

# Cabinet



Date of meeting:	11 August 2025
Title of Report:	Contract award for the provision of Community Equipment services
Lead Member:	Councillor Mary Aspinall (Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care)
Lead Strategic Director:	Gary Walbridge (Strategic Director for Adults, Health and Communities)
Author:	James Stannard (Market Improvement Manager)
Contact Email:	James.stannard@plymouth.gov.uk
Your Reference:	
Key Decision:	Yes
Confidentiality:	Part I - Official

## Purpose of Report

The purpose of the report is to propose an award of a contract for the provision of community equipment services in Plymouth.

Plymouth City Council and NHS Devon ICB jointly commission a Community Equipment Service (CES) for adults and children within the Plymouth City Council area or those on the outskirts if registered with a GP in Plymouth.

This service provides equipment relating to a prescribed, clinical need to support a person in their own home, including when they return from hospital. This includes equipment such as beds, mattresses and mobility aids. Equipment may be provided to support someone with a short-term need while they recover from illness, or longer term or permanent ill health.

There is a need to award a new contract for this essential service as the current provider (NRS) has informed local authorities they will become insolvent by 31<sup>st</sup> July 2025. A short-term contract for a period of 2 months was put in place with Millbrook between 1st August 2025 and 30th September 2025 to ensure the urgent continuation of the service over the summer and while further contract negotiations and planning could take place.

## Recommendations and Reasons

1. It is recommended to direct award a new contract for the provision of community equipment services to Millbrook Healthcare from 01 October 2025 until 31 January 2029.

*Reasons: There is an urgent need to ensure the continuity of the service to ensure that people are able to receive equipment to support their safety and wellbeing. This service is also critically important in ensuring that people are able to leave hospital safely with the equipment they need.*

*With the current provider entering into insolvency nationally, a large number of local authorities will be seeking to re-procure their community equipment services. This is likely to place a significant strain on providers to be able support engagement with multiple procurements. The duration of the contract will allow time for a redesign of the service to take place and a full procurement.*

*Millbrook has significant experience of providing services of this type. The company previously delivered the service in Plymouth and delivers the current service for Devon County Council. In addition Torbay Council is seeking to award a contract to Millbrook.*

## **Alternative options considered and rejected**

### **Ceasing to deliver the service:**

This option was rejected as the provision of equipment is a statutory service. The removal of the service would leave people who need equipment without support and also stop the essential maintenance of equipment which is currently in people's homes to help them to continue to live independently. This would present a significant safety and wellbeing risk.

### **Carrying out a full procurement:**

This option was rejected as there is a need to ensure the continuity of the service in Plymouth for the safety and wellbeing of the people who rely on it and a full procurement for a service of this complexity would take in the region of 3 years to fully review, redesign and procure the service.

### **Delivering the service in-house:**

This option was rejected as the resource and capability to deliver a service of this scale and complexity rapidly and safely does not exist currently. This is also likely to have been a more expensive option as experienced community equipment providers have well established relationships with equipment suppliers and often their own abilities to manufacture equipment.

### **Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or the Plymouth Plan**

This report aligns to the Corporate plan priorities of keeping children, adults and communities safe and working with the NHS to provide better access to health, care and dentistry.

This report aligns to the Plymouth Plan priority of supporting a Healthy City.

### **Implications for the Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:**

The provision of community equipment services is jointly funded by Plymouth City Council and NHS Devon ICB via the Better Care Fund with an estimated annual budget of £2.2m. Any changes to the funding allocation or pressures in terms of spend are jointly considered by the Strategic Director for Adults, Health and Communities with finance colleagues and partners from the ICB.

### **Financial Risks**

The budget for community equipment services is demand led and dependent on the number of adults and children who require equipment in any year. This also varies dependent on the type of equipment required, from smaller items such as bed rails to full hoist systems.

Commercial workshops have taken place with Millbrook as the proposed provider to consider the cost of the contract. It is recognised that Millbrook will incur some additional costs to support the rapid mobilisation of the new service and this will be monitored closely by Finance and commissioning staff in the Council and NHS Devon ICB. It is considered that this will be significantly lower when considered against the likely costs of directly providing the service in-house.

## Legal Implications

(Provided by R. Hargreaves)

It is understood that the direct award criteria under the Procurement Act 2023 have been considered as justified for this matter on the grounds of extreme urgency. This appears to be even more so given the Orders of the High Court of Justice, winding up the two NRS companies with effect from 8.28am on 1 August 2025.

## Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

Community equipment services are predominantly delivered within the city boundaries, to help people to be able to remain living independently in their own home. By aiming to deliver high quality services locally we will continue to review the opportunities to reduce the carbon footprint of the service, for example through deliveries, collections and the recycling of equipment.

## Other Implications: e.g. Health and Safety, Risk Management, Child Poverty:

*\* When considering these proposals members have a responsibility to ensure they give due regard to the Council's duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between people who share protected characteristics under the Equalities Act and those who do not.*

A key requirement of Children's and Adult Social Care is to consider Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion in the provision of care and support for those we work with. This includes consideration of the Equalities Act and how we are ensuring consistent and appropriate access to advice, care and support and equipment, including for those people and communities who may be seldom heard.

## Appendices

*\*Add rows as required to box below*

Ref.	Title of Appendix	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable) <i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A	Briefing report: Contract Award for the provision of Community Equipment services							
B	Contract Award for the provision of Community Equipment services – Part 2			X				
C	Equalities Impact Assessment							
D	Climate Impact Assessment							

## Background papers:

*\*Add rows as required to box below*

*Please list all unpublished, background papers relevant to the decision in the table below. Background papers are unpublished works, relied on to a material extent in preparing the report, which disclose facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the work is based.*

Title of any background paper(s)	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable)
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	If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
N/A							

Sign off:

Fin	ITG.2 5.26.0 48	Leg	LS/45 52(05 )/RH/ 3107 25	Mon Off	N/A	HR	N/A	Asset s	N/A	Strat Proc	JS/AHC/79 3/CP/0725
Originating Senior Leadership Team member: Gary Walbridge (Strategic Director for Adults, Health and Communities)											
Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes Date agreed: 01/08/2025											
Cabinet Member approval: Approved by Cllr. Mary Aspinall (Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care) verbally Date approved: 04/08/2025											