expanded significantly to take on service users living in Rochdale Boroughwide Housing (RBH) Independent Living Schemes (ILS), when RBH ceased their mobile response service. This significant increase in service users has led to a review of the service to ensure it is functioning as efficiently as possible to deliver services for an expanded customer base. Terms and conditions for service users has been identified as a key area in terms of establishing expectations at the outset and in order to develop formal terms and conditions, an approved policy is required.

- 3.3 There are increasing challenges from service users and their carers/families around lack of clarity and formal terms and conditions in respect of the service, particularly around costs, payment terms and mobile response.

- 3.4 The attached policy, along with the attached associated draft working document procedure has been developed to incorporate all aspects of the Careline service, taking account of any related policies, best practice and existing custom and practice.

Key Points for Consideration

- 4.1 The table below provides a summary of the key issues within the policy, which are either different to how we currently operate, or likely to be areas of greatest challenge. The full Policy and draft working document procedure can be found at Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 respectively.

Item number	Summary	Issues of note
4. Eligibility to apply	Must live within the borough Cannot use the service for 999 only response Peripheral linked devices will only be provided following an assessment	Some people don't want to pay for a response service, but want the monitoring centre to call an ambulance if they press their alarm.
5. Service requirement	Must be willing and able to pay by Direct Debit (DD) Must have at least one nominated responder to be eligible for the basic Careline service	Some service users don't wish to pay by DD but it is a requirement in the Adult Care charging policy and allows the service to be managed more effectively in terms of debt management.
6. Installation	In cases where there is no landline telephone, a unit with a SIM card will be installed with	SIM costs are an additional £1.50 per week, which some service users object to. These costs are similar to those they would incur if they have a landline.

	additional costs chargeable to the service user	
9. Moving and Handling	Moving and Handling (M&H) risk assessment in place with Eldercare – if the service user fails the risk assessment, mobile responders will not lift them and instead will call for an ambulance	Service users often complain if Eldercare won't lift them. The M&H risk assessment has been developed in conjunction with North West Ambulance Services and is reviewed annually by RBC M&H Senior practitioner and the Digitally Enabled Care Board.
12. debt recovery	Service will be terminated if charges are not paid within a set timescale.	There have been recent issues with non-payment and service users not engaging. Any service users known to AC with care and support needs will be considered by a Locality Team Manager to determine capacity and risk in cancelling the service.
17. ending the service	Service is charged for until a formal request has been made to cancel, with no backdating of cancellation. If equipment is not returned, it will be charged for if it is possible to recycle it.	Issues with service users not officially cancelling the service and returning equipment. A fee for unreturned equipment should help to alleviate this.

Alternatives Considered

- 4.2 The alternative is to continue to have informal decision making around the delivery of the Careline service, using existing custom and practice, which is unhelpful when trying to respond to challenges and complaints.
- 4.3 Not having a formal policy approved and in place could lead to the service failing to deliver and perform as strongly as possible, which could in turn lead to reduction in numbers of service users, or failure to attract sufficient new service users to make the financial model viable.

Costs and Budget Summary

- 5.1 Careline is a fully chargeable service which is not subsidised by the Council, yet provides a much needed and valued local service.
- 5.2 A report was approved by Cabinet on 9 February for the fees and charges for the service for 2021/22.

Risk and Policy Implications

- 6.1 The policy sets out the service offer and once approved, can be used to formalise the terms and conditions of the service, so that service users and their families are clear about what they can expect. The risks to not having a formally approved policy in place are greater, as we are more open to challenge and the decision making could be inconsistent.

- 6.2 An equality impact assessment screening has been undertaken on the policy, as the majority of users are elderly or disabled, therefore, are more likely to be affected by the policy. There are positive impacts for these protected groups in that RBC offers this discretionary service, which is very highly regarded. Some of the potentially negative impacts on these groups are in relation to terminating the service for non-payment of charges, or not being willing to pay by Direct Debit; the mobile responder not being able to lift someone following a fall if they don't meet the criteria in the lifting assessment at that time.
- 6.3 These would be mitigated by having full terms and conditions available for service users so that they fully understand the limitations of the service and their obligations at the outset; escalation in situations where service users can't pay by direct debit, or haven't paid their charges; mobile responders would remain with the service user until an ambulance arrives if they cannot be lifted.

Consultation

- 7.1 Consultation has been undertaken with staff from across Adult Care, Eldercare (contracted provider of the monitoring and response elements of the service), Rochdale Boroughwide Housing and the Finance Service, including Debt Recovery. Their comments and suggestions have been incorporated into the policy. The feedback has been extremely positive in respect of having a formal policy in place. The policy has also been reviewed by Legal Services and any comments incorporated.
- 7.2 Whilst the policy as a whole document hasn't been consulted on with service users, some of the key elements have been part of a number of wider public consultations previously, particularly in respect of charging. We also seek the views of service users at different times, as detailed in the policy under section 15 – annual review and section 16 - customer satisfaction, which have contributed to the writing of the policy.
- 7.3 Further consultation will take place on the draft policy and any resulting changes will be delegated to the Director of Adult Care in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.
- 7.4 There will be an annual review of the policy and customer feedback will be used to inform and consider any appropriate or necessary changes.

Background Papers	Place of Inspection
8. There are no background papers, all relevant information is embedded in the attached proposed policy document.	Not applicable

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