

Shared Services Joint Committee Wednesday 14 June 2023

Report Title	Assistive Technology Disaggregation
Report Author	David Watts, NNC Executive Director, Executive Director, Adults, Health Partnerships and Housing (DASS) Stuart Lackenby, WNC Executive Director People, Deputy Chief Executive (DCS and DASS)
Executive Member	Councillor Helen Harrison, Executive Member for Adults, Health and Wellbeing, NNC
Cabinet Member	Councillor Matt Golby, Cabinet Member for Adult Care, Wellbeing, and Health Integration, WNC

Key Decision	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for call-in by Scrutiny?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there public sector equality duty implications?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information (whether in appendices or not)?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Applicable paragraph number/s for exemption from publication under Schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972	

List of Appendices

None

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To seek approval to proceed with the disaggregation of the Assistive Technology Service (the Service), which is currently Hosted by West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) and provided to North Northamptonshire Council (NNC) in March 2024.

2 Executive Summary

- 2.1 The Service is hosted by WNC serving customers across Northamptonshire (WNC and NNC).

- 2.2 The service provides the installation, maintenance, and repair of assistive technology, providing support to over 4,000 people in Northamptonshire each year.
- 2.3 The service also assesses people and provides the appropriate items to meet their needs and support them.
- 2.4 The timeframe for disaggregation was set out within the Inter Authority Agreement (IAA) Blueprint approved by NNC and WNC.
- 2.5 A decision was made by the Shared Services Joint Committee on 18 January 2023 to delay disaggregation of the Service until March 2024.

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Shared Services Joint Committee:
 - 3.1.1 Approve the disaggregation of the Assistive Technology Disaggregation Service by 31 March 2024.
 - 3.1.2 Grant delegated authority to the Monitoring Officers for North Northamptonshire Council and West Northamptonshire Council to amend the Inter Authority Agreement subject to an agreed Exit Plan.
- 3.2 Reason for Recommendations:
 - 3.2.1 Disaggregating the Service adheres to the Future Northants Blueprint whereby both authorities can manage their own independent Assistive Technology Service and tailor it to adapt to the organisation and residents of NNC and WNC.
 - 3.2.2 This option follows the principle agreed during local government reform whereby a service may be hosted for a period before it can safely and legally disaggregate.
 - 3.2.3 Ensures the Councils and customers receive the most benefit from the delivery of the Service, by enabling the organisations to tailor the service to the local demographics and address the needs and priorities of the individual authorities.
- 3.3 Alternative Options Considered
 - 3.3.1 **Option 2** – Not to disaggregate and move to a permanent relationship between WNC, NNC and Health
 - 3.3.2 **Option 3** – Disaggregate by 31 March 2024 – within the existing budget.

- 3.4 See sections 5.3 and 5.4 below for further details on Options 2 and 3 respectively.

4 Report Background

- 4.1 The Service is currently being hosted by WNC and provides the installation, maintenance, and repair of assistive technology, providing support to over 4,000 people in Northamptonshire per year. The service also assesses people and provides the appropriate items to meet their needs and support them.
- 4.2 Assistive Technology is any item, piece of equipment or software that is used to increase, maintain or improve an individual's ability to perform daily tasks or to communicate, learn and live an independent, fulfilling and productive life.
- 4.3 The Service is unique in its problem-solving approach. It does not work from a prescriptive model (i.e., catalogue, which has limitations) but has the freedom to innovate and tailor the approach to the needs of the customer by having access to the wider market and this is reflected in the current framework. This allows the team to take a more bespoke approach in supporting people to live well and maintain independence. There are wider benefits for service users when there is the freedom to innovate.
- 4.4 The Service has pioneered many pieces of equipment including the development of a reporting tool (Canary) to assess customer needs at home achieving over £800k costs savings / avoidance for social care in 2019 – 2021. The use of Canary is now business as usual for the Service and savings data is no longer captured following the successful pilot. There will be savings associated with Docobo remote patient monitoring system and the Reminiscence & Interactive Therapy Activities (RITA) but both projects are in the early phases, so the benefits have not yet been fully identified.
- 4.5 The team is also heavily linked to the delivery of telehealth devices in a partnership with NHFT and the acute hospitals. Telehealth is defined as the delivery and facilitation of health and health-related services including medical care, provider and patient education, health information services, and self-care via telecommunications and digital communication technologies.
- 4.6 Government social care reform announcements (December 2021) has a focus on technology with a commitment of £150 million of additional funding to drive greater adoption of technology and achieve widespread digitisation across social care to support independent living and improve the quality of care.
- 4.7 As of November 2022, telecare customers are being monitored by Crosskeys and Call Care. However, Crosskeys contract is coming to an end in March 2023 and a decision has been made to transfer all customers and enrol new customers with Call Care. The cost of monitoring provided by Crosskeys, around £50k per year, will move from Crosskeys to Call Care. There is no additional cost involved in the process of moving monitoring from Crosskeys to Call Care. The cost of reprocurring Crosskeys, or similar, is likely to cost in excess of £50k.

- 4.8 In respect of IT related systems, the interdependency with Cygnum contract/ data split and new database requirements. Any new IT systems need to ensure they have the equipment recording facility to accommodate AT needs.
- 4.9 In April 2023 the team moved from Cygnum to Eclipse due to WNC's Cygnum contract not being renewed, and a new solution being required in the short term. Changes have been made to Eclipse (NNC and WNC) which has enabled the service to utilise these systems. No Eclipse data transfer will be required at the point of disaggregation. The team will utilise Eclipse for both Councils and will use ERP for all financial aspect required.
- 4.10 The AT team has recently made the transition from manual invoices to the automatic finance system ERP which can be replicated by NNC. However, if the service is split, it is recommended that a project group take ownership of this work due to the potential ramifications involved in invoicing customers.
- 4.11 North Northamptonshire Council has an opportunity to decide whether it wishes to continue to operate the hosting arrangements with the Assistive Technology or continue with the disaggregation of the service in line with the Future Northants blueprint.

5 Issues and Choices

- 5.1 The following options have been considered:
- 5.1.1 **Option 1** – Disaggregate by 31 March 2024 – requires additional budget of approximately £60k per authority per annum, each Council will identify funding from within the Service as required
- 5.1.2 **Option 2** - Not to disaggregate and move to a permanent relationship between WNC, NNC and Health
- 5.1.3 **Option 3** – Disaggregate by 31 March 2024 – within the existing budget
- 5.2 **Option 1** (recommended option) – Disaggregate by 31 March 2024
- 5.2.1 The option to disaggregate in a safe and legal manner, in line with the plans and principles set out in the Future Northants Blueprint and the decision to disaggregate made by the Shared Service Joint Committee will create two services, one in the North and one in the West, albeit by 31 March 2024 and not the original date of 28 February 2023.
- 5.2.2 Advantages:
- Allows the two services to operate in a safe and legal manner.
 - Enables WNC and NNC to develop the service in line with their overall strategies and business plans.
 - Enables each Council to provide a more personalised and connected service.

- Allows each Council to develop an enhanced understanding of the community being served, to develop and improve the service offer without requiring other parties' approval.
- Existing and experienced staff can train the additional, newly recruited staff if required
- Allows each Council to continue to deliver AT service without a hosting arrangement.
- Opportunity to create a service that meets the needs for both North and West Northamptonshire residents without a hosting arrangement.
- Freedom in direction of travel for assistive technology for each Council without a hosting arrangement.

5.2.3 Disadvantages:

- The proposed structure is more expensive for NNC and WNC to operate due to the requirement for additional posts to deliver services in a safe and legal manner.
- There will be additional procurements costs associated with disaggregation of the service and the required IT systems.
- To split personal data files across the IT systems may require additional resource that will come at a cost to the organisation
- Changes / instability to service could lead to a loss of staff with knowledge and expertise. Possible challenges with recruitment, which could be compounded by the salary difference between West and North and with terms and conditions.
- Higher costs to deliver existing service, potentially passed on to customers.
- Lack of continuity for our health colleagues / partner agencies, community customers having to navigate different referral systems / different access to equipment / eligibility, different response timescales etc

5.3 **Option 2** – Not to disaggregate and move to a permanent relationship between WNC, NNC and local NHS organisations

5.3.1 The option to do nothing would be to continue with the current joint arrangement, where the service is hosted in the West and provided to the North.

5.3.2 Advantages

- The service arrangements would remain as-is with no change to service delivery.
- This option would provide people (customers) with service continuity.
- This option would provide service stability and resilience, maintaining the ability to respond in 24 hours where required.
- This option would maintain current health partnerships and the newly formed remote monitoring project.

- This option would retain knowledge and skills in the service of AT and technology.
- This option would maintain GDPR practice already in place between North and West Northamptonshire Council.
- This option would maintain access to the current service which has investment from health for health monitoring.
- This option would maintain a seamless customer service with one referral pathway
- This option would enable service development to continue without the disruption of disaggregation.
- This option would enable West and North to develop a countywide Assistive Technology strategy without delay.

5.3.3 Disadvantages

- NNC may not be able to develop the service and strategy in line with its business plan.
- Keeping the service hosted by WNC is against the plans and principles set out in the Future Northants Blueprint and not in line with the decision made by the Shared Service Joint Committee to disaggregate the service.
- Hosted authority might be perceived as the sole lead in driving digital technology in Northamptonshire in partnership with health. Communication must clearly indicate it's a joint venture and a collaborative approach.

5.4 **Option 3** – Disaggregate by March 2024 – within the existing Budget

5.4.1 The option to disaggregate in a safe and legal manner, in line with the plans and principles set out in the Future Northants Blueprint and the decision made by the Shared Service Joint Committee will create two services, one in the North and one in the West, albeit by March 2024 and not the original date of February 2023 with no or marginal additional costs.

5.4.2 Advantages

- This new structure will allow the two services to operate in a safe and legal manner.
- The new structures will enable WNC and NNC to develop the service in line with their overall strategies and business plans.
- The new services will enable each Council to provide a more personalised and connected service.
- The new services will allow each Council to develop an enhanced understanding of the community being served, to develop and improve the service offer without requiring other parties' approval.
- Existing and experienced staff can train the additional, newly recruited staff if required
- Allows council to continue to deliver AT service without a hosting arrangement.
- Opportunity to create a service that meets the needs for both North and West Northamptonshire residents without a hosting arrangement.
- Freedom in direction of travel for assistive technology for both North and West councils without a hosting arrangement.

5.4.3 Disadvantages

- A reduced service to bring it in line with budgetary constraints.
- Consultation on new staffing structure
- Consultation and additional, unknown spend on redundancies of staff not within the structure
- Need to complete a HR process to enact redundancy for any staff whose roles do not exist within the new structure
- Creating a high risk that demand will outstrip the capacity of the disaggregated service will lead to unmet needs
- Reduction in KPI performance levels and the team's ability to respond to urgent requests (2 working days for CRT / hospital discharges / urgent requests)
- Increase adult service care and health costs for meeting people's needs if AT is not available due to a reduced capacity
- There will be additional procurements costs associated with disaggregation of the service and the required IT systems.
- To split personal data files across the IT systems may require additional resource that will come at a cost to the organisation
- Changes / instability to service could lead to a loss of staff with knowledge and expertise. Possible challenges with recruitment, which could be compounded by the salary difference between West and North and with terms and conditions.
- Less resilient – A small team being unable to flex staff across Northamptonshire to cope with staff capacity issues (sickness / AL / urgent requests) means the team will be less resilient and the impact would lead to less efficient service delivery or missed KPI's impacting on ongoing projects.
- Possible impact and disruption of service delivery to residents affecting finance and invoice system, IT CMS system, CSC training requirements to book appointments, framework and contract agreements may need to be drafted and agreed.
- Higher costs to deliver existing service, potentially passed on to customers.
- Lack of continuity for our health colleagues / partner agencies, community customers having to navigate different referral systems / different access to equipment / eligibility, different response timescales etc

6 Next Steps

- 6.1 An exit plan would be developed in accordance with the requirements of the Inter Authority Agreement (IAA) for the hosted provision of functions and services between NNC and WNC.
- 6.2 Staff consultation will be undertaken, and final staffing structures will be proposed by the Director of People (WNC) and the Executive Director Adults, Communities and Wellbeing (NNC) and agreed by both authorities' leadership teams.

7 Implications (including financial implications)

7.1 Resources and Financial

- 7.1.1 Resources will be required from the enabler services in both authorities to support the disaggregation and TUPE of staff.
- 7.1.2 Employees will undergo a consultation period where the outcome of employee allocation will be determined, and some employees will transfer across to West Northamptonshire Council under TUPE rules, and against the disaggregation principles agreed with the Trades Unions.
- 7.1.3 Additional Budget will be required to disaggregate the service, per option 1. This is estimated to be approximately £60k per authority per annum. The Better Care Fund (BCF) is the preferred choice in line with existing funding, otherwise each Council will identify funding from within the Service as required

7.2 Legal and Governance

- 7.2.1 Changes to the relevant elements of the existing IAA Schedule 2 which covers the management and operational duties of the Assistive Technology Service will need to be made through an agreed Exit Plan.

7.3 Relevant Policies and Plans

- 7.3.1 The proposal will assist delivery of the West Northamptonshire Council Plan 2021-2025 “Improved Life Chances”.
- 7.3.2 The proposal will assist delivery of the North Northamptonshire Council Plan 2021-2025 “Active Fulfilled Lives”.

7.4 Risk

- 7.4.1 The split of the structures and staff would need to ensure a balance of skills, knowledge, and experience, if this is not achieved there is a risk of disruption to the service.
- 7.4.2 Key risks have been identified in the Impact Assessment.

7.5 Consultation

- 7.5.1 Consultation with affected employees, supported by Trade Unions, will be undertaken and the team members will be involved in the process via 1:1s and team meetings, with the opportunity to raise questions and concerns.
- 7.5.2 There is no statutory requirement for public consultation.

7.6 Consideration by Executive Advisory Panel

7.6.1 No considerations arising from this report.

7.7 Consideration by Scrutiny

7.7.1 No considerations arising from this report.

7.8 Equality Implications

7.8.1 At this point in the process, it is not possible to fully assess the actual impact on all protected characteristic groups. An initial Equalities Screening Assessment will be undertaken during the disaggregation process and discussed with the Equalities Officer. The situation will be reviewed during staff consultation and for any equality implications that are identified, appropriate mitigating actions will be taken (where possible).

7.9 Climate Impact

7.9.1 There are no implications arising from the proposed recommendation.

7.10 Community Impact

7.10.1 Webpages, customer journeys and referral pathways will be reviewed to establish separate information and processes. Stakeholders will be communicated with to ensure there is clarity over how to access the services.

7.10.2 The disaggregation will allow each Council to develop an enhanced understanding of the community being served, to develop and tailor the service offer to each locality

7.11 Crime and Disorder Impact

7.11.1 No implications arising from the proposed recommendation.

8 Background Papers

8.1 Assistive Technology Disaggregation Impact Assessment

8.2 Change Request presented to Shared Services Joint Committee 18 Jan 2023

8.3 The Future Northants Blueprint agreed at NNC Shadow Exec Meeting 24 Sept 2020 & WNC Shadow Exec Meeting 22 Sept 2020