

WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL CABINET

19 September 2022

**Cabinet Member for Adult Care, Wellbeing and Health Integration:
Cllr Matt Golby**

Report Title	Assistive Technology Framework
Report Author	Pedro Santos – Team Manager Assistive Technology Pedro.Santos@Westnorthants.gov.uk

List of Approvers

Monitoring Officer	Catherine Whitehead	23/08/2023
Chief Finance Officer (S.151)	Martin Henry	23/08/2023
Head of Communications	Becky Hutson	22/08/2023

List of Appendices

Appendix A – Service background

Appendix B – Assistive Technology Strategy

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To outline Adult Social Care’s intentions to renew and expand the existing Assistive Technology Framework which enables West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) and its partners to procure a range of assistive technology goods and services from appointed suppliers.
- 1.2 To seek Cabinet approval for delegated authority to renew and expand the framework to procure goods and services from the appointed suppliers where not already delegated.
- 1.3 To continue to support the implementation of the Assistive Technology Strategy and the expansion of remote monitoring in Northamptonshire.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 West Northamptonshire Council (Assistive Technology and Call Care) currently supplies a range of assistive technology to over 9,000 people across Northamptonshire per year, supporting them to live more independently.
- 2.2 The assistive technology framework enables the Assistive Technology team and Call Care to purchase equipment which the service then delivers to the people of Northamptonshire as required and as per their assessed need.
- 2.3 The assistive technology service is currently hosted in the West and will continue to provide the service on behalf of North Northamptonshire until 31st of March 2024, when the service is due to be disaggregated.
- 2.4 As a result of service developments and new partnerships, it is proposed that Northampton Health Foundation Trust, North Northants Council and both the General Hospitals are added to the framework. This strategic move aims to bolster our partners, enhance project delivery efficiency, streamline procurement processes, and foster continuous development within our partnerships, ultimately leading to improved outcomes and increased procurement efficiencies.
- 2.5 The Assistive Technology Service provides a range of equipment including:
- Telecare – group of devices that link to a 24h monitoring centre, WNC Call Care, and lead/require an emergency response. This includes pendants, smoke detectors, fall sensors, bed and chair sensors, etc.
 - Apps – With the increased use of smartphones and tablets apps, companies started to cater towards people with disabilities and creating apps that support people in communicating, anxiety, reminders, guided conversations etc.
 - Monitoring devices – Passive devices that provide information about the person activity or location whilst at home or when accessing the local community.
 - Memory prompts – reminders to prompt the person to complete tasks throughout the day, for example, medication, drinking water, eating, etc.
 - Hearing equipment – safety and quality of life devices for hearing impaired people.
 - Smart Devices – Google Home or Amazon Alexa provide good alternatives to more complex environmental control devices and the ability for a person to use their voice to control some aspects of their life such as calling for help, talking to friend and family, turning lights on and off, etc.
 - Remote monitoring / Telehealth – the use of assistive technology to monitor, control or manage a person health remotely. These devices include the use of spo2, blood pressure,

thermometers and weight scales linked to a software platform that provides alerts when readings are deemed out of variance leading to a clinical intervention.

- As part of the new Assistive Technology strategy and in partnership with Northampton Health Foundation Trust (NHFT) the Assistive Technology Team have implemented and developed a Virtual Care Hub. The hub is composed by NHFT nurses, Assistive Technology staff and Call Care operators to bring remote monitoring to Northamptonshire.

- 2.6 The project has provided support to over 650 people in the first year and responded to over 23,000 alerts, leading to people in their own home or in a residential care to be able to stay in their place of choice for longer, avoid hospital admissions, reduce emergency ambulance calls and tackle early signs of deterioration.
- 2.7 The existing project has been given approval to continue for the remaining future and it's part of the NHFT 5-year funding plan. New pathways for the community remote monitoring are being developed such as: heart failure, diabetes, AF screening, etc., and we are also increasing the number of care homes in the county who can access this service and therefore continue developing and expanding the hub.
- 2.8 The hub has been recognised by the HSJ Digital Awards where they won in the category of Improving Out of Hospital Care Through Digital and received a high commendation in Connecting Health and Social Care Through Digital.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet
- a) Approve the establishment of a framework to allow West Northamptonshire Council to procure a range of assistive technology goods and services from appointed suppliers.
 - b) Give delegated authority to the Executive Director for Adults, Communities and Wellbeing to establish the Assistive Technology Framework to procure goods and services from appointed suppliers where not already delegated.

4. Reason for Recommendations

- To comply with procurement requirements and West Northants procurement policy
- To enable the procurement of assistive technology equipment so that the service and their partners can continue/purchase equipment which supports people to live more independently and reduces the need for higher cost care packages.

5. Report Background

- 5.1 The existing assistive technology framework has been live since April 22 and is set to expire on 31st March 2024. There is an opportunity to extend the existing framework, however, this would potentially limit the service as it would mean that new providers/partners cannot be added and new developments in technology may therefore not be able to be utilised.

- 5.2 The existing Assistive Technology Service is hosted by West Northants Council, delivered on behalf of North Northamptonshire and is due to be disaggregated in April 24.
- 5.3 A new Assistive Technology Framework for the procurement of equipment is required from 1st April 2024 to allow the team to continue to help promote Northamptonshire residents' quality of life, independence and wellbeing, support with hospital discharges and the delivery of cost avoidances to Health and Social Care.
- 5.4 The service is seeking approval to establish a new Assistive Technology Framework to ensure compliance with legislation and West Northants Council's procurement policy. A new framework will also support future work with a range of partners developing new models for delivering care and support across the county. (See appendix 2, The AT Strategy)

6. Issues and Choices

- 6.1 Not to approve the procurement/renew of the Assistive Technology Framework will lead to the service not being able to continue to develop the existing projects and create limitations of what can be done to support vulnerable people in Northamptonshire.
- 6.2 Approval to proceed with the procurement of an Assistive Technology Framework, will result in the service being able to continue to provide equipment to the vulnerable people of Northamptonshire and continue the development of the service.

7. Implications

7.1 Resources and Financial

7.1.1 The framework value will be set to an upper limit of £3,000,000.

7.1.2 This value does not mean that the Assistive Technology team will spend the estimated amount in the 4 years of the framework (2+2), as the value is set to a level which will allow the service and its partners (including health as part of the integrated care system) to use the framework up to that limit. Currently the existing framework is limited to £250,000 per year, which significantly limits the ability to open the framework to partners and consider projects without reaching the maximum value.

7.1.3 It is therefore proposed that the Framework should be set at this value to future proof the service for developments which can benefit people of Northamptonshire. Internal governance procedures will ensure that any expenditure incurred can be met from within existing budgets

7.1.4 The current equipment spent is capitalised and there are no implications to the existing budgets or expenditure levels through this procurement framework paper.

7.1.5 There are no implications on staffing levels through this procurement framework paper.

7.2 Legal

7.2.1 It is necessary for contracting authorities to treat economic operators equally and without discrimination and to act in a transparent and proportionate manner in order to comply with procurement legislation.

7.2.2 The design of the procurement shall not be made with the intention of excluding it from the procurement legislation or of artificially narrowing competition

7.2.3 Although there's an existing framework which could be extended for another 2 years the limitations on value and partner accessibility will severely limit the potential development of the service and the positive impact it can achieve.

7.3 Risk

7.3.1 Delays in the approval decision and therefore procurement of a new Framework will put at risk new developments and may prevent the acquisition of suppliers or services for WNC.

7.3.2 There are no other significant risks arising from the proposed recommendations in this report.

7.4 Consultation and Communications

7.4.1 WNC Procurement Team will communicate with the current providers within the existing WNC framework, notifying them of our decision not to proceed with the renewal of the existing framework.

7.4.2 Further communication will be shared with existing providers and the market to generate interest and invite them to apply to the new framework.

7.4.3 WNC partners have been made aware of our intention to name them under the proposed new Framework and guidance will be provided to them.

7.1 Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny

Comments have not been requested from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in relation to this report and recommendations.

7.2 Climate Impact

The use of assistive technology promotes efficient ways of support for individuals who have health and social care needs. The technology can support independence or reduced dependency on social care type services reducing the climate/environmental impact of physical support which causes additional road use and traffic in our communities.

7.3 Community Impact

The Community Impact would rise from a failure to provide Assistive Technology to the people of Northamptonshire. Financial pressures would increase via the need to meet eligible care needs through more formal care packages which may disproportionately be felt in more deprived areas of Northamptonshire where usage is higher.

8. Background Papers

Appendix 1 - AT Strategy