

Impact Assessment



Assessment of: **Community Equipment Services (CES) recommissioning**

Head of Service: **Solveig Wright**

Version / date of sign off by Head of Service: **07/5/2024.**

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1. Description of service under review

Devon's Community Equipment Service delivers, installs and maintains equipment that people need in order to live safely in their own homes. Examples include hoists, slings, hospital beds, walking aids, and telecare systems.

The service prevents hospital admissions and supports people to leave hospital as soon as possible so that they can recover at home. The service diverts people from having to move into residential and nursing homes, by making it possible for personal carers and unpaid carers to safely deliver care to people in their own homes.

Devon's Community Equipment Service is available to anyone living within the Devon County Council boundaries and is for both adults and children.

People are not charged when the item or items of Community Equipment are prescribed for them by an authorised Health and Social Care practitioner, in response to an identified and eligible healthcare need. However, people can be advised by Health and Social Care practitioners on how to purchase items for themselves where there isn't eligibility for these to be provided free of charge, or where the customer would simply prefer to make their own purchases.

Devon's Community Equipment Services are delivered through a Countywide contract held by a single market provider. This allows the 3000 Health and Social Care authorised prescribers to have access to a single 'one stop shop' web-based ordering system that guarantees the right piece of equipment can be made available in the right place at the right time.

2. Proposal aims and objectives, and reason for change or review.

The 7-year contract for Devon's Community Equipment Service is due to expire at the end of March 2025. The Council needs to ensure continuity of this essential service at the same

time as assuring fairness to market competitors. The contract is therefore being re-commissioned by competitive tender.

The proposal is that the new contract will retain all of the established content and processes that have worked well over the last 7 years. The aim will be to replicate and build upon the existing infrastructure, and to as far as possible minimise the need for the Health and Social Care workforce to change the way they work. The goal is for Devon's estimated 90,000 users of Community Equipment to experience as little disruption as possible should any change of provider be required.

However, the new contract will introduce some differences to the way that we work with the provider to manage costs and assure quality. These changes are designed to help maintain a best value service in the context of higher demand for Community Equipment at a time of greater economic challenge, compared to 7 years ago.

In order to better manage costs, the new contract will be based on a clearer separation between the items of Community Equipment that we jointly purchase with the provider, and the money that we pay the provider for delivery, collection and recycling. This separation will help us to make better decisions about what to do when the supplier price of equipment increases. And will help us make better informed, fairer decisions on any inflationary uplift awards the provider says they need in order to remain financially sustainable.

The new contract will also reflect the national and local expectation for increased accountability towards safety, and continuous improvement on customer service. The contract specification has been updated in line with changes to legislation. The contract monitoring requirements have been modernised to reflect the increased expectation that partnership working will identify and solve issues before they become problems.

The quality requirements of the new contract have been updated to reflect the importance of the provider's workforce skills in a service that requires access to over 80,000 private homes across Devon in a typical year. The provider will need to show how they are delivering social value to Devon, and they will need to actively evidence their understanding of anti-racism and equality.

3. Risk assessment, limitations and options explored (summary)

The alternatives to competitive tender were explored during 2023, and the main options considered are given below.

Due to the potential for disruption to service continuity that competitive tender could bring about as a result of any change in provider, the extension of the current contract with the incumbent provider for a further substantive period was considered. However, DCC's legal and procurement advice concluded this was likely to be deemed as unfair to potential market competitors, and that therefore this course of action was likely to result in legal challenge that the Council would not be in a position to defend.

A further alternative to competitive tender was considered, in the form of establishing a Local Authority Trading Company. This is sometimes referred to as a 'Teckal' exemption and can arguably allow a Local Authority to enter into a Service Level Agreement for purchasing goods and services from a preferred provider, without use of competitive Tender. When this option was explored, DCC's legal and procurement advice again concluded this was likely to be deemed as unfair to potential market competitors, and that therefore this course of action was likely to result in legal challenge that the Council would not be in a position to defend.

In developing the new specification and contract for Community Equipment Services, a full review of the previous specification and contract arrangements was undertaken. Alternative ways of specifying and contracting for Community Equipment were considered, primarily through evaluating the relative risks and benefits of recent comparable Community Equipment procurement exercises undertaken by other Local Authorities.

The first key area of opportunity was concluded as being greater separation between the costs of Community Equipment through which the provider makes no profit margin, and the delivery, collection and recycling activity charges that do allow profit margin.

The second key area of opportunity was concluded as being the modernising of the contract's requirement for compliance with legislation, and the strengthening of the contract's requirement for partnership working and customer service.

The key risks in proceeding to recommissioning by competitive tender were identified as disruption to service continuity as a result of any change in service provider that became

required a point of contract award. A detailed analysis of these risks concluded that these risks could and should be mitigated through strengthening the requirement for bidders to provide details of a mobilisation or implementation plan, that committed them to allocate the necessary resources for a smooth handover.

4. People affected, diversity profile and analysis of needs.

The service is open to anyone in Devon who may require equipment to help meet a health or social care need. The scale of Devon's Community Equipment Service can be summarised as:

- Total number of Items in people's homes at any one point is 337,833.
- Number of people receiving a service is 91,863.
- Average number of items Per person is 3.68.

Geographically the people affected are evenly distributed across Devon in relation to population density.

Each Community Equipment item (or 'prescription' as they are sometimes called) is recorded electronically on the provider's database, and on Devon County Council's database. This system allows Devon to create bespoke reports that allow us to maintain an overview of gender, the age range of customers, where they live, the piece of equipment required, along with the indicative Health or Social Care need that the piece of equipment was being provided to help with.

Analysis of the age of people that use the service shows that:

- 2.19% are under the age of 18.
- 17% are between the ages of 18 to 64.
- 70.94% are over the age of 65.
- (With 9.67% where the age was not provided).

Analysis of the gender of people that use the service shows that:

- 56.85% are female.
- 38.19% are male.
- (With 4.96% where the gender was not provided)

The information gathered when providing Community Equipment does not include personal data about race, disability, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership status, or pregnancy and maternity status.

What we know from the information we do hold is that the sections of community most

affected are:

- Over 65's who have been discharged from hospital following operations or treatment. With more of these people being female than male.
- People of any age (including children) that have disabilities with mobility issues.
- Unpaid Carers of the above two groups

Demand for the service has steadily grown each year. Comparison of activity between 2020 and 2023 shows that:

- The number of post code areas served (71) remained the same.
- The number of orders delivered increased by 9.5%
- The number of homes delivered into increased by 10%
- The number of items delivered increased by 17.5%

This tells us that although the number of people needing Community Equipment has increased, the main reason for increased activity is because people with more complex conditions are being supported to live at home longer.

5. Stakeholders, their interest and potential impacts

The internally facing stakeholders of our delivery partnership are made up of:

- Devon County Council (both adults and children's services).
- NHS Devon Integrated Care Board.
- Local Care Partnership Delivery groups.
- Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust.
- Livewell Southwest.
- Devon Partnership Trust.
- Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust.
- Special schools.

Their interests and potential impacts include:

- Community Equipment as a critical element for being able to maintain the movement of patients through the Primary Care and Secondary Care acute hospital systems.
- Timely hospital discharge, and patient safety.
- Good quality outcomes for patients and people being supported to live at home.
- Supporting children to participate in learning and to access the local community.
- Compliance with CQC and NHS standards of care.
- Best value services that are delivered within the available budgets.

The community and public facing stakeholders include:

- People with health or social care needs that require community equipment in order to avoid hospital admission or facilitate hospital discharge or to live safely at home.
- Unpaid Carers
- Families with children requiring community equipment.
- Environmental groups

Their interests and potential impacts include:

- Access to the right piece of equipment when it is needed.
- Well maintained and safe equipment, with all necessary support and training to use it.
- Good quality and responsive customer service that can work flexibly and respectfully within people's own homes.
- Prompt removal and collection of equipment when it is no longer required.
- Respect for the environment and the importance of re-using equipment and avoiding unnecessary pollution, wastage or costs.

6. Additional relevant research used to inform this assessment.

The Community Equipment Service supports the delivery of Devon's Joint Forward Plan. [Devon Plan - including the Joint Forward Plan and Integrated Care Strategy - One Devon.](#) This is an Integrated Care strategy that sets out the planning and organisation for joined-up, preventative care.

The Community Equipment Service also supports the delivery of the Council's 'Promoting independence' vision. [Home - Promoting independence \(devon.gov.uk\)](http://devon.gov.uk)

This sets out our aspirations across the domains of 'Living well' for working age adults, 'Ageing well' for older people, and 'Caring well' for unpaid carers.

7. Description of consultation process and outcomes

The Council's understanding of what matters to people in relation to Community Equipment has been informed through an ongoing programme of customer service feedback and surveys. This has established that the following areas should be subject to quality and monitoring checks as we design and award a future contract:

- The behaviour and attitude of staff as they deliver and install Community Equipment into people's homes.
- The training, skills and competencies of staff as they deliver and install Community Equipment into people's homes.
- Clear and reasonable customer service standards that deal with damage to goods,

damage to property, repairs.

- The importance of equipment that has had all necessary safety checks carried out and is properly cleaned after any previous use.
- A reliable, flexible and friendly delivery and collection service.

The Council's understanding of health and social care requirements for a Community Equipment service have been informed through wide ranging practitioner feedback and surveys. This has established that the future contract should be based upon the following principles and values:

- Good quality web-based systems for allowing quick and easy ordering of equipment.
- A strong partnership and clear requirement for joint working across the provider and the Practitioner.
- The availability of a dedicated specialist Practice organisation, in the form of the Independent Living Centre, to advise and support both the public and practitioners' queries about Community Equipment.

Background information

8. Equality analysis

All residents by geographic area

Community Equipment can be required by people living in any part of Devon, and is available to all persons registered with a Devon GP.

The commissioning intentions for the next Community Equipment Services contract are to retain the current features of Devon's existing Community Equipment infrastructure and build upon these to meet increased future demand.

Age

Devon's Community Equipment Service will remain 'all age', and people of any age will continue to benefit from the new contract.

Customer engagement and practitioner surveys have identified some Community Equipment Service risks that are specific to children with disabilities, and the new contract has been reviewed against the need for higher quality and more stringent safety checks concerning some specific items of equipment when these are supplied for use by children.

Disability (includes sensory, mobility, mental health, learning disability, neurodiversity, long term ill health) and carers of disabled people.

Access to Devon's Community Equipment Service will continue to be based upon Practitioner assessment of need, and all sections of the community will continue to benefit from the new contract.

Under the previous contract, practitioner feedback has identified people with Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) needs as not always having had access to a good service, due to the provider's difficulty in accessing the correct equipment in a timely manner. People making use of AAC include individuals with a variety of congenital conditions such as cerebral palsy, autism, intellectual disability, and acquired conditions such as amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, traumatic brain injury and aphasia.

The new contract is designed to make it simpler and easier for the provider to source and supply hardware that is prescribed by Practitioners. The contract should therefore positively impact people with disabilities.

Race and culture: nationality/national origin, ethnic origin, skin colour, religion and belief, asylum seeker and refugee status, language needs

Higher expectations have been placed on the qualitative parts of the Tender evaluation. The new contract has been brought up to date in that its specification reflects Devon's commitment to anti-racism. The provider will be expected to evidence the pro-active work their organisation undertakes towards this commitment, which should result in a positive impact.

Sex and gender identity and reassignment (including men, women, non-binary and transgender people), and pregnancy and maternity (including women's right to breastfeed)

The commissioning intentions for the next Community Equipment Services contract are to retain the current features of Devon's existing Community Equipment infrastructure and build upon these to meet increased future demand, so the impact should be neutral.

Sexual orientation, and marriage/civil partnership if work related

The commissioning intentions for the next Community Equipment Services contract are to retain the current features of Devon's existing Community Equipment infrastructure and build upon these to meet increased future demand, with a neutral impact accordingly..

Other relevant socio-economic factors and intersectionality

The new contract has been shaped around the Health and Social Care strategic aims of supporting more people with more complex conditions to live in their own homes. This should positively impact on people where income, housing, isolation and access to services and transport are issues.

9. Human rights considerations:

In seeking delivery of the Health and Social Care strategic aims of supporting more people with more complex conditions to live in their own homes, there is potential for the contract to facilitate higher risk scenarios through accidents involving community equipment. The use of community equipment to facilitate home care packages for people who are extremely ill and who would otherwise require hospital or nursing home treatment could contribute to a negative impact.

The mitigations for these risks include careful revision of Health and Safety requirements for all activities involving community equipment being used at a person's home, and greater accountability for how and where specific types of equipment should be used. The contract has updated and strengthened a number of community equipment safety requirements, and this will be an ongoing focus of the quality monitoring of the contract.

10. Environmental analysis

Reduce, reuse, recycle and compost.

The contract includes performance targets for recycling and has tied these to financial incentives.

Conserve and enhance wildlife.

The contract has updated and strengthened the requirement for safe disposal of waste, and consideration of environmentally cleaning materials.

Safeguard the distinctive characteristics, features and special qualities of Devon's landscape.

The contract has not been identified as presenting any negative impacts to the distinctive characteristics, features and special qualities of Devon's landscape.

Conserve and enhance Devon's cultural and historic heritage.

The contract has not been identified as presenting any negative impacts to Devon's cultural and historic heritage.

Minimise greenhouse gas emissions.

The contract has updated and strengthened the requirement for minimised greenhouse gas emissions. The provider is required to contribute to Devon's Carbon targets.

Minimise pollution (including air, land, water, light and noise)

The contract has updated and strengthened the requirement for the provider's positive environmental impact. The provider is required to contribute environmental aims.

Contribute to reducing water consumption.

The contract has updated and strengthened the requirement for the provider's positive environmental impact. The provider is required to contribute environmental aims.

Ensure resilience to the future effects of climate change (warmer, wetter winters; drier, hotter summers; more intense storms; and rising sea level)

The contract has updated and strengthened the requirement for minimised greenhouse gas emissions. The provider is required to contribute to Devon's Carbon targets.

11. Economic analysis

- **Impact on knowledge and skills**
- **Impact on employment levels**
- **Impact on local business**

The contract includes a Social Value requirement, in which the Provider will add value by improving the economic and social well-being of Devon and its residents. This will be achieved by providing additional community benefits to support the Council's ambitions of:

- Creating an environment in which businesses and jobs can grow and where we have a local economy which is successful and sustainable.
- Promoting and develop the use of apprenticeships across its own workforce.
- Using technology to drive change.
- Promoting community resilience.