

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Assistive Technology - Revised Charging Policy

VERSION CONTROL

Date	Version	Author	Description of Changes
08/01/2021	1	Nik Darwin	
07/04/2021	2	Nik Darwin	General amendments to text in introduction and further reference to consultation being conducted under evidence
08/04/2021	3	Nik Darwin	Reasons for proposal added

			from Cabinet Paper. Plus other small amendments in response to comments.
20/08/2021	4	Nik Darwin	Updated following the consultation to include user feedback. Reasons section updated to reflect report

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL –EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Stage 1 Description: Fact finding (about your policy / service /

Department	People Directorate		Lead officer responsible for assessment		Nik Darwin	
Service	Commissioning		Other members of team undertaking assessment		Shelley Brough, Helen Clark	
Date	07/01/21		Version		0.4	
Type of document (mark as appropriate)	Strategy	Plan	Function	Policy	Procedure	Service x
Is this a new/ existing/ revision of an existing document (please mark as appropriate)	New x		Existing		Revision	
Title and subject of the impact assessment (include a brief description of the aims, outcomes, operational issues as appropriate and how it fits in with the wider aims of the organisation) Please attach a copy of the strategy/ plan/ function/ policy/ procedure/ service	<p>Assistive Technology Charging Policy</p> <p>Assistive Technology (also sometimes referred to as Telecare) is a range of electronic gadgets that can help you to live independently in your own home. This includes things such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) sensors/detectors that link to a monitoring centre. For example; a falls detector, pendant alarm, smoke, low temperature and property exit sensors ii) devices which use GPS to raise alerts to a carer or a monitoring centre iii) sensors that can support a person or their carer in and around the home. For example; pendant buttons, door contacts or motion sensors linked to a pager iv) The service includes support from a monitoring centre and a falls pick up service. <p>A proposal is being put forward on revising the current Assistive Technology (AT) Charging Policy. This would mean that people who currently do not pay for the service because they are aged 85 and living alone, would pay the same fees as all other Assistive Technology users. This would be a flat rate charge of £5 per week (regardless of level of support required including number of devices). No one who could not afford to this charge would be asked to pay it (subject to a financial assessment process).</p>					

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	<p>A consultation has been held to understand the views of users on this issue before the proposal is considered by the Council's Adults and Health Committee.</p> <p>The proposal has been forward for the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Levying the same charge on all users, would allow the service to be sustainable in the longer term. This would enable the service to grow and to be accessed by additional vulnerable people. Without this, financial pressure will build, given the welcome projected 15% increase in those people aged 85+ by 2025 (in comparison to 2020) and 36% by 2030¹. Currently, half of users are paying for the service and half are not, thus meaning one set of users are effectively subsidising others (including 212 people aged 85+ living with others). This is unfair. In implementing the change, the financial assessment process will ensure that no one who cannot afford to pay, would have to pay. 	
<p>The Who are the main stakeholders, and have they been engaged with? (e.g. general public, employees, Councillors, partners, specific audiences, residents)</p>	<p>Consultation/engagement has been undertaken with the following groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assistive Technology Users The Commissioned Service Provider - Welbeing Cheshire East Council Members (via Cabinet and a briefing session) Staff who refer individuals for Assistive Technology 	
<p>Consultation/ involvement carried out</p>	<p>Yes</p>	
<p>What consultation method(s) did you use?</p>	<p>A survey has been sent to all AT service users. An online form was also available for completion by residents in general.</p>	

¹ Projecting Older People Population Information System, www.poppi.org.uk

Stage 2 Initial Screening

<p>Who is affected and what evidence have you considered to arrive at this analysis? (This may or may not include the stakeholders listed above)</p>	<p>1,128 users are affected by this change out of a total of 2,253 users who receive the service in total (note: data from May 2021). This data is derived from software called CONTROCC which the Council uses to monitor who receives the service.</p>
<p>Who is intended to benefit and how</p>	<p>Social care service users in general as the additional funds would be used to supplement the existing Assistive Technology budget. This would mean that the service could be expanded to either existing service users or new service users as part of the social care assessment/review process, meaning that they would also benefit from the advantages of the AT service.</p>
<p>Could there be a different impact or outcome for some groups?</p>	<p>The charge would apply equally to all Assistive Technology users. However, these have different levels of disability which is in part reflected in the type and number of devices that they have.</p>
<p>Does it include making decisions based on individual characteristics, needs or circumstances?</p>	<p>A financial assessment process would be used to establish the ability for an individual to pay the charge. If it was established that they could not afford this, then the charge would be waived.</p>
<p>Are relations between different groups or communities likely to be affected? (eg will it favour one particular group or deny opportunities for others?)</p>	<p>The perception might be that people aged 85 plus and living alone were being singled out. However, the policy aims to treat each individual in receipt equally (with the exception of the financial means test).</p>
<p>Is there any specific targeted action to promote equality? Is there a history of unequal outcomes (do you have enough evidence to prove otherwise)?</p>	<p>The revised charging policy aims to ensure that all people are charged the same fee for receiving the service. Targeted action takes place to ensure that those who cannot afford to pay for the service do not need to. This will particularly benefit those living in areas of deprivation.</p>

Is there an actual or potential negative impact on these specific characteristics? (Please tick)							
Age	Y		Marriage & civil partnership		N	Religion & belief	N
Disability	Y		Pregnancy & maternity		N	Sex	Y
Gender reassignment		N	Race		N	Sexual orientation	N

Stage 3 Evidence

What evidence do you have to support your findings? (quantitative and qualitative) Please provide additional information that you wish to include as appendices to this document, i.e., graphs, tables, charts		Level of Risk (High, Medium or Low)
Age	<p>Frailty is known to increase with age². This also means that an increasing proportion of people in higher age bands who would benefit from Assistive Technology. This policy change specifically targets those aged 85+ and living alone. However, it aims to do this in a fair way so that only those with the ability to pay are asked to pay the new charge. This includes ensuring that there is fair notice and opportunity for people within this category to ask for a financial assessment (for those who would find the charge unaffordable). Introducing the charge would mean that the service could be expanded to other users who would also benefit from this service due to the advantages it brings in terms of safeguarding individuals and supporting independence (where the individual has relevant needs). Assistive Technology is known to maintain or improve an individual's functioning and independence, thereby promoting their well-being³.</p> <p>A small amount of relevant comments were received in the recent consultation relating to the equality impact on age. This included that i) it was felt inappropriate for older people to have to disclose personal details as part of the financial assessment process. Note: the approach followed by Cheshire East Council is set by legislation and having a different approach for older people in itself could be viewed as</p>	Medium

² Prevalence of frailty and disability: findings from the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing, Age and Ageing, Volume 44, Issue 1, January 2015, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25313241/>

³ World Health Organization, Assistive Technology Factsheet., www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/assistive-technology

	discriminatory; ii) that older people have limited finances and that the policy could place financial stress on them. Note: anyone who did not have ability to pay would not have to pay subject to a financial assessment. This works within the framework of national policy on social care charging which has been separately impact assessed.	
Marriage & civil partnership	The impact of this policy is deemed neutral on this protected characteristic.	Low
Religion	The impact of this policy is deemed neutral on this protected characteristic.	Low
Disability	<p>Users of Assistive Technology are largely those who have a disability such as physical disability or cognitive impairment such as dementia. Implementing this policy means that the cost would not weigh disproportionately on these users. More generally, Assistive Technology is known to maintain or improve an individual's functioning and independence, thereby promoting their well-being.</p> <p>It was commented during the consultation process that there might be additional impact on people with dementia due to financial worries.</p>	Medium
Pregnancy & maternity	The impact of this policy is deemed neutral on this protected characteristic.	Low
Sex	Due to the fact that the life expectancies of men and women are different, there are a higher number of women than men who use the service and who would be liable for the new charge. However, the argument remains the same to that detailed under the 'age' section.	Low
Gender Reassignment	The impact of this policy is deemed neutral on this protected characteristic.	Low
Race	The impact of this policy is deemed neutral on this protected characteristic.	Low
Sexual Orientation	The impact of this policy is deemed neutral on this protected characteristic.	Low

Stage 4 Mitigation

Protected characteristics	Mitigating action <i>Once you have assessed the impact of a policy/service, it is important to identify options and alternatives to reduce or eliminate any negative impact. Options considered could be adapting the policy or service, changing the way in which it is implemented or introducing balancing measures to reduce any negative impact. When considering each option you should think about how it will reduce any negative impact, how it might impact on other groups and how it might impact on relationships between groups and overall issues around community cohesion. You should clearly demonstrate how you have considered various options and the impact of these. You must have a detailed rationale behind decisions and a justification for those alternatives that have not been accepted.</i>	How will this be monitored?	Officer responsible	Target date
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -To ensure that the consultation plus any implementation process such as financial assessment takes account of the particular needs of this group e.g. large print text, someone to speak to via the telephone, face to face meetings where useful. -To ensure that users who are recommended for Assistive Technology by a Social Care Assessor (plus other staff) understand that a fee will be required if they wish to take up this service. -To ensure that (if the policy is implemented) those affected are given fair opportunity to ask for a financial assessment due to their ability to pay. This would involve ensuring that letters are in large print and messages are clear and that additional steps are taken for those recorded as having reduced capacity. 	Implementation plan if proposal is adopted	Nik Darwin/ Lee Hudson	TBC
Marriage & civil partnership	N/A			
Religion	N/A			
Disability	-To ensure that the financial assessment process takes account of the particular needs of this group e.g.			

	<p>Learning Disability friendly material, a range of methods for contact, support to work through the financial assessment process.</p> <p>-To ensure that users who are recommended for Assistive Technology by a Social Care Assessor (plus other staff) understand that a fee will be required if they wish to take up this service.</p> <p>-For support provided to be sensitive to the needs of the user for instance, because they have a cognitive impairment.</p>			
Pregnancy & maternity	N/A			
Sex	N/A			
Gender Reassignment	N/A			
Race	N/A			
Sexual Orientation	N/A			

5. Review and Conclusion

Summary: provide a brief overview including impact, changes, improvement, any gaps in evidence and additional data that is needed

Specific actions to be taken to reduce, justify or remove any adverse impacts	How will this be monitored?	Officer responsible	Target date

If the policy is implemented, then users would be financial assessed to understand their ability to pay	Via the Cheshire East Council client records system LiquidLogic	Lee Hudson	TBC
Revising the referral process to ensure there is clear information on the charge	Updated procedure documents/ briefing note for staff	Nik Darwin	TBC
Please provide details and link to full action plan for actions	N/A		
When will this assessment be reviewed?	N/A		
Are there any additional assessments that need to be undertaken in relation to this assessment?	This assessment will be revised following the decision at Committee.		
Lead officer sign off	Nik Darwin	Date	02/09/21
Head of service sign off	Shelley Brough	Date	02/09/21

Please return to EDI Officer for publication once signed

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