

Telecare



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Telecare services for older people

This briefing is part of the Department of Health's prevention package, a key component of the government's strategy for an ageing society. The package aims to raise the focus on older people's prevention services and encourage their use, ultimately improving older people's health well-being and independence.

The right technology and related support services can help an older person continue living independently, in their own home, as safely as possible, stop them feeling isolated and offer reassurance they can cope.

What is telecare?

Telecare involves the use of electronic sensors and aids that make the home environment safer so that people can live at home, independently, for longer.

Types of device

Telecare devices range from those where the user presses a button that raises an alert at a remote control centre, to systems that monitor the person's well-being and/or environment and trigger a warning that the person's well-being may have deteriorated or that an untoward event has occurred. In some cases alarms are locally terminated and alert a partner or family member rather than going through to a call centre.

Examples of telecare devices include the following.

- Home hub units. These are in effect the communicator and control centres in the home, designed specifically to meet the needs of clients with complex and evolving health and social care monitoring requirements. Hubs link to a number of telecare devices such as temperature sensors, fall detectors and enable high clarity hands free speech. Should a device be activated, a typical scenario would be for a call centre to phone the service user. Service users can answer by hitting a button on the hub or on their pendant which they carry with them. Every installation is tailored to the needs of an individual and so the types and numbers of sensors will vary for each client. The unit will dial a monitoring centre when any of the telecare devices are triggered.

- Telecare sensors such as bed sensors (pressure mats that detect if a chair or bed is occupied) and fall detectors help monitor personal health and well-being of users.
- Environmental sensors allow certain environmental conditions to be monitored and include smoke alarms, carbon monoxide detectors and natural gas detectors. Some safety devices prevent floods if taps are left running and auto cut off of gas supply if a flame is not present.
- Call centres have protocols for who to call and in what sequence when an alarm goes off. For sensors such as smoke detectors the service user will be contacted first, then a carer, friend or family member and the emergency services will be the final point of contact if none of the above can be contacted.
- Safety and security devices include bogus caller buttons and intruder alarms which can help give the user peace of mind as they can call for assistance if they think there is an intruder.

Related assistive technology

Other assistive technologies also enable people to live more independently or help them stay out of hospital.

- Telehealth uses electronic sensors or equipment to monitor people's health in their own home, such as equipment to monitor vital signs like blood pressure, blood oxygen levels or weight. These measures are automatically transmitted to a clinician who can observe the user's health status without the patient leaving home.
- Telemedicine uses sensors and electronic means of communication (usually from one clinician to another) to help with the diagnosis and management of health conditions. For example, a GP may consult with a consultant while the patient is present, using video conferencing arrangements.

How does telecare support older people?

Telecare is a personalised service, tailored to the needs of each person. Individuals will have an assessment prior to having any equipment installed so that they can see which telecare equipment will benefit them the most.

Many local authorities have decided to invest in telecare to support older people. The UK telecare sector is well established and served well by trade associations and manufacturers. The preventative technology grant established by the Department of Health in 2006 provided £80 million to encourage local authorities to provide

telecare to an additional 160,000 clients. Similarly, some of the £520 million provided through the social care reform grant can be used for telecare services.

Case study

A woman with Alzheimer's disease had begun to leave gas appliances on unlit and as a heavy smoker, she also left lit cigarettes in ashtrays. Smoke detectors and a gas detector/shut-off valve were installed to manage the risk and as a result the woman was able to continue to live safely in her own home. Carers were also reassured about her safety.

Case study

Mrs B suffered bouts of confusion and anxiety, especially during the night. She needed to get up to use the toilet during the night, but could never seem to get herself back into the bedroom and into bed. The GP was being called out on a regular basis and Mrs B was eventually taken into respite care for more intensive assessment. It was decided as a last resort, pending residential care, to try using a bed sensor which could be timed to send out an alarm to the monitoring centre if Mrs B didn't return to her bed within a specified period of time.

Initially a call came through every night for a fortnight, either as a result of the bed sensor being triggered or Mrs B herself pressing her alarm button. The carers attended several times but often found Mrs B simply sitting in her chair, having been up to use the toilet. As the weeks wore on, Mrs B developed a good relationship with the call staff at the monitoring centre, and with information from the care staff, they were eventually able to 'talk' Mrs B back to her bed and reassure her. This has continued for approximately one year and Mrs B is content that help and reassurance is available.

Key facts about telecare

- Telecare is not a replacement for emergency services. Telecare products are used to support individuals with longer term and complex health and social care needs, enabling individuals to live more independently. Users are advised to call on emergency services in critical situations.
- Telecare enables individuals to live independently at home and can help improve the user and carer's quality of life. Support is still available from NHS and social care staff who will intervene when required.
- Service users and carers are made fully aware of what telecare sensors and other devices are being fitted. They can also raise any concerns with their care

co-ordination manager. In most cases the devices are unobtrusive and only activated when a potentially adverse incident occurs.

Access to telecare

Telecare is offered by a number of local authorities, and although it is not yet available throughout the whole of the UK, coverage is increasing.

The NHS Purchasing and Supply Agency (PASA) telecare national framework agreement (NFA) allows all public sector bodies in the UK to source telecare and telehealth solutions without the need to undertake their own sourcing and tendering exercises. Recorded telecare sales by the public sector, including health, housing and social care organisations, through the agreement have so far exceeded £53 million.

The Fair Access to Care Services (FACS) guidance provides local authorities with a framework for setting the eligibility criteria for adult social care, and individuals who meet this criteria are eligible for telecare services. However, there may be a service charge.

Individuals who receive social care services may consider telecare choices available through direct payments and personal budgets. Alternatively, telecare products and services can be purchased from a wide range of private providers.

Individuals should be involved in producing their own care plan which includes telecare.

Further information

Telecare Learning and Improvement Network (LIN)

A national network supporting service provision through the application of telecare and telehealth. The Telecare Advisory Network acts as an integrated co-ordination and oversight group on the successful policy and service development, mainstreaming, research and practical application of telecare and telehealth.

<http://www.dhcarenetworks.org.uk/IndependentLivingChoices/Telecare>

Telecare Services Association (TSA)

This is the representative body for the telecare industry, which aims to promote and support the telecare industry and highlight the benefits of telecare.

<http://www.telecare.org.uk/>

WSD Action Network (WSDAN)

This network has been commissioned by the Department of Health whole system demonstrator programme to combine research, educational and experiential learning opportunities to examine the progress and impact of telecare and telehealth in enabling long-term conditions management.

http://www.wsdactionnetwork.org.uk/about_wsdan/index.html

Department of Health guidance on personalised care planning, including telecare.

http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Healthcare/Longtermconditions/DH_093359

The NHS Purchasing and Supply Agency (PASA) telecare national framework agreement (NFA)

Since the agreement was launched £12.5 million cash releasing savings have been achieved, plus additional efficiency savings of £27 million by reducing the need for local organisations to undertake their own sourcing/tendering exercises.

<http://www.pasa.nhs.uk/PASAWeb/Productsandservices/Telecare>

Map of telecare provision

Google map of current telecare services <http://maps.google.co.uk/maps/ms?hl=en&ie=UTF8&msa=0&msid=100406857045032193451.0004540c223f16f2d1c9d&z=6>



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