Introduction

This report represents the results of two surveys conducted in late 2011, on two separate aspects of Carelink.

Section 1 reports results of an October 2011 survey of Carelink customers, looking at satisfaction levels among existing Carelink customers.

Section 2 reports results of an autumn 2011 survey of North Somerset residents (via the North Somerset Citizens' Panel) and updates information on how well-informed residents of North Somerset are about the Carelink service.

The Carelink service has had several developments over the period 2010-2011, including:

- in November 2010, the management of the Carelink service was transferred from North Somerset Council to Agilisys, who are now running the service on behalf of the council.
- the service received a grant of £80,000 from central government in early 2010 to increase the uptake of the service ('funded marketing activity')

These developments occurred independently and they are shown diagrammatically in Fig 1.

Fig 1.

There were two surveys in 2010 about Carelink services in North Somerset (light blue in Fig 1). They are:

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1 This grant was part of the Customer Led Transformation (CLT) Programme, overseen by the Local Government Delivery Council (supported by Local Government Improvement and Development). For more information on the programme, see http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageld=29004656
• A Citizens' Panel survey (March 2010) of resident’s use of and attitudes to Carelink in March 2010. This was designed to inform the funded marketing campaign\(^2\).

• A customer satisfaction survey of existing Carelink customers in October 2010\(^3\).

This report presents the results of the two 2011 surveys (purple dotted lines in Fig 1) which were designed to update the 2010 figures. The 2011 surveys used methods designed to provide full comparability with their equivalent 2010 surveys.

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\(^2\) For full details of the October 2010 customer satisfaction survey, see http://consult.n-somerset.gov.uk/consult.ti/css2010/consultationHome
\(^3\) For full details of the spring 2010 Citizens’ Panel, see http://consult.n-somerset.gov.uk/consult.ti/CitPanSpr2010_Carelink/consultationHome
Main findings
Overall, the customer satisfaction survey results show that there are high levels of customer satisfaction with Carelink service.

At least 98% of customers (who expressed a definite opinion) are satisfied with four of the five aspects asked about:
- overall with the quality of service they receive from Carelink
- how easy it was to sign-up to
- staff helpfulness
- the equipment being user-friendly.

91% of customers (who expressed a definite opinion) find the service is good value for money.

One of the main findings is that: while the overall satisfaction figures (combining very satisfied and fairly satisfied) are stable 2010-2011. Within this, the proportion of customers who are very satisfied has dropped 2010 to 2011. It is unclear what is behind this statistically significant drop. There do not appear to be any service-issues raised by respondents. One possible explanation could be that a different interviewer was used in 2011 and 2010.

Satisfaction levels among new customers has not decreased since the service was transferred from North Somerset Council to Agilisys, who are now running the service on behalf of the council.

The Citizens’ Panel survey of residents shows that there have been large improvements in how well-informed residents are about three aspects of Carelink in 2011 compared to 2010. These aspects are:

- what Carelink costs
- how to get information about Carelink
- who provides Carelink.

There has been no change in the 69% percentage of residents who feel well-informed about ‘what Carelink is’.
1. Customer satisfaction survey 2011

1.1. Introduction

North Somerset Council has provided telecare/Carelink services since 1984. In this time there have been two surveys of customer satisfaction, the first one in October 2010 as part of gaining accreditation to the industry body, the Telecare Services Authority (TSA) and the second one here, in October 2011.

In 2011, partly to achieve comparability with the 2010 survey, we continued with the 2010 ‘TSA survey’ format⁴. We randomly sampled 109 of our 2,176 Carelink customers⁵. This provides a ‘margin of error’ of around ±5% on most figures in this report⁶.

Fieldwork was:
- by telephone
- carried out 15 October to 17 November 2011
- spread across the day (between 9am and 5pm).

The 2011 survey figures are compared to a similar survey which was conducted in 2010, using comparable methods though a larger sample size (n=329)⁷.

Interviewers were briefed and monitored by the Council’s Customer Insight Team. Interviewers recorded interviews directly into SNAP (survey software).

1.2. Overall satisfaction with quality of service received

98% of customers are satisfied overall (very or fairly satisfied) ‘with quality of service received from Carelink’. When we remove the ‘don’t know’ responses, the figure is 99% satisfied. This compares to 99% of customers who were satisfied in 2010.

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⁴ The TSA specifies a number of things including a sample of at least 5% of customers, a target of 90% satisfaction and some minimum content regarding quality, speed of response etc. That fieldwork should be carried out by trained callers and such calls supervised for quality control.

⁵ 5% of the eligible customer base equals 109 customers. @eligible customer base: from the entire customer base of 2,621, certain categories of customer were systematically removed from the sampling frame (445 in total) for practical reasons or confidentiality/security reasons (e.g. no-contact request). 250 customers were selected from the remaining 2,176 by simple random sample and 117 of these were attempt-contacted before achieving the 109 respondents.

⁶ At 95% confidence interval. The ±5% figure applies to figures in the 90%:10% range (covering most headline results in this survey). Maximum margin of error is ±9.15% for figures in 50%:50% range.

⁷ For full details of the 2010 customer satisfaction survey, see http://consult.n-somerset.gov.uk/consult.ti/css2010/consultationHome
1.2.1 Drop in ‘very satisfieds’
However, behind this topline similarity, there has been a fall in the percentage of customers who are very satisfied (and an equivalent increase in the percentage of fairly satisfieds), 2010 to 2011.

Fig 2.

It is unclear what has driven this drop in very satisfieds. At the end of the interview respondents were asked if they had any comments or suggestions about Carelink. Almost all of the comments reflect the overwhelmingly satisfied customer base, for example:

“Excellent service, I have no complaints.”
“It is a wonderful service and provides a great comfort.”
“The service is a lifeline, I am very happy.”

Only two of the 108 comments from respondents raised specific aspects of dissatisfaction (albeit both from customers who had rated themselves very satisfied with the service):

“Would like the response to be quicker, it seems to take a long time to speak to someone after I press the button”
“When upstairs the sound can be muffled and I can’t always be heard”

8 For a full list of verbatim responses, see Section 1.7.
While these are useful, the lack of any consistent widespread message from the free text responses suggests there are no particular substantive issues driving the proportion of ‘very dissatisfieds’ down 2010 to 2011.

The results have been analysed to rule out any other substantive issues such as newly-joined customers being more or less satisfied than longer-standing customers. This suggests the best explanation may lie in ‘survey’ rather than ‘Carelink service’ issues.

Both the 2010 and 2011 surveys used the same sampling method and methodology and very similar questionnaires. So, there are two other possible explanations for the drop in the percentage of ‘very satisfieds’:

1. something in the air; something like weather or economic conditions make respondents more likely to say they are less satisfied about an ‘objectively’ identical experience. There is no evidence e.g. from other council surveys that this influenced results.

2. the main thing that changed from the 2010 to 2011 survey was that a different interview was used in 2011. While, in both years the interviewer was trained and supervised and, in neither year were there any problems or observed differences, it could be that subtly different personality or communication styles tended to generate the different results.
1.3. Satisfaction with value for money
80% of customers say that Carelink is value for money. This is a decrease from 2010 when the figure was 91%.

The percentage saying it doesn’t provide value for money has increased only from 5% to 7%.

Fig 3.

Do you think the service is good value for money?

- Yes: 80% (2010: 91%)
- No: 7% (2010: 5%)
- Don’t know: 13% (2010: 4%)

The main shift has been the increase in ‘don’t knows’, up from 4% to 13%.

An explanation for the large percentage of customers not knowing whether the service is good value for money may be that some of the respondents were unable to remember what they pay and for some of them their families pay for the service. In addition, the upfront installation charge was scrapped in April 2010, removing a key visible charge. One customer responded that she did not know whether it was good value for money as she had “made no payment yet”.

7
If we remove don’t knows from the analysis the situation looks more stable 2010 to 2011, with no statistically significant change.

Fig 4.

Do you think the service is good value for money?
(% of customers, valid responses, excluding 'don't knows')

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The comments from respondents saying that Carelink is not value for money are:
“Never used the button, lots of money to pay for something you don’t use.”
“Wish it was cheaper.”
“Had it for a long time and it’s getting more expensive.”
1.4. Satisfaction with ease of signing up

In the 2011 survey, 99% of customers say they found signing up to Carelink easy. This figure includes 61% of customers who said they found the process very easy. Again, the difference between the 2010 and 2011 figures is the proportion of those saying ‘very easy’ and ‘easy’.

Fig 5.

97% in 2010 found the process of signing up to Carelink very easy, compared 61% in 2011. For discussion of this issue, see section 1.2.1 above.
1.5. Helpfulness of Staff

100% of customers who responded to the 2011 survey said that they found the staff at Carelink to be helpful. This figure includes 68% of customers who said very helpful.

Fig 6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very helpful</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helpful</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not helpful</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not very helpful</td>
<td>&lt;0.5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Again, the main difference between the 2010 figures and the 2011 figures is the change of customers finding staff helpful and very helpful. See section 1.2.1 for a discussion of this.

Comments made by the customers about the staff are:

“The staff are always polite and helpful”

“Staff are wonderful”

“Staff are lovely and always very helpful”
1.6. User-friendliness of equipment

94% said that they have found the Carelink equipment very user friendly. If we exclude the ‘don’t know’ responses, 99% say very user friendly. This compares with the 100% saying so in 2010.

Fig 7.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How user friendly is the equipment?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(% of customers, valid responses, excluding 'don't knows')</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very user friendly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not very user friendly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The probable reason for a large percentage (6%) of respondents saying ‘don’t know’ in 2011 is probably lack of experience of using the equipment.

“Not had to use it.”
“Never had to use it.”

There were seven other comments relating to efficiency of the equipment, though all of these come from people who described the equipment as very user friendly, suggesting these are niggles rather than important issues for them.

“I find the pendant slightly bulky.”
“System does not always work; staff can’t always hear what I say.”
“I would prefer a bracelet”.
“Very happy, I don’t like the neck one, I would prefer a wristband.”
“Need a new pendant, clip has broken. Some interference with the system and telephone.”
“I am unable to hear staff when I pressed the button in the bedroom”.
“Wrist band is frayed, replacement requested.”
1.7. Suggestions for Improvement

98% of people who responded to the survey said “no” when asked whether they had any suggestions about how the service could be improved. Their comments together with any other comments made by respondents in the course of the interview are presented verbatim below. Only substantive comments have been included (i.e. the numerous ‘no’ [suggestions to make] comments are excluded).

Doesn't need to improve
Can't improve the service
No, happy with the service
Would like the response to be quicker, it seems to take a long time to speak to someone after I press the button
No. Very pleased
Yes, make installation free.
Yes, when upstairs the sound can be muffled and I can't always be heard.
Daughter set is up for return from hospital, confident that someone is there to help. Very satisfied
I have recomended to friend. I find it trouble free
Not had to use it.
Staff always pleasant.
Valuable lifeline
Important so I can remain independent
Service is a great peace of mind to family and friends. Makes me feel safe in my own home.
Peace of mind for my family
Very happy.
Excellent service, I have no complaints.
Made no payment yet.
I find the pendant slightly bulky.
It is a wonderful service and provides a great comfort.
Still getting use to the system but happy with it so far, staff are always pleasant.
Wrist band is frayed, replacement requested.
There for an emergency
Pleased with the service.
Very happy with service
Feels safe.
The service is a lifeline, I am very happy
I am very happy with the service
I'm Very Happy
Never had to use it.
I would prefer a bracelet.
Very happy, service brings peace of mind to me and my family
I don't use it often
I'm very pleased
Very happy with the staff
I have recommended to my friends.
Relief to have.
Never used the button, lots of money to pay for something you don't use.
Family peace of mind.
Very pleased, wonderful service.
Doesn't use the button often
Very happy, but I need a new pendant.
Service is a lifeline
Never had to use it but is reassuring to have.
Very happy, I don't like the neck one, I would prefer a wristband.
Would like to know whether pendant is waterproof.
Very happy
Very grateful for the help and the service
System does not always work, staff can't always hear what I say.
Had it for a long time, getting more expensive but it provides peace of mind.
I have recommended it to friends, means I can feel safe in my own home
Need a new pendant, clip has broken. Some interference with the system and telephone
It's not very pretty but the staff are very helpful.
Very happy
Happy with the service
Excellent service, staff are wonderful.
Very happy
I am unable to hear staff in the bedroom when pressed the button.
Staff are lovely and always very helpful
Been using it for a long time, happy with the service, added security.
I am very happy, the staff are always polite and helpful.
Very useful, Very happy with staff and service
1.8. When signed up for Carelink

Responses to the survey were analysed according to when respondents signed up to the service.

Generally those who had signed-up more recently are more likely to be satisfied on most of the survey questions. However, those who signed up in the period of the funded marketing campaign and before the transfer to Agilysis (Apr-Oct 2010) were slightly less 'satisfied' than those who had signed up before then or since then.

These figures have to be considered as very tentative because:

a) base sizes are low per period (about 18 respondents who had signed up in the period of the funded marketing campaign)

b) ‘when signed up’ is of limited use as a time marker as respondents were all current customers who may have accessed the service at any (or no) point since they originally signed up. So their key experience of Carelink (if any) may relate to any subsequent time point or points, all points being unknown.
2. Public perceptions of Carelink

2.1. Introduction

This section presents the results of a survey of adults in North Somerset conducted in September and October 2011. Some respondents to this survey could be Carelink respondents, others not – respondents were not profiled according to this.

The survey was the North Somerset Citizens' Panel survey (autumn 2011). It ran from 5 September to 14 October 2011. It involved a sample of adult (16 and over) residents of North Somerset. This sample of 1,305 are people recruited onto the Citizens' Panel via probability ('random') invitation. The base population is the 16 and over population of North Somerset.

Of the 1,305 panel members 719 responded to the autumn 2011 survey, a response rate of 55%.

The survey concentrated on the topic of rubbish and recycling. It included a few other questions, including two questions on Carelink, asking how informed people feel about four aspects of Carelink and how important they felt it was to be informed about Carelink.

These two questions were originally asked on a Citizens' Panel survey in spring 2010 and were repeated 18 months later, in autumn 2011, after the funded marketing campaign. The aim was partly to quantify the extent to which the funded marketing campaign has increased public informed-ness about Carelink, especially among those who feel it’s important to be informed about it.
2.2. Informed-ness about Carelink
Levels of informed-ness have increased for three of the four aspects measured, namely:

- what Carelink costs
- how to get information about it
- who provides Carelink.

Fig 8.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2010 (Very or fairly well informed)</th>
<th>2011 (Not very or not at all well informed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What it does</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What it costs</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to get information</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who provides these kind</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of things</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There has been no change in the issue which people already felt most informed about what Carelink-type services do ("what it does" in Fig 8).

Across these four aspects, the groups with above average levels of informed-ness are:

- the over 75s
- disabled people
- carers
- flat dwellers
- North Somerset Mosaic Group J.

Across these four aspects, the groups with below average levels of informed-ness are:

- under 45s
- employed full time
• retired
• Portishead and rural areas
• (tentatively) North Somerset Mosaic Group A, C, D and I.

Whereas in spring 2010, below average levels of informed-ness were associated with low income, this does not seem to be the case in 2011.

2.3. Importance of being informed
Clearly Carelink is not for everyone, so it is important to provide the service (and information about the service) mainly to those with a need, or likely imminent need, for it.

As a proxy for measuring need we measured the percentage of people who consider it important to be well informed about Carelink type services. These figures have hardly changed 2010 to 2011, with around two thirds of adults saying they think it is important to be well informed about Carelink type services.

As in 2011, those most likely to say its important are:
• older people (increases with age)
• carers
• disabled people
• lower income households
• residents of the most deprived wards
• flat dwellers
• North Somerset Mosaic Groups C D and J.
Fig 10 shows what percentage of those who think it is important to be well informed about Carelink type services in general do feel well informed about specific aspects of it. So, in 2011, 72% of those who feel it is very or fairly important to be well-informed about this type of service (on the basis of a brief description), do consider themselves very or fairly well-informed about it what it does'.

Levels of informed-ness (among this key group) have improved markedly for three of the four aspects discussed.

Fig 10.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What it does</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What it costs</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to get information about it</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who provides these kind of things</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The increase is clearest for ‘what it costs’ which perhaps reflects a focus in the funded marketing campaign to:
- simplify the cost structure
- reduce costs (e.g. scrapping the installation fee)
- include cost information in all marketing material.
Appendix A: number of Carelink customers

Carelink customer numbers were increasing slowly from 1984 to 2010. The start of the funded marketing saw a steep rise in customer numbers. That trajectory has been partly maintained since the end of the funded marketing campaign.

North Somerset: number of carelink customers May 2008 to Dec 2011

- A: Carelink web pages and leaflet redesigned (Sep/Oct 2009)
- B: Customer Insight project starts (funding received, recruitment completed, preparatory work starts Jan 2010)
- C: Large scale and concerted marketing activity gets going (Apr/May 2010)

2,679 customers (at 19/12/2011)

- 474 'extra' customers (i.e. 21% extra than if 'natural' growth rate had been maintained)