

## Appendix

**Speech Call Units**

Speech Call Units are provided in properties, both within schemes with communal areas and 'stand-alone' flats or bungalows. The equipment in the 'stand-alone' properties, although separate, is often connected to the equipment within a nearby scheme.

Following approval from Cabinet in November 2023, a project commenced to consider the alternatives to the current system. All of the alternative providers would initially work on a pilot project for a small number of schemes and then gradually move schemes onto their solution over a number of years. This would be a large complex project in any circumstances, but is particularly difficult as the switch over of telephone lines from analogue to digital also needs to be managed over the next few years. It could not be guaranteed that the move to an alternative provider could be achieved within the necessary timescales for digital switchover.

Like most other housing providers, the Council has been using the same equipment for a number of years. The Council has a programme of upgrades to keep systems up to date, as current equipment becomes obsolete. Since the announcement of the digital switchover the Council has ensured that any upgrades are compatible with future digital requirements. The digital switchover was originally planned to be completed by the end of 2025. However, this date has been delayed a number of times.

The Local Government Association has produced a Digital Switchover Telecare Checklist. The first step recommends to complete of a full audit of the existing equipment and if it is compatible with future digital requirements. The team have worked with the existing provider to complete desktop analysis and site visits to determine the compatibility of all the current equipment. The results of the audit are included in the table below:

<b>System</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
Bartons Close	Upgrade required
Bexhill Court	Compatible
Birch Close	Upgrade required
Church Close/The Lilacs	Compatible
Cloverlands Court	Compatible
Cloverlands Drive (connected to Cloverlands Court)	Compatible
Hillcrest Close (connected to Cloverlands Court)	Compatible
Glebe House/Linwood Crescent	Compatible
Greenwood Court	Compatible
Grove Court	Compatible
Gutersloh Court	Compatible
Central Avenue (connected to Gutersloh Court)	Compatible
Hillfield Road (connected to Gutersloh Court)	Compatible

<b>System</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
Hopkins Court	Upgrade in 2024/25
Humber Lodge/Myrtle Grove/Read Avenue	Compatible
Harry Peel Court (connected to Humber Lodge)	Compatible
Myrtle Bungalows (connected to Humber Lodge)	Compatible
Myrtle Flats (connected to Humber Lodge)	Compatible
Lawrence Avenue	Upgrade required
Lombardy Lodge	Compatible
Birkin Avenue (connected to Lombardy Lodge)	Compatible
Newthorpe Common	Upgrade required
Pheonix Court	Compatible
Regency Court	Compatible
Richmond Court	Compatible
Rockwell Court	Compatible
Rowan Court	Upgrade required
Scalby Close	Compatible
Southfields Court	Compatible
Sunnyside Road	Upgrade required
Inham Road Bungalows (connected to Sunnyside Road)	Upgrade required
Templar Lodge	Upgrade in 2024/25
Templar Road	Upgrade required
The Spinney	Upgrade in 2024/25
The Willows/Dovecote Lane	Compatible
Westbourne Court	Compatible
Trenton Close Bungalows (connected to Westbourne Ct)	Compatible
Valley Road	Upgrade required
Venn Court	Compatible
Yew Tree Court/The Lilacs	Compatible

As can be seen from the table, the majority of systems are already compatible and three upgrades are already planned for this year. There are only nine systems that are not compatible and not already due for an upgrade. Given that the majority of our current systems will work following the digital switchover it is proposed that the Council remains with the current provider at this time and completes the work required to ensure that all equipment is compatible.

It is important to note that the fire monitoring equipment is also connected to the Speech Call System, as the monitoring centre is notified if an alarm is activated. The alternative providers do not have integrated systems, so in addition to a new Speech Call System, new fire monitoring would need to be installed. The current system for fire safety and response works well, it would be a risk to look to change this.

Employees that regularly work with the current provider have been asked for their feedback on the working arrangements. The feedback is positive. Regular contract management meetings are held, and if there are any issues these are swiftly

resolved. There are strong positive working relationships that have built up over a number of years.

For the reasons outlined, it is proposed to continue with the current arrangements and complete the required work to make all of the systems compatible with the digital upgrade. The costs quoted are outlined in the table below:

<b>System</b>	<b>Cost £</b>
Bartons Close	11,583
Birch Close	13,571
Lawrence Avenue	14,813
Newthorpe Common	12,995
Rowan Court	25,342
Sunnyside Road	6,258
Inham Road Bungalows (connected to Sunnyside Road)	1,927
Templar Road	13,914
Valley Road	9,681
<b>Total</b>	<b>110,084</b>

When systems are upgraded the work is usually completed for the amount that has been quoted. However, occasionally issues are identified following the work commencing. To ensure that the work completed within the required timescales a contingency has also been included in the amount requested.

### **Lifeline Service**

The same provider also provides the units and monitoring for the Lifeline Service, although the units are not hard-wired and do not link to fire monitoring equipment in private homes. All of the units currently used for the Lifeline service will be compatible with the digital switchover, as long as they have a back-up battery installed. We wrote to all customers regarding this in January 2024, and are working with our customers to ensure that they understand the changes.

If it is approved to remain with the current provider for the Speech Call Units then it is recommended that the equipment used also remains the same for the Lifeline service. The ongoing day to day management of the service would be difficult with two different providers. However, there are other improvements that could be made to the service outside of the technology used.

Unlike many other local authorities, the Council has kept a high number of Independent Living schemes and a large team of Independent Living Co-ordinators to work with tenants. Typically, Independent Living Co-ordinators work with between 70 and 80 tenants, with whom they have regular contact via visits and telephone calls. This level of service is valued by many of the Council's residents. None of the Council's Independent Living schemes are categorised as difficult to let, and a lot of interest is received each time a property is advertised. Some residents do not wish to move to a scheme but would like the type of support that is offered.

It is proposed that the Council considers offering a visiting service in addition to the current Lifeline and Lifeline Plus units. The current charge for a speech call unit is £3.93 per week. The Council also offers a Lifeline Plus service, which includes a falls detector for £5.90 per week. It is proposed that a visiting service is offered for an additional charge in a similar way to Lifeline Plus. As an indicator of what could be charged, a local provider offers a package, where customers receive a daily phone call for an additional £3.50, plus VAT, per week.

There are some providers locally already offer a form of visiting service. There is a provider that will offer home visits in an emergency situation, but not routinely. There are also some providers that offer visits as part of a larger support or care package, but the costs of these are very high. Initial research has not identified a service similar to our Independent Living service being offered to private residents.

Once employee and admin costs are deducted, annual profit from the Lifeline service is approximately £22,000, so in addition to offering support for residents there is also the opportunity to increase the income to the General Fund.

It is recommended that this option is explored further, following the timetable below:

	<b>Task</b>
Summer 2024	Consult with current Lifeline customers and Independent Living applicants to gauge interest a visiting service, and an understanding of the type of service they would want
Summer 2024	Complete further research of the service offered outside of the local area, including any local authorities
Autumn/Winter 2024	Design and cost a visiting service based on customer feedback and services offered elsewhere
Early 2025	Submit report to Cabinet for approval