EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

DONCASTER METROPLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Due Regard Statement

How to show due regard to the equality duty in how we develop our work and in our decision making.

Due Regard Statement

A **Due Regard Statement** (DRS) is the tool for capturing the evidence to demonstrate that due regard has been shown when the council plans and delivers its functions. A Due Regard Statement must be completed for all programmes, projects and changes to service delivery.

- A DRS should be initiated at the beginning of the programme, project or change to inform project planning

- The DRS runs adjacent to the programme, project or change and is reviewed and completed at the relevant points

- Any reports produced needs to reference "Due Regard" in the main body of the report and the DRS should be attached as an appendix

- The DRS cannot be fully completed until the programme, project or change is delivered.

| 1 | Name of the 'policy' and briefly describe the activity being considered including aims and expected outcomes. This will help to determine how relevant the 'policy' is to equality. | **PSTN (Public Switched Telephone Network) Home Alarms and Schemes**

OpenReach, maintain and look after the cables and telephone exchanges which connect homes and business to internet and telephony. Individual package providers purchase capacity on these lines, re-bundle it and re-sell it to customers as part of telephone and internet packages to service users.

OpenReach are coordinating a national programme to switch analogue phone and network lines to digital lines by 2025. The exchanges that serve Doncaster (18 in total) are being migrated at different dates and are essentially put forward for migration to digital services when the homes that they serve reach threshold milestones for digital connectivity.

This programme means different geographical areas of the Doncaster Borough will begin switching over at different dates. These dates are published on the web on the Openreach site. Only 5 out of 18 exchanges have currently been put on notice of the digital transition (known as a stop sell date) and more will be released in the coming months and years.

The Home Alarms Service is maintained by HEART based in Adults, Health, and Wellbeing. It currently uses analogue telephone equipment to connect vulnerable service users to the Doncaster Council Alarm Receiving Centre in order to summon help for service users in an emergency. The digital switch over, therefore, has a significant impact on the service and its ability to maintain services to clients migrating from analogue to digital services. The service has explored options for new equipment and have the following aims and objectives;

Aims and Objectives for Home Alarms Service:
• Ensure home alarms are readily available and fit for purpose, to ensure people are safe, including vulnerable adults in the Doncaster area. |

- Ensure the service are adequately trained in any new home alarms/software technologies for deployment across the Doncaster community required to keep residents safe.

A solution is being secured to implement a roll out plan of new home alarms in the community (SMART Hubs with SIMs). These devices can handle both analogue calls (by their inbuilt mobile phone SIM card) and digital calls made via the internet. These new devices have an inbuilt 24-hour battery backup that the Council maintain and service, and can deal with internet and power outages. They work on both analogue and digital lines, and therefore support resident safety and wellbeing, and offer a future proof solution to the service.

Since August-September 2021, costings have been created based on a 12-14 month roll out plan to commence in November 2021, provided the appropriate capital and revenue funding is approved and accessed for the roll out.

Whilst there is no impact upon the current charging, there may be further consideration of reviewing this in the future.

There are equality implications only with a failure to implement the new technology. The existing provision over traditional phone lines is available to all. However, it is not available to those who do not have a phone line (unless they install one). This is likely to affect younger vulnerable individuals or the so called "silver surfer" generation who may be reliant on a mobile phone rather than a traditional land line. In effect, current service provisions, are adversely affecting younger populations with social care needs.

Implementing the newer technology makes the service more inclusive with a range of equipment to suit more individuals and their needs and lifestyles. In addition, because the newer technology uses WIFI or SIM card, it enables its installation in all places in the borough.

The digital upgrade itself, is likely to more adversely affect the service's older less technologically aware users with some likely unable to understand the digital switch

		process or what that means (or that they need to have an internet package in order to use the phone in future). This could lead to users inadvertently cancelling internet contracts and therefore, inadvertently ending their ability to make telephone calls. New smart devices remove this risk in that if this happens, the machines will move to mobile network coverage. The project proposed rolls out upgrades to 4100 telecare lifeline machines across Doncaster over a 12-14 month period. The service will prioritize the installation of upgrades to those service users with machines that are experiencing issues followed by all those on Telephone Exchanges that have a notified date of "stop sell". (The date at which no new or changes to, existing analogue lines are available in an exchange area – this essentially is the trigger for the start of digital migration in an exchange area). Within those exchanges, users are being prioritized by need with the most vulnerable individuals being upgraded first.
2	**Service area responsible for completing this statement.**	Adults, Health and Wellbeing, Home Alarm Service (HEART)
3	**Summary of the information considered across the protected groups.**	*Protected user groups as defined by the Equalities Act 2010 are:* *Age, Disability, Race, Gender, Sexual Orientation, Religion and Belief, Maternity and Pregnancy, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership.* The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Statement for Doncaster Council states '*We recognise and value the benefits of diversity and inclusiveness in our communities where we strive to improve the quality of life for all.*' The council is clear about championing equality. At Doncaster Council, promoting equality of opportunity, equal pay, eliminating discrimination and building cohesive and inclusive communities is about making life better for our residents, service users, customers and employees. The Home Alarm Service is a universal non-statutory service which is available to every person in Doncaster. Any individual of any age, need or background may refer themselves to the service to receive a basic telecare package (a telecare lifeline and

pendant) which is subject to charges agreed annually by the Council. Users with advanced telecare needs are referred to assessment professionals in either the Council or the NHS or its partners, and receive a tailored needs assessment to put in telecare specific for them. These are again subject to the same charges as agreed by the Council annually.

In this way, the service provides bespoke support to individuals giving them a choice of service provision. Users can be connected to our Calls Monitoring service – where telecare is installed and monitored by the Council's Alarm Receiving Centre but where the emergency contacts of the service users are called (along with the emergency services) should there be an issue, fall or emergency that cannot be resolved by the Alarm Receiving Centre staff. Users with higher needs or no other local support, can opt to receive our Response package where members of Council staff attend the property in an emergency to assist service users who have fallen.

Previously, the service has only been available to those users that have a telephone line in their property. Where users did not have one, they were requested to install one before any telecare could be installed. This was becoming prohibitive to a small number of individuals who did not want to install a landline and moves were started earlier this year to look at solutions that were suitable for all, regardless of their home situation. These digital smart solutions fit this need.

In the roll out of this project, users who are experiencing issues with the telecare equipment due to the digital switch over will be prioritised as they are at the highest risk of service unavailability due to technological issues. Users will be prioritised for upgrade then, by telephone exchange area (migrating those where the digital switch is imminent first to prevent as much risk exposure as possible) with individuals of this highest vulnerability prioritised first within those groups.

Vulnerability / risk has been assessed using information provided by the service users. This information is gathered on installation of the telecare equipment and is updated whenever there is a change to the equipment or whenever maintenance occurs. This information does contain protected medical information about the service users' medical

		conditions that could affect treatment in an emergency and details of the major medications. Users with high risk illnesses such as Dementia, Alzheimer's, those prone to falls or with conditions that likely lead to falls, those on medications such as blood thinners etc. that mean any fall could result in severe internal bleeding and those with the most frequent contact with the service are being prioritised but it should be noted that no service user in receipt of the service is considered to be "low risk", hence the urgency of the rollout of this project.
4	**Summary of the consultation/engagement activities**	**Consultation:** **No external consultation with service users has been undertaken as part of this proposed project. This is being done to safeguard vulnerable service users.** The aim of internal consultation has been to share knowledge and create recommendations and a plan to approach a response to the impact of the digital switchover on the Home Alarms Service and mitigate any risks to residents through a timely equipment switchover. The range of consultees included:- 1. Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council Colleagues across: • Legal • Procurement • Finance • Communications • Senior Leadership and Management • IT 2. Externally • Other local authorities • Some providers of internet/telephony • The Local Government Association • Home Alarm Equipment Providers

5	**Real Consideration:** **Summary of what the evidence shows and how has it been used**	The Home Alarm Service (HEART) completed a risk analysis of all recipients of the service. This analysis was carried out and resulted in categorisation of individuals by risk level, to ensure a prioritised response can be made to ensure these individuals have functioning home alarm equipment. The risk analysis was based from records of (Health conditions and medication) and the frequency of contact with the council. There are currently five areas of the borough which are due to go through the analogue to digital line switchover between October 2021 and August 2022, the service have checked where recipients of the service sit, to plan a response and roll out of the new home alarm equipment, prioritising the areas switching over first. This risk assessment will be updated throughout to ensure that anyone with increasing service needs or increasing health risks are picked up and their priority changed as the work continues.
6	**Decision Making**	*An ODR was produced 07/10/21, going through sign off procedure for the initial outlay of spends for the roll out of the new home alarm equipment, covering staffing costs. A full key decision process is underway to secure funds for the full replacement of equipment across the borough.*
7	**Monitoring and Review**	The responsibility for the monitoring and review of the arrangements will remain with the Assistant Director of Adult Social Care in the first instance. Regular updates will be delivered to elected members
8	**Sign off and approval for publication**	*To be completed following the approval to implement the home alarm replacement plan.*