



Essex Rapid Care Technology Deployment

April 2020

Introduction and FAQs for Care Providers

Essex County Council is working in partnership with [Alcove](#) and [RETHINK Partners](#) to launch a new, fast-paced technology enabled service as part of our response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic has led the government to take measures to encourage social isolation and slow the spread of the disease. However, ECC still has a responsibility to its vulnerable residents to:

- Protect them from risk of infection, so far as is possible
- Support them to self-isolate
- Enable them to continue receiving necessary care and support

Therefore the **Essex Rapid Care Technology Deployment** will enable the Council, adult social care and care providers to quickly deliver care to residents through a virtual care model, while ensuring people continue to remain safe and well at home without exposing them to infection. It will also ensure that care workers and their families will be protected from infection and can continue to work during this time.

This is a very real and current issue as the homecare market are already facing largely depleted staff numbers meaning that total care hours being provided are well under those commissioned.

The effectiveness of the service will depend very much on partnership working with you – our local care providers. The intention is that residents who receive the service will be able to receive care virtually through the portal for identified tasks that don't require hands on support.

We are moving fast to roll-out this option locally and we are therefore very keen to work with you from the outset so that you, your businesses and your staff know what is being planned and how you can make best use of the technology and the service.

We hope that the information below starts to answer some initial questions. We will be inviting providers directly involved to attend a **full video briefing session** and Q&A as appropriate.

1. What is the Alcove Video Carephone?

Essex Rapid Care Technology Deployment is a new virtual care service that we are rolling-out to appropriate people in our communities as part of our response to COVID-19.

It includes the rapid delivery of an **Alcove Video Carephone** - an integrated, easy-to-use care device - which will allow care providers and family members to check-in on people through a virtual care model.

This will reduce the need for hands-on care, aid social distancing, keep care workers who are self-isolating working and support emerging need related to COVID-19.

Care workers and family members will be given access to a portal through an app, to be able to call into the Video Carephone and keep track of Video Carephone activity to ensure the recipient is staying well.

2. How does it work?

The Alcove **Video Carephone** allows care workers, family members and other approved services to be able to contact the recipient and vice versa through a video call.

It is like a telephone but with a screen and pre-programmed call tiles for easy use. By clicking on a tile on the **Video Carephone**, the recipient can call their friends or family members, care workers or get general help and technical assistance as required.

The **Video Carephone** has a SIM card pre-installed so the recipient does not require WIFI - although WIFI is helpful as a back-up. The tiles will include:

- Formal care offer: care worker, day centre worker, CVS
- Informal carer: minimum of 1 – up to 3
- Alcove technical support
- Help@Home service (for selected users only)

Care workers and family members will be given access to an app and portal to be able to make reciprocal video calls and also keep track of activity to ensure the recipient is managing during this difficult time.

The **Video Carephone** has a number of additional functions which can be set up remotely including:

- Medication reminders
- Prompts and reminders about anything (e.g. getting dressed, drinking fluids)
- Video/virtual “Eyes-on” during a video call supports wellbeing, welfare, safety and safeguarding – these allow you to see any changes in service users, such as, if they are symptomatic
- Video allows professionals to double check service users have completed personal tasks, e.g. “have you applied your cream to your leg?” “have you eaten lunch?” and environmental indicators “have you fed the cat?”
- Reminders can pop up on the screen that users have to tap on, to accept completion of task
- Service users can have pre-programmed replies set up to respond to reminders if they wish, which they tap to send a response
- Alerts can be set up to notify carers or responders if people don’t respond to their pop-up reminders
- Texts can be sent to the device – such as “your carer is running late”
- Check-ins
- Devices are small enough for service users to carry them around their home

Full training will be provided on how to set these up.

3. Is the SIM card pre-installed and is it locked to network for coverage?

The device is run on a 4G roaming SIM so that it is not dependent on a single network. We do ask if the user has WIFI which is a helpful back up should we have signal issues. If a user receives the device and is unable to use it due to the network coverage, the device can be packaged back up and the courier can collect it; the kit can then be cleaned and redeployed elsewhere.

4. Who will be receiving the devices?

The devices will be delivered directly to people's homes by Alcove so you are not involved in the hardware at all. At the moment, Essex County Council is identifying the most appropriate people to receive this device, and will be working directly with the staff involved to ensure they are aware of the service and how it works.

We are initially focusing on three priority groups:

a) Essex Welfare Service (Operation Shield - Shielding residents)

- Known to adult social care
- In receipt of care: prioritising those with care reduced therefore increased risk
- Minimal/Fragile informal care network
- Care amenable to virtual care tasks
- Very high risk of serious illness as a result of Covid-19 (Cat A)

b) Community care provision (LAH, day care, LD&A, MH)

- Lower need service users – to release capacity for higher need users
 - Green cohort – domiciliary care care: OP, MH, LD/A (PSI, ABI to follow)
 - Minimal/Fragile informal care network
 - Amenable to virtual care tasks
- To follow on:*
- Amber domiciliary care
 - Other services: day ops, independent living, supported living, extra care

c) Reablement: new starts to maintain flow

- lower need service users

Within these groups we are prioritising people who do not have access to mainstream technology.

We are also open to considering service users with a higher care need, if the Video Carephone will have a positive impact on reducing visits and contact.

People will be identified and approved by Essex County Council commissioning teams. However, we know that you have a great deal of knowledge about individual cases and are keen to involve you in identifying potential users for the service.

We are in the process of working out the detail, but we will ensure we have clear criteria and that a seamless referral process is in place for you.

5. How will recipients receive the device?

The Alcove Video Carephone will be delivered, without entering the home, to recipients together with a letter from Essex County Council and operating instructions. Once the recipient has plugged in their Video Carephone, they will be instructed to press the support button which will call Alcove's Technical Support.

A member of the Alcove team will talk the recipient through the process of setting up and provide answers and reassurance to any concerns they have. The recipient has access to the Alcove support line Monday – Friday 9am-5pm.

Care providers and their teams will receive an email from Alcove in order to be able to make reciprocal calls. They will also be given access to a portal to be able to track and log any activity.

Further information on how this will work will be given at the briefing sessions.

6. What equipment will we need?

Care Providers will need to ensure that virtual care workers have the following equipment:

- Reliable WIFI connection
- Laptop/desktop
- Headset

7. Can you do it on a mobile phone?

To ensure the professionalism of the service, we would encourage people to be sitting at a desk, with a laptop or tablet, with a headset.

A mobile phone isn't a professional device in which to give a virtual care call. It will not work very well if you get staff who are out delivering care calls and dipping in and out of virtual calls. The most beneficial way, is to identify 'super users' who can deliver the virtual care; hopefully they can be staff who would otherwise struggle to be at work at the moment.

8. Does it have to be a work device or a personal laptop?

The service is encrypted, so people can use a personal laptop or tablet, from the portal end you can see when staff logged in and made calls.

It is up to the providers to decide whether they are comfortable with staff doing this.

9. Can we get data and reporting from the calls?

Yes, you will be able to log in and see your own staff and service user activity; Alcove can also produce an extract file for you.

10. How is it different from using something like Skype or Facetime?

The Alcove Video Carephone is a standalone device and recipients will only need simple instructions in order to make it work. In addition, it will be delivered with a SIM card which means it doesn't rely on the recipient having WIFI to work – although this is a helpful back up.

Skype and Facetime require people having an existing tablet or smartphone and the ability to install and navigate the apps. This is not the case with the Video Carephone. It is already set up with the required software and locked down to maintain reliability.

You also won't have any interoperability issues as it is standalone device. Staff and virtual care workers will have access to a portal and app which they can use to access any of the additional functionality.

The software used in the Alcove Video Carephone is designed around care users and is specifically targeted at people with limited skills and no access to mainstream technology.

11. How safe and reliable is the technology?

Alcove Video Carephone technology has been in existence for over five years and there are 12,000 devices in use across the country.

Having a SIM card means that the connection is more reliable than WIFI and it provides more security for users. Virtual care workers, however, will need WIFI to make calls.

Virtual care workers and family members are added to a white list which ensures that only approved callers have access to the Video Carephone device to safeguard the user. It is GDPR compliant.

Any troubleshooting can be resolved remotely by the Alcove technical support team. If the Video Carephone is not appropriate for the recipient and they are unable to use the device, the ability to easily return and redeploy the device is available.

12. What are the timescales for roll-out?

The following timescales are in place:

- Essex County Council has purchased 2,000 devices to roll-out to people across the county in the next 10 weeks
- The first 200 will be rolled-out by the end of April
- Followed by 200 installations per week thereafter.

We are moving fast and at scale because we have to; please bear with us and flag early if there are issues that we need to resolve.

13. Why are we doing this now?

COVID-19 is putting pressure on everyone across the service and as care provision becomes at risk due to ill or isolated staff, we needed to find an alternative to face-to-face care.

This service ensures vulnerable adults still get the care and support they need while protecting staff from unnecessary exposure. It also allows them to continue to work at home, protecting income and means that they can continue to get paid during this time.

14. What if it doesn't fit in with our current delivery model?

Alcove and RETHINK partners have worked with other organisations on many schemes and we will share with you our experience of making best use of the technology, minimising disruption to your service delivery operations. We are used to evolving and troubleshooting to deliver a customised service, dependent on needs.

We will also work with you to find out how we can adapt your services and workforce planning to make best use of the Video Carephone and capture feedback on your experience of it.

15. Will this affect my income?

The service will not affect business income. One of the benefits is that it will allow care workers to work remotely and maintain income while numbers are diminished through illness or self-isolation. There is also no additional charge to service users.

16. What if I don't want to participate?

We are strongly encouraging all our contracted providers to use the service. We think it has real benefits for everyone: staff, managers and clients.

17. Sounds great - what should I do next?

Please look out for an email inviting you to attend briefing sessions as we roll out the technology.

Also it would be useful if you could consider:

- **Which of your staff are best suited to work in this way**
They don't need strong IT skills at all, but need to be chatty, friendly, organised, observant and professional
- **Your IT readiness**
Virtual care is best delivered through a laptop/computer screen to ensure professional interaction. Any staff delivering virtual care will also need a headset and WiFi.