

Appendix 1

PROJECT UPDATE REPORT



Submitted by: Euan Stratton			Date of Report: 24 th October 2023	
Project title: Analogue to Digital Telecare Migration	Project ID Number: SDP22-25_Dec22_23	Priority workstream (if applicable):	RAG status for current phase*	Amber
Project phase <i>Planning/Delivering -</i>				
Initiation ** Complete	Planning** Q1 2024	Implementation** Q2-Q3 2025	Close** Q1 2026	
Which strategic priority does the project align to?				
Prevention and early intervention	Reshaping care	Engagement	Effective use of resources	Tackling inequalities and public protection
Brief description of the project				
<p>By the end of 2025, the current analogue telephone service on copper wires will be switched off as the UK's telecoms infrastructure is upgraded to digital fibre connectivity. This process has been underway for some time, however the next 24-36 months will see the biggest impact on private and business telephone users as migration to digital is progressed by the various telecom providers. This migration is being driven by the instability and vulnerability of the existing analogue network and we are unable to influence this process, or the areas selected for migration. For some time now, customers who seek to upgrade or switch their telephone or broadband package have been upgraded to a purely digital service, if available. Forced migrations are due to commence in Scotland in April 2024.</p> <p>Telecare, which includes community alarms, previously relied on a traditional telephone line to raise an alarm call. These analogue alarms use audio tones (STMF/DTMF) to send specific information through to an alarm receiving centre (ARC) before the voice call is connected, however these tones are not suitable and can prove unreliable when used over a digital connection. The advice from both the Scottish Government Digital Office and the TEC Services Association is for analogue telecare equipment to be replaced with digital alternatives. Aberdeenshire currently have about 2500-2600 community alarms installed with clients.</p> <p>This work also impacts approx. 1700 tenants in our sheltered and very sheltered housing complexes, who rely on a Tunstall warden call system. This system includes door entry, warden call via an emergency button or pull cord, and fire alarms. With 57 complexes throughout the LCA, each warden call system connects to the ARC via a traditional analogue telephone line when the system is switched to 'off-site'. These warden call systems are not currently compatible with digital telephone lines.</p>				

Aberdeenshire Council/HSCP currently utilise the Regional Communication Centre (RCC) based at Aberdeen City Council as our ARC to manage any alarm calls made from community alarms or from sheltered housing warden call systems which have been set to 'off-site'. The RCC utilises a Tunstall platform to receive and manage alarm calls. At present, this platform can only receive analogue signalling and is not compatible with digital lines.

A project board comprising of managers from Aberdeenshire Council Housing and Building Standards, AHSCP, the Principle Electrical Engineer from Property and Facilities and a project leader were installed around April 2021 to plan, develop and ultimately deliver the migration to digital for telecare and warden call systems. Funding for the project leader role was provided by the Scottish Government at £50k per year for the first 2 years of the project, however this funding ceased in 2023. Finance have also been involved with the project board for several months now.

It was identified that the project involves three separate but interconnecting strands, namely community or dispersed alarms, the alarm receiving centre and sheltered housing.

Project update as of 19th October 2023

Since September 2023, it is no longer possible to purchase or obtain a new copper based analogue telephone service if a digital telephone connection is available. The migration to digital telephone lines is being driven by the infrastructure owners, Openreach, and in some areas of the country Virgin Media, but delivered by the various telecom providers, i.e. BT, Sky, Talk Talk etc. Although forced migrations were paused for a time, they are due to resume in 2024. Various actions to mitigate against telecare clients being 'force migrated' have been taken, including providing telecom providers with the ARC contact number to check for outgoing calls from customers and work is currently ongoing to instigate a data sharing agreement with BT regarding telecare clients within Scotland.

Community Alarms

Since 2022, we have been purchasing and installing digital ready community alarms that connect using the mobile telephone or GSM network. These alarms are known as 'hybrid alarms' because although they are digitally ready, they can operate using analogue protocols enabling them to connect to the ARC at RCC in Aberdeen, which operates on an analogue receiving platform.

Following the pandemic and the global chip shortage, obtaining new alarms has proved extremely challenging and at various points through 2023 the telecare service was close to having zero stock available. This was mitigated by instigating a Scotland wide device sharing programme, where redundant analogue stock from other areas could be gifted to other services. Stock levels have now improved, and we currently have approx. 150 hybrid alarms in stock with 500 still awaiting dispatch from the manufacturer. 29% of all alarms installed in Aberdeenshire are hybrid type alarms. With the alarms awaiting dispatch and those already in stock, we have about 50-55% hybrid alarm availability.

Up until August 2023, alarm purchases were done utilising the Scotland Excel TEC purchasing framework. Unfortunately, this framework has now expired, and its

replacement is not expected until early 2024. A Direct Award Procurement request has been approved to Legrand Care who currently provide our hybrid alarms. It has been recommended and approved by the Project Board to carry out a procurement exercise to purchase the remaining necessary digital alarms of about 1000-1200 units. This will coincide with the implementation of the digital ARC, providing increased choice for alarm units and probable cost saving and other benefits, such as guaranteed stock availability, security assessed devices approved for use with the new digital ARC, increased functionality and proactive monitoring possibilities etc.

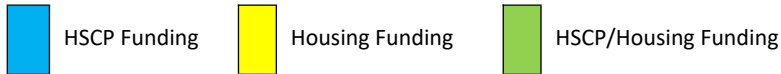
Alarm Receiving Centre

As early adopters of the Shared Digital ARC solution for Scotland, there has been a lengthy programme of work to reach the stage where a preferred bidder, Chubb Fire and Security Ltd, has been identified. Final negotiations are taking place between Scotland Excel, the Digital Office and Chubb before contract award. Aberdeen City Council are also adopters of the Shared ARC and it's intended this solution will replace their current analogue system. It is hoped the digital solution will be operational March/April 2024, although an extensive onboarding process will be required including testing and reprogramming of existing hybrid alarm stock. Negotiations and agreements with ACC have still to take place and will be better informed once the pricing structure for the new solution is known. Work has already been undertaken to cleanse data on the existing platform to mitigate unnecessary costs.

Sheltered Housing

The infrastructure works necessary to provide IP or internet connections at relevant points in the 57 sheltered housing sites managed by Aberdeenshire that operate warden call systems has concluded and the work is about to be started. A 'digital connector' solution from Tunstall who provide the warden call systems is expected to be available soon, with provisional ordering and installation works to be arranged and managed. It is hoped to have these digital connectors in place for the implementation of the digital ARC at ACC/RCC. There will also need to be extensive testing of these systems once the digital ARC is available.

Estimated Costs



Type	Cost	Spend to Date (end of September 2023)	Annual Rolling Cost
Community/Dispersed Alarms	Approx £800,000 - £1,000,000 (equipment only, alarms and peripherals)	£480,058 (equipment and staff costs incl. pending orders) - £100,000 of which was Scottish Govt funding	SIM charges total approx. £117,000-£135,000 (alarms purchased to date have 2 years of SIM charges included in the initial cost)
Sheltered Housing – Tunstall Digital Connector Option at all sites	Approx £100,155 (equipment) + £32,300 for necessary infrastructure works	£0	Total approx. £17,850 (additional to existing maintenance costs and includes yearly SIM and new broadband charges)
Alarm Receiving Centre – New digital receiving platform with RCC managing alarm calls	Unknown presently though possibly £170,000 - £250,000 per year	Current arrangement with ACC/RCC £170,00 per year (split 50/50 between HSCP and Housing)	Estimated approx. £170,000 - £250,000

Key achievements

Resources (Workforce, Finance, Assets)

Please refer to project charter

The Project Board have agreed specific paths based in relation to the options provided. Key achievements have been.

- Preferred supplier for the Shared ARC solution tender identified and contract award is imminent and clear pathways to implementing solution along with ACC.
- Additional work necessary with ACC once pricing structure for Shared ARC established.
- Purchasing strategy of 100 hybrid alarms each month since November 2022 now providing a constant supply of alarms (currently 6-month lead time for deliveries)
- Procurement pathway identified and in part established to continue purchasing of alarms out with framework and to complete necessary purchases.
- Infrastructure works identified for Sheltered Housing and work to progress in near future, preferred option from Tunstall becoming available to order.

Please refer to project charter

The biggest impact on workforce resources will involve the telecare team at the JEC. The strategy to purchase and install whenever possible hybrid alarms since 2022 should reduce the burden however there will be a need during 2024 to utilise the existing technicians to carry out daily equipment upgrades by replacing older analogue equipment with hybrid alternatives for existing clients.

Another consideration is the demand placed upon the team in relation to portal management for digital devices. Digital alarms provide routine 'heartbeat' updates over the mobile network and can notify real time faults, such as mains or network failures, low batteries etc. This also provides the ability for more remote resolutions to faults, however as the digital alarm estate increases as will the demand for the effective management of these portals.

Clearly, there is a significant financial impact associated with this project, though every effort has and is being made to ensure the best available and suitable equipment is obtained with budget considerations at the forefront.

Finance have agreed to attend each Project Board meeting and have been doing so for several months now.

**Risk and Mitigations
Please refer to project charter**

The [Risk Register](#) for this project, which has previously been added to the AHSCP risk register, is reviewed monthly by the Project Board. Improvements in relation to stock resilience and the mitigating factors of stock purchasing strategies and national device sharing have improved identified risks.

Issues for escalation

As we move closer to accessing a digital alarm receiving solution at RCC, this increases the choice of telecare equipment we can install and utilise.

Along with three other authorities, Aberdeenshire have assisted in a programme of testing next generation telecare equipment from 2iC-Care. Their hub can be linked with a multitude of different peripherals from various manufacturers, providing the opportunity to utilise existing peripheral stock and enable greater choice in the future.

The imminent contract award for the Shared ARC and the desire on both sides to continue partnership with ACC for RCC alarm receiving services has mitigated identified risks.

The likelihood of imminent ordering of the IP Connector solution for sheltered housing along with identifying and initiating infrastructure works has mitigated identified risks. Alternative solutions from other manufacturers and telephone line considerations with BT Wholesale are also being explored to further minimise risk.

Large scale forced migration to digital telephone lines within Aberdeenshire creates perhaps the highest current risk associated with this project. Mitigating factors such as continued coordinated work with the Digital Office, TSA, Openreach and Telecom Providers is designed to mitigate upon these risks as is the data sharing agreement currently being worked on along with BT and the Digital Office.

With more units relying on the GSM network as a means for connectivity, any failure of the network or power outages that also impact mobile telephone masts creates a risk. Work is ongoing both with a national Resilience Working Group lead by the Digital Office and the TSA to mitigate against these issues. Alarms with more than one means of connectivity is preferred, i.e., IP and GSM, as well as dual SIM or dual core options also preferred. There is scope to develop a formal telecare business continuity plan to assist the telecare team with managing future outages.

As well as conventional reactive monitoring via traditional pendants, fall detectors etc, this device and its associated software can manage proactive monitoring through a variety of sensors to provide next level telehealth services and the ability to support and help clients through early intervention in response to changes in monitored activities.

It can also be used to better support clients with more complex care requirements by enabling access to advanced monitoring and reporting opportunities.

The project board have agreed a full procurement exercise should be undertaken to purchase the remaining approximate 1000-1200 digital alarms that are still required. The evaluation of any bids will be based upon many factors, and it will be equally important to consider factors such as opportunities for enhanced and proactive monitoring for clients now and in the future. Although some options may initially appear more expensive, they may provide cost saving benefits elsewhere.

Deliverables
Please refer to project charter

This project has experienced setbacks and challenges from the outset, primarily with supply chain issues and delays out with our control, such as with the Shared ARC programme. Key deliverables however are:

Benefits
Please refer to project charter

- Digital telecare can provide the ability to support emerging and next generation telehealth technology which is not possible with analogue equipment. This is in line with the AHSCP strategic priorities.
- Remote monitoring, programming and resolution of faults saving staff time and

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 29% of telecare clients now have a digital enabled community alarm installed. • Awaited alarm deliveries will achieve a total digital alarm stock level of more than 50% • The shared digital ARC solution with RCC is still hoped to be available about April 2024 • Infrastructure work is due to commence, and product ordering is expected imminently in relation to sheltered housing and its digital solution for warden call systems. 	<p>reducing vehicular travel.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The shared digital ARC for Scotland and digital telecare may have clear alignment with the proposed National Care Service • Digital calls connect quicker and more reliably than analogue and can transmit much greater volumes of data, reducing the time vulnerable clients may spend trying to raise an alarm. • Ability to monitor and assess digital data and provide routes to early intervention or support where necessary, e.g., evidence of increased falls
<p>Engagement</p> <p>Engagement has been undertaken throughout the project with information being shared with all telecare clients. Information is also available on the Aberdeenshire telecare webpage and a questionnaire survey of sheltered housing tenants and staff was also carried out.</p> <p>Referring teams have been informed of the need for change and the impact to services.</p> <p>There has been close communication with the telecare technicians throughout testing and the installation of digital compatible alarms. Their input has been vital in determining decisions made by the project board.</p> <p>Information on the gov.uk website regarding the analogue to digital telephone migration has been made accessible from appropriate pages of the Aberdeenshire/AHSCP website.</p> <p>Further information regarding the switch to digital telephony and the impact on telecare was sent by post to clients this year.</p>	<p>Equalities</p> <p>Digital telecare and the integration of emerging telehealth opportunities, supports the delivery of the Equalities outcomes agreed for 2020-2024 for people with protected characteristics, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to live in a homely environment • to live healthy, independent lives • to enable monitoring and assessment to provide earlier clinical intervention if necessary.

*RAG status explanations

Green	On track - no forecast issues with achieving project aims and milestones
Amber	Some issues but manageable by project team
Red	Significant issues requiring escalation to the SPG/SMT

**Explanation of project phases and typical activities

Initiation – This stage involves identifying the need for the project. Key activities may include forming a project group, undertaking research to investigate and understand the problem, data gathering, undertaking an options appraisal of possible solutions, identifying high level benefits, agreeing on a solution and developing a draft project charter.

Planning – In this stage the project solution is developed in detail. Key activities may include more detailed benefits mapping, risk planning, resource planning (e.g. staff and funding), communication and engagement planning, project planning and defining of key deliverables.

Implementation – In this stage the project plan is put into action. Key activities may include undertaking project tasks, monitoring progress and performance of the project, managing problems/change requests and executing the communication and engagement plan.

Close – In this stage the project is fully embedded into business as usual (BAU). Key activities may include handing over the project, releasing project resources, communicating project closure to key stakeholders, undertaking a review to capture lessons learnt and developing a control plan to monitor performance. The review of project benefits (Benefits Realisation) should also be undertaken at an appropriate time after the project has been closed, to measure the overall benefits of the project.