

COMMUNITY EQUIPMENT SERVICE UPDATE

Relevant Board Member(s)	Sandra Taylor – Corporate Director, Adult Social Care and Health
Organisation	London Borough of Hillingdon
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Papers with report	None

HEADLINE INFORMATION

Summary	This report is to brief the Board on the changes to the provider of the Community Equipment Service from NRS Healthcare to Medequip Assistive Technology Limited. The change has arisen due to the liquidation of NRS Healthcare. The report also explains that the Council has left the London Community Equipment Consortium and made alternative arrangements to ensure the health and safety of residents.
Contribution to plans and strategies	The Community Equipment Service (CES) contributes to the delivery of the 2025/26 Better Care Fund Plan and ensures compliance with local authority duties under the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act, 1970, and the Care Act, 2014. It also ensures compliance with NHS responsibilities under the National Health Service Act, 2006.
Financial Cost	The CES contract budget reflected in the 2025/26 BCF plan is £2,136k.
Ward(s) affected	All

RECOMMENDATION

That the Health and Wellbeing Board notes the content of the report and questions officers to address any queries or concerns it may have.

INFORMATION

1. This report concerns arrangements to ensure continuation of the Community Equipment Service (CES) following the liquidation of the contracted provider, NRS Healthcare Limited (NRS). The report summarises actions taken and provides an update on the current position.
2. The Health and Wellbeing Board would not ordinarily be asked to consider a service specific report, but this matter is being brought to the Board's attention because of the critical importance of the service to the health and safety of Hillingdon's residents and its impact on the local health and care system.

Strategic Context

3. The CES supplies equipment ranging from raised toilet seats to electric profiling beds and hoists, key safes and handrails to support residents of all ages, although most users are people aged 65 and above. The scope of the contract with NRS included the supply, delivery, fitting and installation, adjustment, servicing and testing, collection, refurbishment, recycling and disposal of items of equipment.
4. The service has a critical part in supporting the continued independence of Hillingdon's residents who are living with a physical disability and/or a sensory impairment, which is predominantly people aged 65 and over. The provision of this service also supports the local health and care system by:
 - Supporting the independence, safety and quality of life of Hillingdon's residents of all ages.
 - Preventing A & E attendances and emergency admissions.
 - Facilitating earlier hospital discharge and reducing length of stay.
 - Reducing care costs by avoiding or delaying admission to residential care. It also supports unpaid carers and reduces the need for additional care workers.
 - Facilitating people at end of life being able to die at home when this is their preferred choice.
5. The Council acts as lead commissioner for the CES on behalf of the Integrated Care Board (ICB) and the NHS prescribers make the greatest use of the service, which is reflected in local risk share arrangements, i.e., 71% NHS and 29% local authority in 2025/26. NRS were awarded a five-year contract in June 2023, which was a call-off from a London borough consortium framework led by the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea (RBKC). As of 30 June 2025, there were 21 London boroughs and associated Integrated Care Boards that were members of the consortium.
6. As of 30 June 2025, there were 23,400 residents being supported by 206,872 items of equipment. In 2024/25, there were 10,400 residents referred by the NHS or social care (children and adults) prescribers for new equipment and/or who received repairs and planned preventative maintenance to existing equipment supplied to them.

NRS Liquidation and Service Provider Change

7. NRS went into liquidation on 1 August 2025 when the court appointed the Official Receiver (OR) as the liquidator. The OR offered a managed wind-down of the service rather than an immediate cessation of trading.
8. Medequip Assistive Technology Limited was able to offer both Hillingdon and Ealing a service based on geography as they have a depot already located at Heathrow. In response to alerts by NRS about their financial position, the Council's July 2025 Cabinet meeting agreed to award Medequip a contract for two years from 1 August 2025 with the option to extend for one further year. This is intended to give sufficient time for the detail of the longer-term service model to be determined and any required procurement activity to take place.
9. Hillingdon and Ealing represent one of the six groupings of boroughs and associated ICBs that have replaced the London consortium referred to in paragraph 5.
10. The Board is asked to note that the market for community equipment nationally is under-developed and has been dominated by three companies, Millbrook, Medequip Assistive Technology Limited and NRS. Before 1 August 2025, in London provision was split

between Medequip and NRS, with only three boroughs having alternative provision arrangements, such as a local authority trading company.

Interim Service Arrangements

11. The support offer from Medequip was to initially provide a limited service focused on equipment deliveries and installations intended to avoid admission to hospital and support discharge as well as to undertake repairs to equipment already supplied to residents in the community. These restrictions were introduced pending Medequip being able to increase its staffing capacity. The limited service started on 1 August 2025.
12. To support the limited service, a temporary reduced equipment catalogue was introduced with advice from senior leads from prescribing teams. The senior leads also provided nominations for a reduced list of authorised prescribers.
13. During the transition phase, the collection by Medequip of equipment no longer required by residents has been limited to the most urgent cases, e.g., end of life.

Full Service Implementation

14. Plans are in place for a full service that includes equipment supply, installation, collection, recycling and servicing (also known as planned preventative maintenance) to be in place from 8 September 2025. This will include expanding the catalogue of equipment available and incrementally increasing the number of people authorised to prescribe equipment.

Communication with Stakeholders

Northwest London ICB

15. Officers are liaising with the ICB's Programme Director, Integrated Care. The Board may wish to note that ICB emergency planning arrangements have now been stood down. These initially entailed twice weekly meetings with senior NHS provider leads across Hillingdon and other trusts supporting Hillingdon patients.

Prescribing Teams

16. Updates to prescribing teams going forward will be managed through an operational advisory group that has been established. This group will also coproduce the development of the catalogue, manage the list of authorised prescribers and oversee the budget and prescribing practice.

Equipment Users

17. Equipment users are informed of the changes via multiple channels including direct contact for servicing, care agencies and other home visiting teams, and an article in the Council magazine called *Hillingdon People* that goes to every household in the Borough. Resident support services such as the Hillingdon Advice Partnership have also been made aware of the new arrangements.

Contract Management

18. The Council is responsible for contract management and feedback from the operational leads group referred to previously will be used as part of the contract management process, as will service user experience.