

Call In of Cabinet Decision Telecare Charging Consultation

Wednesday 2 July 2025

Cllr Julian Dean on behalf of the Green and Progressive Independent Group.

Point 1: Recognising that this is a preventative service, ensuring that the full impact of charging has been ascertained and to provide experience-based insights or suggestions from members that could further mitigate the charge, or enhance the service and level of support to individuals.

To date, we have:

- Included an assessment of risk and mitigations within the original cabinet report **pages 3,4, 5 and 6**, and have further developed an enhanced **mitigation paper (Appendix A)**
- Conducted **formal consultations** with service users, carers, and stakeholders (467 responses received). Their input directly shaped the proposed enhancements to mitigation strategies and support pathways, which include:
 - **Continuing to fund Telecare for anyone who, following financial assessment, is deemed unable to meet the charges, consistent with our responsibilities under the Care Act. We will also continue to fund: Recipients of existing Council-funded social care packages; Individuals entitled to free services under Section 117 of the Mental Health Act 1983; and those receiving a time-limited reablement package after hospital discharge**
 - **Assigned officers conducting risk assessments** to address safety or wellbeing concerns and confirming or initiating charging assessments. Where required a home visit will be considered.
 - Conduct a **benefits check** and take steps to **maximise the individual's entitled income**.
 - Refer to **advocacy or other support services** as needed
 - Allocate officers to ensure that should the decision to discontinue Telecare is made on a **fully informed** basis, not driven solely by cost and ensure users understand all available options and can make an **informed decision**
 - Provide **follow up calls** to those who are flagged as high risk who end the service after 3 months

A new Telecare Officer will commence in late June to improve monitoring and manage equipment retrieval.

The proposed charge is at **a subsidised rate of £3.45 a week**.

Cllr Julian Dean on behalf of the Green and Progressive Independent Group.

Point 2: Ensuring that Councillors and the public understand the various channels through which the Council as a Social Services and Housing authority provides telecare and that the regimes are consistent, and the decision has been based on accurate information.

Shropshire Council's Telecare service includes:

- 24-hour alarm monitoring
- Personal pendants
- Fall detectors
- Door and sensor packages
- **STAR Housing**, an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO), responsible for managing the Council's social housing stock- currently operates their own community alarm service under separate governance and funding arrangement, independent of the Council's provision:
 - Offers only base units and pendants
 - Cost more than the Council's proposed charge

Other Telecare options available on the open market to Shropshire residents:

- Private providers supply tailored packages, installation (including remote options), and monitoring/response services. These commercial services typically cost more than the Council's proposed charge highlighting the affordability of the Council's offer

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Point 3: As the equalities impact assessment identified negative outcomes for two groups with protected characteristics to assess whether anything more can be done to mitigate the impact for them

The Equalities Impact Assessment rightly highlights that older people and those with disabilities, two groups with protected characteristics are more likely to rely on Telecare services. This is unsurprising, as Telecare is specifically designed to support individuals and provide reassurance to those who may be at higher risk due to age, frailty, limited mobility, or complex health needs.

We've carefully considered how to further mitigate any adverse impact. This includes:

- Continuing to fund Telecare for anyone who, following financial assessment, is **deemed unable to afford the charges**, consistent with our responsibilities under the Care Act

We will also continue to fund:

- Recipients of **existing Council-funded social care packages**;
- Individuals entitled to free services under **Section 117 of the Mental Health Act 1983**;
- and those receiving a time-limited **reablement package** after hospital discharge

Under the proposed charging model, (**page 6** of the cabinet report) approximately 1,793 out of 2066 telecare users would need to pay.

(N.B we have 117 people on an alternative provision which we will be moving into our substantive contract to ensure equitable provision for residents)

We welcome any further ideas from Members and officers on how to bolster our wrap-around support and secure the strongest possible outcome for people we support.

A comprehensive consultation has been carried out and is evidenced in the original cabinet report to inform these proposals. A printed version (with a freepost envelope for return) accompanied by a link to the online questionnaire, was distributed by post to all 2,060 service users ([page 11 of the cabinet report](#))

At present, our Telecare service is offered universally at no cost, regardless of individual financial circumstances.

We will offer the following support to individuals who inform us that they are unable to afford the charge or wish to cancel the service.

- A financial assessment is required for those with eligible care needs, using the Online Financial Assessment Calculator.
- Under the proposed model, a comprehensive financial assessment will review income, outgoings, and savings.
- During assessment, officers will:
 - Offer **benefits advice** and entitlement checks
 - Refer to **external support agencies** (e.g. Citizens Advice, welfare benefit/ income maximisation services)
 - Identify eligibility for **hardship or crisis-support funds**
- **Service Uptake Monitoring:** A new Telecare Officer will improve device return processes and monitor usage
- Following the risk assessment conducted by an allocated officer, we will provide **follow up calls** to those who are flagged as high risk who end the service after 3 months. Where required a home visit will be considered

Implementation Plan (Summary) (see Appendix B for full plan)

- **Communication Plan:** Developed from 9 July – duration: 5 days
- **LAS Data Work:** Commenced 9 July – duration: 22 days
- **Customer Letters Issued:** Starting 6 August – over 40 days
- **Direct Customer Contact:** Begins 6 August – duration: 60 days
 - Includes handling enquiries, referrals to the Financial Assessments Team, providing support, and completing risk assessments
- **Follow-up with Non-Responders:** From 3 September – duration: 20 days

Deadline 1 October 2025 - go live

A delay could impact wider service development, including Telecare recommissioning and disrupt interdependent commissioning workstreams across service areas.

It would also **affect projected income generation** linked to the savings plan, as well as prolonging uncertainty for individuals utilising the service.

Reiterating the information in the cabinet report on [pages 3, 4, 5 and 6](#) - the risks and mitigations section.

To clarify further, we have included an enhanced description of the mitigation measures related to this concern in [Appendix A](#) – section a which is summarised below: **Telecare Charging: Service Cancellation & Continuity Protocol**

Summary:

- **Cancellation Notification:** The Telecare Team must inform the allocated social worker (or Duty Team) within 2 working days of cancellation due to charging.
- **Risk & Charging Assessment:** Officers assess risks from unmet needs and check if a charging assessment is needed or already completed.
- **Financial & Welfare Support:** Officers conduct benefit checks, maximise income, and refer to advocacy to ensure decisions are informed.
- **Council Funding:** Charges are not applied for those anyone who, following financial assessment, are deemed unable to meet the charges, consistent with our responsibilities under the Care Act. We will also continue to fund: Recipients of existing Council-funded social care packages; Individuals entitled to free services under Section 117 of the Mental Health Act 1983; and those receiving a time-limited reablement package after hospital discharge.
- **Charging Policy:** Users undergo financial assessment, with self-funders contributing per the 2024–25 charging policy and Minimum Income Guarantee.
- **Informed Choice & Mental Capacity:**
 - Individuals have the right to decline services, even if it seems unwise.
 - Where a user lacks capacity, the Council works with legal representatives or applies for a deputy if needed. Debt recovery is paused until appointment, but charges apply from service start.
- **Service Uptake Monitoring:** A new Telecare Officer will improve device return processes and monitor usage.
- **Service Recommissioning:** A new contract due next year—will include:
 - Credit-back loan model
 - Automated inactive device testing
 - Review of access to the service without an assessment

The Equalities Impact Assessment rightly highlights that older people and those with disabilities, two groups with protected characteristics are more likely to rely on Telecare services. This is unsurprising, as Telecare is specifically designed to support individuals and provide reassurance to those who may be at higher risk due to age, frailty, limited mobility, or complex health needs.

At present, our Telecare service is offered universally at no cost, regardless of individual financial circumstances.

A financial assessment is required for those with eligible care needs, using the Online Financial Assessment Calculator.

Under the proposed model, a comprehensive financial assessment will review income, outgoings, and savings. During assessment, officers will:

- Offer **benefits advice** and entitlement checks
- Refer to **external support agencies** (e.g. Citizens Advice, welfare benefit/ income maximisation services)
- Identify eligibility for **hardship or crisis-support funds**

Ongoing measures to ensure fairness:

- Annual or event-triggered financial re-assessments
- Clear printed and digital guidance on the charging process
- A dedicated Telecare officer to monitor usage and provide support, including home visit if deemed appropriate

The new model aims to shift from a universal-free system to one that ensures sustainability while maintaining subsidised access for all in Shropshire.

Cllr Rosemary Dartnall on behalf of the Labour Group
Point 3: *The report does not consider the impacts on people's lives beyond leaving the Telecare service and therefore does not consider mitigations*

We acknowledge concerns that the report's analysis may appear to end at the point a client withdraws from telecare, without fully detailing subsequent effects on their daily wellbeing or the safeguards in place thereafter. However, the original report's risk assessments do consider these impacts and set out corresponding mitigation measures in the risk table on **pages 3 and 4**. For a more comprehensive explanation, please see Appendix A – section a), which provides the following detailed response. A summary is provided below:

Telecare Charging: Service Cancellation & Continuity Protocol

- **Cancellation Notification:** The Telecare Team must inform the allocated social worker (or Duty Team) within 2 working days of cancellation due to charging.
- **Risk & Charging Assessment:** Officers assess risks from unmet needs and check if a charging assessment is needed or already completed.
- **Financial & Welfare Support:** Officers conduct benefit checks, maximise income, and refer to advocacy and other forms of support to ensure decisions are informed.
- **Council Funding:** Charges are not applied for those anyone who, following financial assessment, are deemed unable to meet the charges, consistent with our responsibilities under the Care Act. We will also continue to fund: Recipients of existing Council-funded social care packages; Individuals entitled to free services under Section 117 of the Mental Health Act 1983; and those receiving a time-limited reablement package after hospital discharge.
- **Charging Policy:** Users undergo financial assessment, with self-funders contributing per the 2024–25 charging policy and Minimum Income Guarantee.
- **Informed Choice & Mental Capacity:**
 - Individuals have the right to decline services, even if it seems unwise.
 - Where a user lacks capacity, the Council works with legal representatives or applies for a deputy if needed.
- **Service Uptake Monitoring:** A new Telecare Officer will improve device return processes and monitor usage.
- Provide **follow up calls** to those who are flagged as high risk who end the service after 3 months

Summary

- No charges will be applied to individuals who, following a financial assessment, are found unable to contribute—this aligns with our obligations under the Care Act and our Charging Policy.
- We will continue to fully fund:
 - Individuals with existing Council-funded social care packages
 - Those entitled to free services under Section 117 of the Mental Health Act 1983
 - People receiving short-term reablement support after hospital discharge
- For those considering cancelling services due to charges, each case will be carefully reviewed. This includes an individual risk assessment, benefit checks, income maximisation efforts, and referrals to advocacy or support services to ensure fully informed decisions.
- The proposed model aims to shift from a universal-free system to one that ensures sustainability while maintaining subsidised access for all in Shropshire.
- Monthly updates on the progress of implementing these measures will be shared with Cllr Ruth Houghton, Portfolio Holder for Social Care, through the Service Director's briefings.
- Finally, propose that Scrutiny consider a dedicated item on Prevention in its forward plan within the next 12 months, allowing for deeper exploration of this element of the Adult Social Care strategy.

Appendix 2: Telecare charging consultation Cabinet report

Original Appendices:

Appendix 2a: Telecare Benchmarking

Appendix 2b: Telecare Charges Consultation Report

Appendix 2c: ESHIA

Appendix 2d: Adult Social Care Charging and Financial Assessment Policy for Non-Residential Care
2024-2025

Supplementary appendices for Scrutiny Panel:

Appendix 3: Presentation

- Appendix 3a: Mitigations paper on telecare charging
- Appendix 3b: Implementation plan