

Sheltered Alarm Funding Review - Citizen Consultation

Summary Findings

1.0 Overview

A review of the funding for housing providers to provide a subsidised alarm service for residents of sheltered / independent living schemes has been completed. The changes to alarm funding is due to take effect from 1/4/19. The review included 3 options for the funding provided to housing providers:-

- Stop alarm subsidy – cease the funding to housing providers;
- Reduce alarm subsidy – only subsidise for residents in receipt of a long term social care service;
- Reduce alarm subsidy – only subsidise for residents in receipt of Housing Benefit and only the element of alarm charge which is not eligible for Housing Benefit.

Currently there are 753 citizens who receive a subsidised alarm service through contracts with 7 housing providers. In addition there are 112 citizens living in 2 sheltered alarm schemes which are contained within a separate (Dispersed Alarms) contract which needed to be included in the consultation as they are due to be moved to the sheltered alarms contracts from 1/4/19. One housing provider decided to decline funding from 1/4/19 so their residents were excluded from the consultation. Therefore a total of 817 residents in 15 schemes with 6 housing providers were invited to give their views as part of the consultation.

NB. Residents of NCH sheltered / independent living schemes were not included in the consultation as NCH were excluded from the funding review at this time.

It was estimated in advance of the consultation that 15% of residents of sheltered / independent living scheme were in receipt of a long term social care service and 75% of residents were in receipt of Housing Benefit.

The consultation process started on 6/8/18 with a consultation pack (letter and questionnaire) being delivered to each sheltered / independent living scheme for distribution to residents. This consultation closed on 10/10/18 (9.5 week period). *The consultation was due to close on 28/9/18 but was extended due to a clarification on the wording on one of the funding options being issued week commencing 20/8/18.* A total of 344 completed questionnaires were returned - a 42% return rate. Alongside the consultation process an engagement process with the housing providers of the alarm service was undertaken. A separate analysis and report from the housing provider engagement has been compiled.

2.0 Findings

The 344 responses have been analysed. The analysis has been undertaken based on responses given in the completed questionnaires – any questions where no response has been received have been discounted from the analysis.

2.1 Use of alarm service

Category	Number	%
Used alarm in an emergency in past 12 months	101	31%
Used once or twice in an emergency	63	60%
Used three or more times in an emergency	43	40%
Emergency has resulted in an ambulance and or hospital admission	39	36%
Used alarm not in an emergency	55	17%

Table 1.0

Table 1.0 shows that a third of respondents have used their alarm in an emergency in the past 12 months with nearly two thirds using once or twice, whilst over a third used it three or more times in an emergency. Approximately one third of those using their alarm in an emergency resulted in an ambulance being called and / or a hospital admission. A fifth of respondents used their alarm in a non-emergency situation, largely the “I’m OK” button available for residents at Lark Hill.

Examples of citizens responses to the reason why they used their alarm in an emergency:-

“A man was knocking on my door and I was afraid he was trying to take my money. The operator didn't help. She told me to phone the police. He is now in prison”.

“At 96 I am very frail and my balance is poor. I mainly call after a fall as I am unable to get back up”.

“Collapse following discharge from surgery resulting in head injury. 999 for ambulance - admitted to QMC overnight”.

“I have seizures and have to press / pull for help”.

The rest of the analysis of responses compares the responses given by all respondents compared to the responses to those who stated they have used their alarm in an emergency.

2.2 Receipt of social care, Housing Benefit and disability benefits

Category	All responses	Used alarm in an emergency
In receipt of a long term social care service	13%	20%
In receipt of Housing Benefit	52%	49%
In receipt of disability benefits	31%	46%

Table 2.0

Table 2.0 shows that 13% of sheltered alarm users state they receive long term social care, whilst 52% of them receive Housing Benefit. This is lower than the projected numbers for those receiving social care and Housing Benefit – for Housing Benefit this is explained by the number of home owners living at Lark Hill.

When looking at those citizens who have used their alarm in an emergency in the past year there is a higher number who state they receive social care and disability benefits. This is not surprising as frailer, more vulnerable citizens are more likely to be disabled and receive social care as well as need to use their alarm in an emergency.

2.3 Preferred funding option

Category	All responses	Used alarm in an emergency
Stop alarm subsidy	7%	8%
Retain alarm subsidy – social care eligibility	22%	28%
Retain alarm subsidy – Housing Benefit eligibility	25%	16%
Stated another funding option	13%	11%
Stated funding arrangements should remain as they are.	33%	37%

Table 3.0

Table 3.0 shows that of the 3 options presented there is a slight preference with introducing an eligibility criteria for Housing Benefit however with long term social care getting a similar level of response. Unsurprisingly more citizens stated that they would prefer no change to the existing arrangements. However it should be noted that the residents of Lark Hill received an accompanying letter suggesting they could request the arrangements stay the same and this will have increased the numbers suggesting this as an option.

When looking at the responses from those citizens who have used their alarm in an emergency the clear preference is also for no change but in terms of the options presented an eligibility criteria of being in receipt of social care is preferred.

2.4 Receiving additional support

Category	All responses	Used alarm in an emergency
Receives additional support	37%	61%
Support worker / personal care / carers	41%	55%
Scheme manager / Ranger	18%	22%
Equipment	15%	8%

Table 4.0

Table 4.0 shows that 37% of residents state that they receive additional support to the alarm system in their home, which also shows that 63% receive no additional support. Of those who stated they do receive additional support the majority receive support from carers or a support worker, although many state that this is self-funded. A similar amount of residents also receive support from the scheme manager / Ranger or from equipment.

When looking at those citizens who have used their alarm in an emergency a greater number receive additional support and this is mostly through support workers or carers. This is expected with a greater number of them being in receipt of social care.

2.5 Impact of proposals

Category	All responses	Used alarm in an emergency
Financial / additional costs	32%	32%
None / no real impact	21%	10%
Alarm is needed	16%	20%
Anxiety / feel vulnerable or unsafe	13%	20%

Table 5.0

Table 5.0 shows that a third of respondents state the impact of the proposal would be financial or leaving them with additional costs, and this is the same for those residents who have used their alarm in an emergency. A fifth of respondents felt the proposals would have no impact on them but this is greatly reduced by those who used their alarm in an emergency. A fifth of those who used their alarm in an emergency stated they would feel anxious, vulnerable or unsafe with the proposals, with those who hadn't less so.

NB. Many respondents who stated what the impact would be, including those stated they needed their alarm, appeared to do so on the basis that the alarm service would be removed. The letter to residents explaining the consultation and options available was explicit that removing the alarm was not being considered.

2.6 Affect if potential charge

Category	All responses	Used alarm in an emergency
Can't afford / less money / extra costs	43%	46%
Happy to / have to pay to retain alarm	13%	11%
Not affected / not much impact	13%	11%

Table 6.0

Table 6.0 shows again that finances is an issue for many respondents with 43% stating that if they were asked to pay a charge they wouldn't be able to afford it or would have less money / face extra costs – more so for those who have used the alarm in an emergency. 13% of respondents said they would not be affected if were asked to pay for their alarm, with a similar number stated that they would pay to retain the alarm service.

2.7 Equality Impact

Category	All responses	Used alarm in an emergency
Aged 65+	84%	93%
Consider yourself disabled	42%	58%
Are White British	87%	89%
Did not have help to complete form	69%	55%

Table 7.0

The demographic responses are as expected and indicate that the majority of respondents were aged over 65, just under half are disabled and two thirds did not have help in completing the questionnaire. There is a largely White British demographic living in sheltered / independent living schemes. For citizens who stated they used their alarm in an emergency more of them are disabled, are aged 65+ and needed help completing the questionnaire.

3.0 Comparison of responses / citizen profile compared to dispersed alarm consultation

In understanding the use of / need for an alarm service for citizens living in sheltered / independent living schemes a comparison with those with a dispersed alarm living in the community has been considered. This is following a similar review of alarm funding for those living in the community carried out in 2017 with citizens being invited to complete a similar questionnaire. The main comparisons are in the table below:-

Alarm use	Sheltered	Dispersed
Used their alarm in an emergency	31%	42%
Used alarm in an emergency 3 or more times	40%	46%
Emergency alarm resulted in ambulance / hospital admission	36%	42%
Used alarm not in an emergency	17%	14%
Impact of proposals	Sheltered	Dispersed
Financial / costs	32%	39%
Anxiety / feel vulnerable or unsafe	13%	14%
Not affected / no impact	21%	9%
Alarm is needed	16%	9%
Willing to / have to pay	2%	15%
Citizen demographics	Sheltered	Dispersed
Aged 65+	84%	76%
Describes as disabled	42%	86%
Needed no help completing form	69%	37%

Table 8.0

The comparison between citizens with a sheltered alarm and those with a dispersed alarm in the community shows that citizens with a dispersed alarm used their alarm more often in an emergency, and it is more likely that the emergency alarm use will result in the citizen needing an ambulance or a hospital admission.

In term of impact a higher number of dispersed alarm users stated they were concerned about the costs, a similar number living in sheltered and with a dispersed alarm felt anxious or vulnerable, a higher number living in sheltered stated they would be not be affected by the proposals but also stating they needed their alarm, and a much higher number of those with a dispersed alarm stated a willingness to pay.

In terms of demographics citizens who live in sheltered / independent living are older, however half of many of them state they are disabled as well as needing help in completing the questionnaire.

NB. The citizen consultation for dispersed alarms proposed a single option to introduce an eligibility criteria to continue to receive a subsidised alarm service with those no longer eligible needing to self-fund to retain their alarm service, with citizens being asked directly if they would be willing to pay to retain their alarm service. The sheltered / independent living consultation sets out three options for the funding of subsidised alarms for housing providers although perhaps implies that whichever option might be selected some / all citizens could be asked to pay a charge.

4.0 Conclusions

The citizen responses to the proposal to revise the funding for alarm provision in sheltered / independent living indicate the following:-

- Nearly 70% of citizens have not used their alarm in an emergency in the last year;
- Those who did use their alarm in an emergency were almost twice as likely to use once or twice in the year than 3 or more times;
- Of those who did use their alarm in an emergency a third needed an ambulance or hospital admission;
- Of the options proposed in the consultation there is no clear preference (although more citizens stated they did not want things to change);
- Two thirds of citizens do not receive any other support to live independently;
- Impact on finances is the major concern raised by citizens.

Looking at the responses provided by those living in sheltered / independent living who had used their alarm in an emergency they are more likely to be in receipt of social care and disability benefits, more preferred the option for social care as an eligibility criteria, were more likely to receive additional support, especially from support workers / carers, more would feel more vulnerable and unsafe, and more would be affected if a charge were to be introduced by the housing provider.

Comparing the consultation responses to the recent dispersed alarm, citizens living in the community with an alarm are more likely to use their alarm in an emergency, to use more often, and more likely to need an ambulance / hospital admission. Citizens in the community were more concerned about financial impact but also more were willing to pay for an alarm, with less stating they would be unaffected by changes to the current system. Twice as many citizens with an alarm in the community stated they were disabled and needed help completing the consultation questionnaire, although fewer were aged 65 and over.

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