

# Carers' Technology Enabled Care Pilot Evaluation

Summer 2022

## Introduction

Torbay Carers Service has run a pilot which offers a three-month loan of Technology Enabled Care (TEC) products provided by NRS to enable Carers and the people they care for to try out products to help with the caring role. A summary of the technology used appears in Appendix 1.

Torbay Carers Service evaluated the impact and value of the TEC loan and enabled Carers to continue to receive support beyond the three-month trial period if they found the items useful and chose to continue to receive the service.

## Methodology

Carers who would benefit from TEC were identified by Carer Support Workers from August 2021 onwards. Six weeks after the TEC had been set up, Carers received a call from one of Torbay Carers' Carer Evaluators to find out if they were happy with it and if they wished to continue to use it beyond the trial period.

A structured questionnaire was facilitated by the Carer Evaluator to find out if and how the product(s) benefited them.

The evaluation covered TEC installed during the eleven months from mid-August 2021 to mid-July 2022.

## Summary

Key findings identified:

- 26 out of 29 had used a Lifeline, two a Footprint, one an Oysta watch.
- The majority (80%) found the technology either helpful (19%) or very helpful (65%) in supporting their caring role.
- The main benefit is to provide peace of mind to both the person using the product and the people who care for them (83% of Carers). Carers also reported more freedom so they can carry out their own activities.

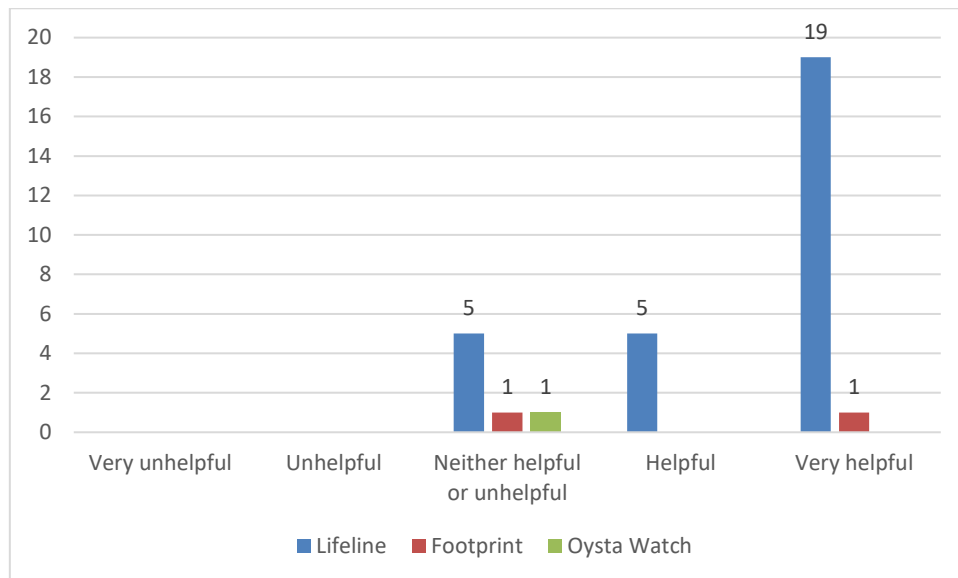
Other benefits reported by the Carer:

- 73% saw a reduction in stress
- 29% said it reduced the risk of the caring situation breaking down
- 28% said it improved their access to work / leisure and hobbies
- 66% reported gaining more control in their everyday life.
- 66% said it improved the person they care for's health, safety or wellbeing.
- 46% saw an improvement in the cared for person's behaviours or independence
- 66% wanted to continue beyond the trial period. 13 will definitely do so, and a further 10 will if the cost isn't prohibitive.

## Findings by question

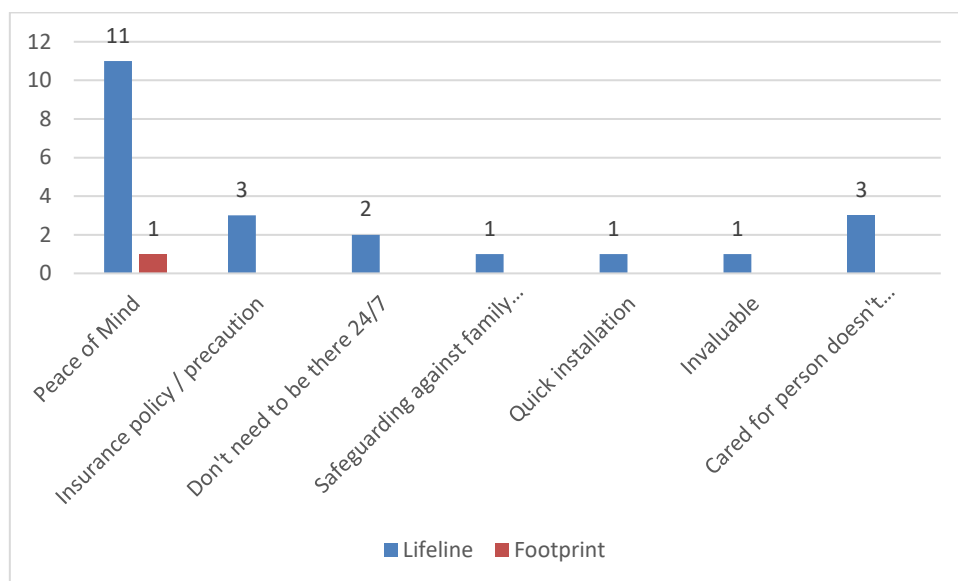
### Question 1: How helpful has technology been in supporting your caring role?

With 25 out of 30 respondents (83%) finding their technology either helpful (5) or very helpful (19) and six finding it neither helpful or unhelpful (7) the majority saw a benefit to their caring role. The figures for the Footprint and Oysta watch are too small to draw conclusions, but the Lifeline is predominantly very helpful.

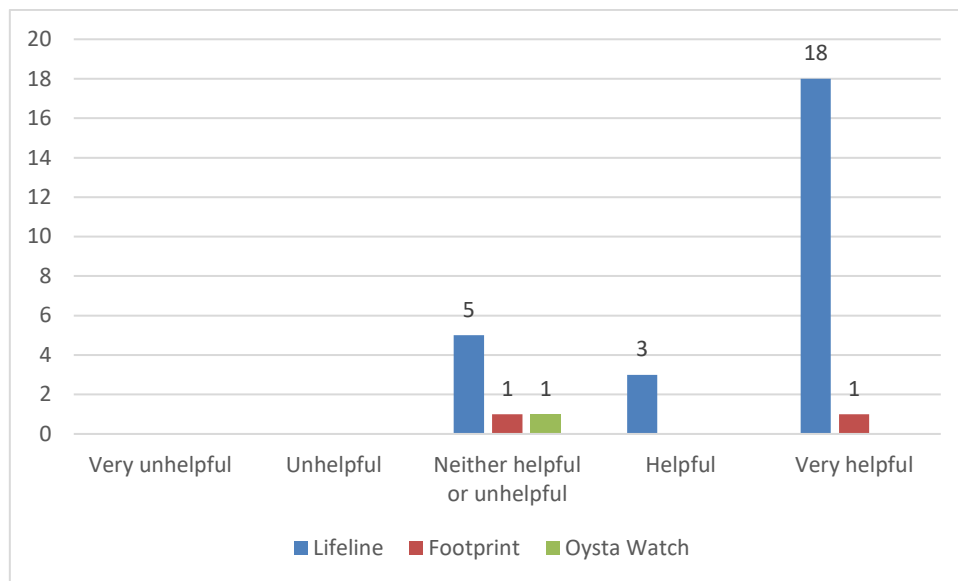


#### Comments:

- All but one of the responses were about the Lifeline, with mostly positive feedback about peace of mind. Three responses were negative as the people using them do not like to use them. There was one comment about the Footprint that was positive, reflecting on the peace of mind it offers. See the table below for themed responses:

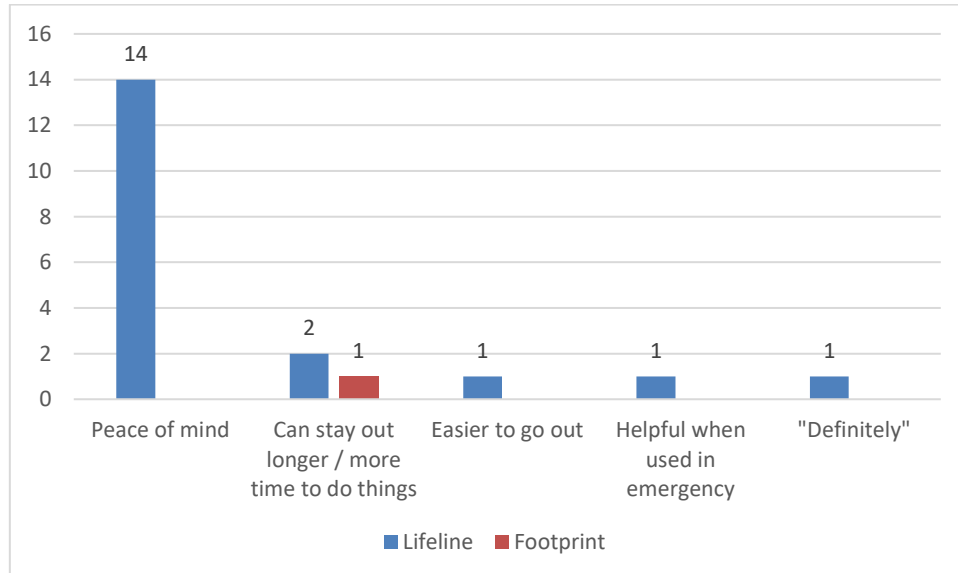


**Question 2: How helpful has technology been in reduction in stress caused by your caring role?**



The majority of respondents found their technology helped to reduce stress caused by caring. 21 out of 26 people who used the Lifeline (81%) found it helpful or very helpful.

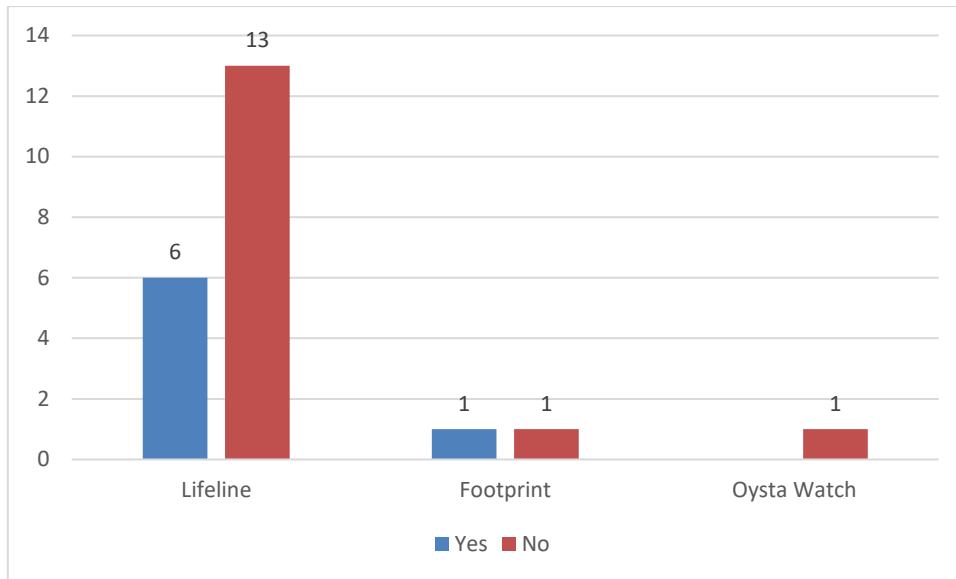
Comments were predominantly about how the item has provided the Carer with peace of mind and therefore more freedom. One referred to the time they used the Lifeline and that it was very helpful – see the second quote below the table.



*“I was signed off work with stress three months ago, but since the Lifeline has been in I have returned to work and feel much better”*

*“There was a fall which caused a great deal of stress, but without this Lifeline it could have been much worse. I used it to call for help. I don’t know what I would have done without it”*

**Question 2(a): If it has reduced stress for you, has it reduced the risk of the caring situation breaking down?**

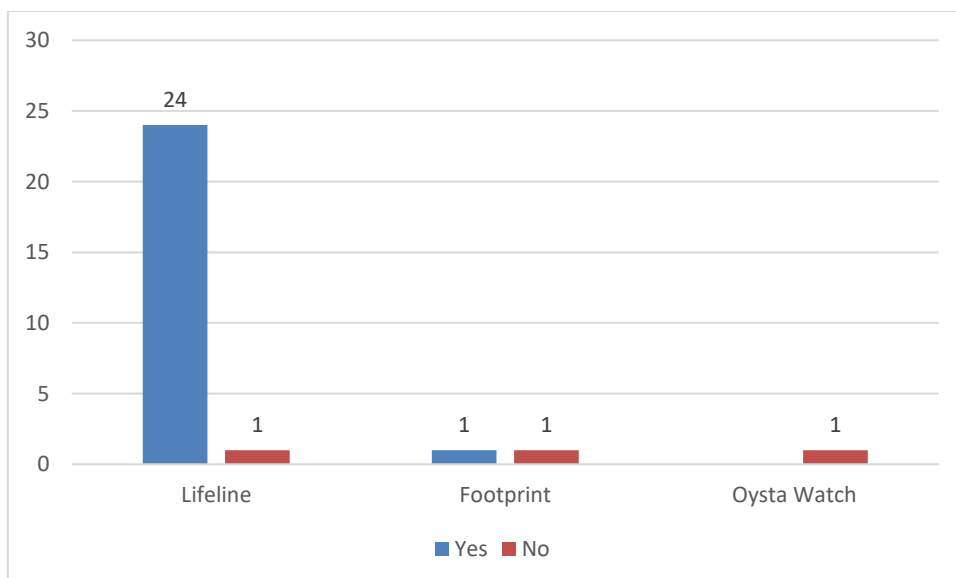


**Comments:**

There were three responses, as follow:

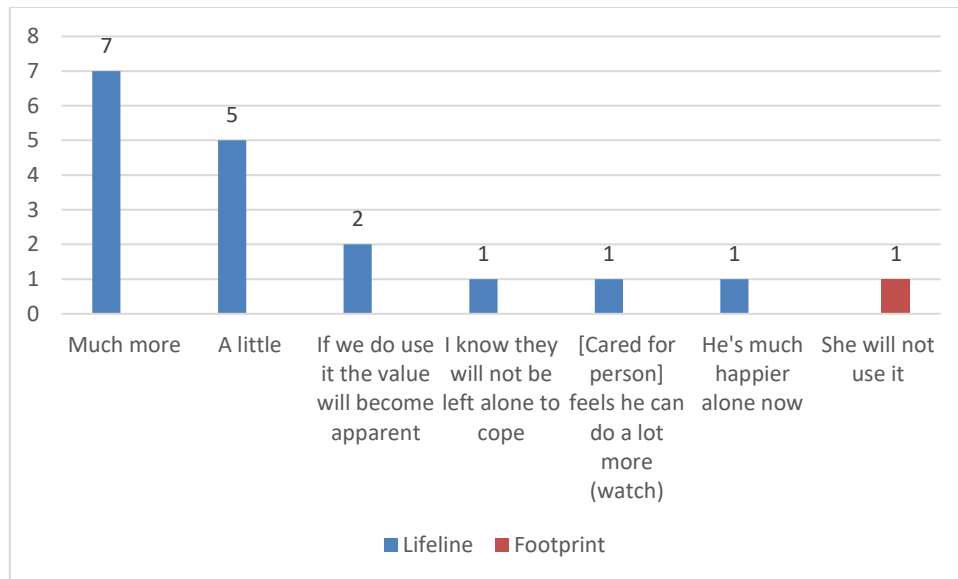
- “[Without it] we would probably have had to have live-in care.”
- “Could avoid care homes and cost to family in loss of jobs etc.”
- “Life is easier now, knowing it is there”

**Question 2(b): Has it given you peace of mind about the wellbeing of the person you care for?**



The vast majority of responses to the open-ended comments section were positive and referred to an improvement in their peace of mind. For the Lifeline, 24 out of 25 responses said the item provides them with peace of mind. This was mixed for the Footprint and the one response for the Oysta Watch said it did not provide them with peace of mind.

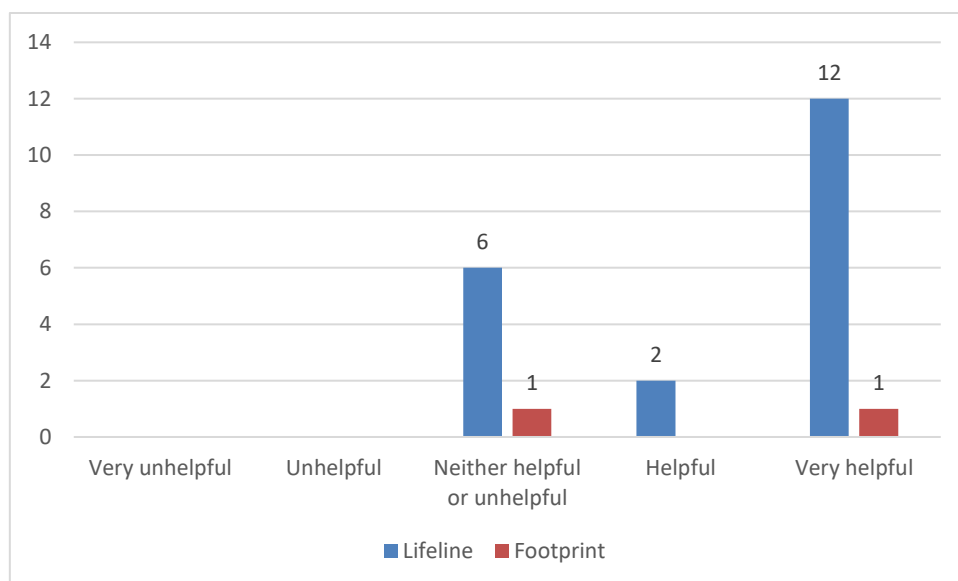
The open-ended comments referred to the degree to which the items helped with peace of mind, and two saying that they haven't done so yet, but will benefit from it if it needs to be used.



*"I feel so much better knowing there is back-up. I think everyone should have this. It has improved my situation a lot."*

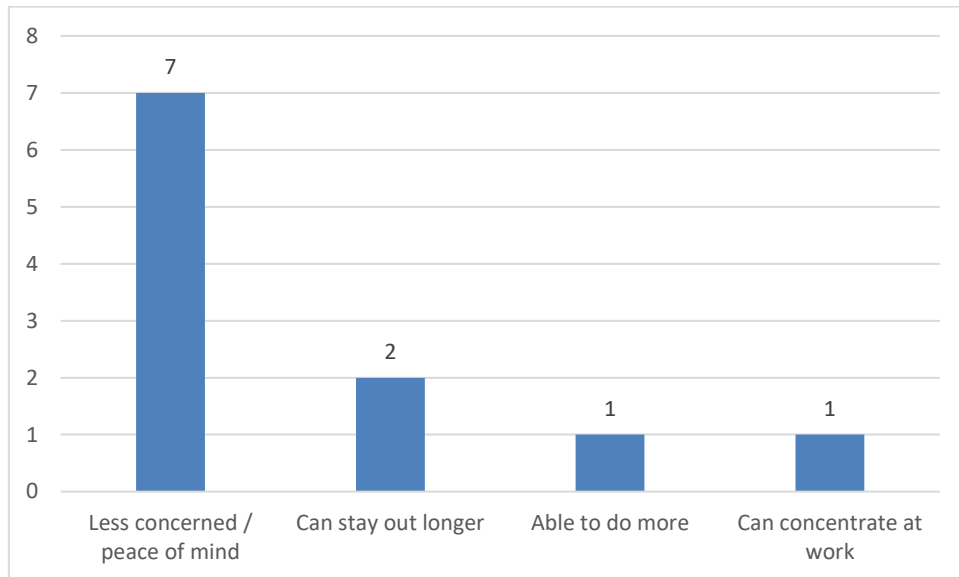
**Question 3: How helpful has technology been in enabling you to have a break from caring or 'me time'?**

With 14 out of 20 responses (70%) stating that the technology gave them a break from caring, the technology has been able to free up time for Carers in the majority of cases.



Comments:

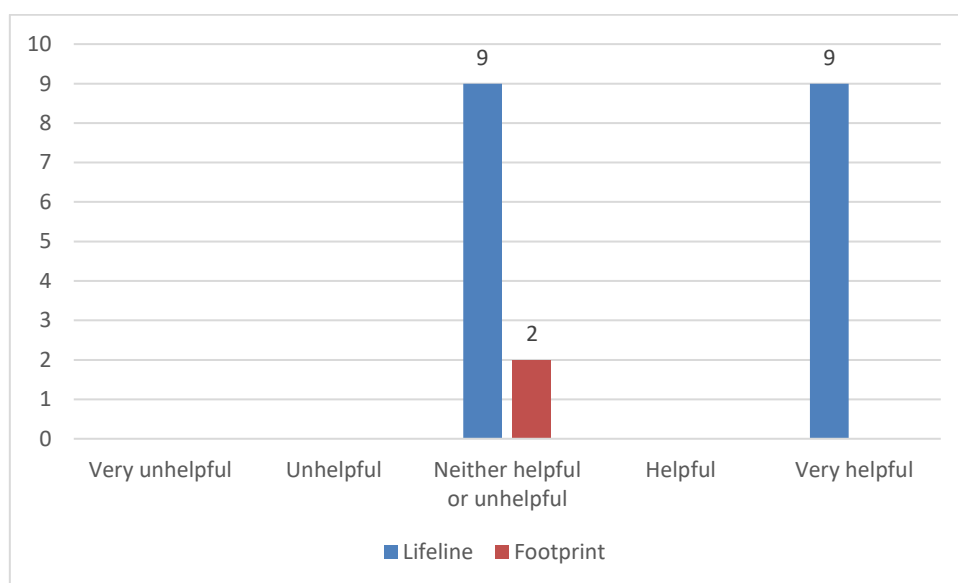
- For those who it was relevant (eight responded as not applicable), most responses focused on peace of mind that the item brings them, but two said they are able to spend longer out of the house as a result, one Carer is able to do more and one reflected on an improvement at work (see following comment).



*“Since the Lifeline has been in I have not left work to go home at all. Previously it was common for me to leave. I can now concentrate on my job more.”*

**Question 4: How helpful has technology been in supporting your relationship with the person you care for and /or family members?**

With 50% of respondents using the Lifeline saying it has proved very helpful in supporting relationships, this reflects well on the impact of the device. The two responses from users of the Footprint noted no discernible impact on relationships from using the device.



Comments:

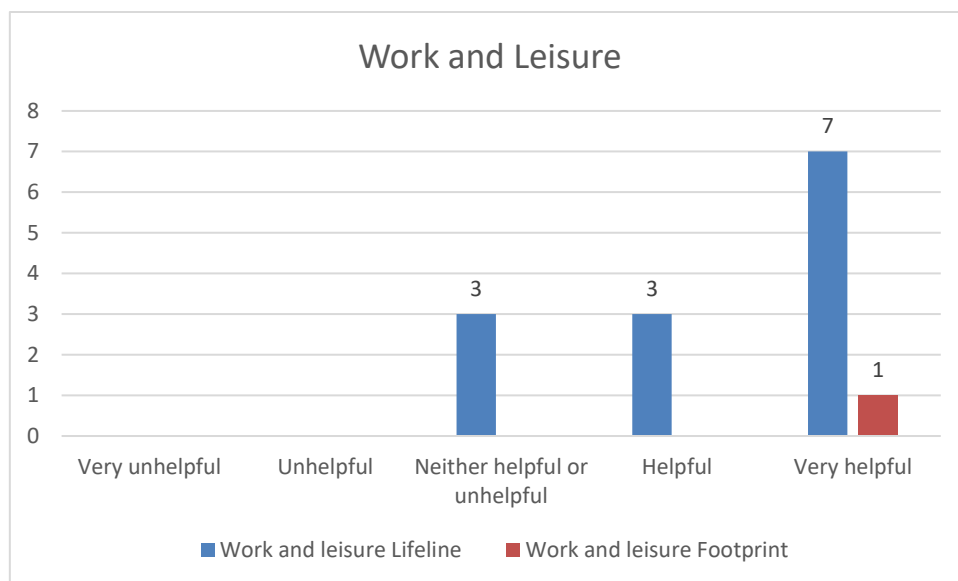
- Two respondents said they feel more relaxed / assured.
- One reflected on the person they care for being more independent.
- One feels their wider family is happy that the technology is in place.
- One respondent said they are less irritable as a consequence of having the technology.

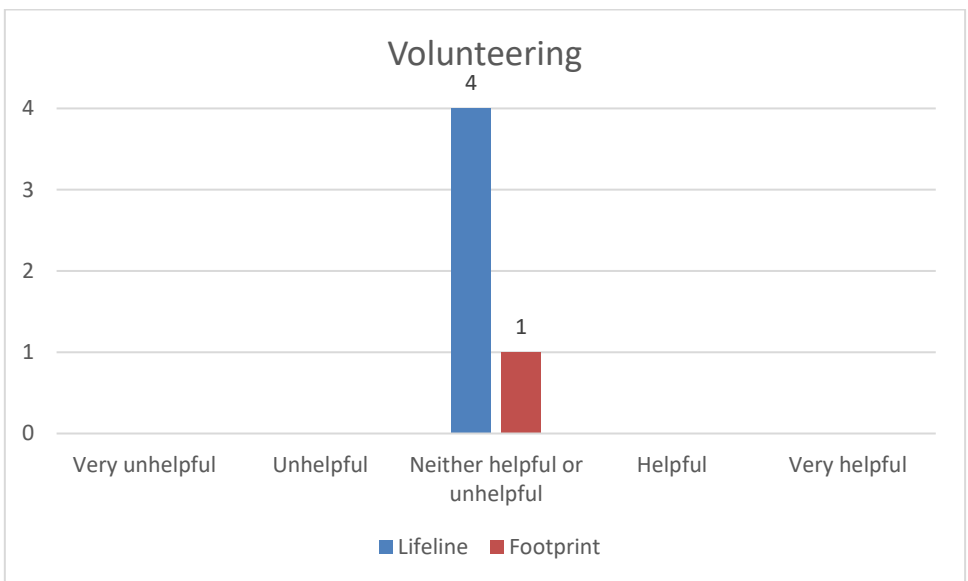
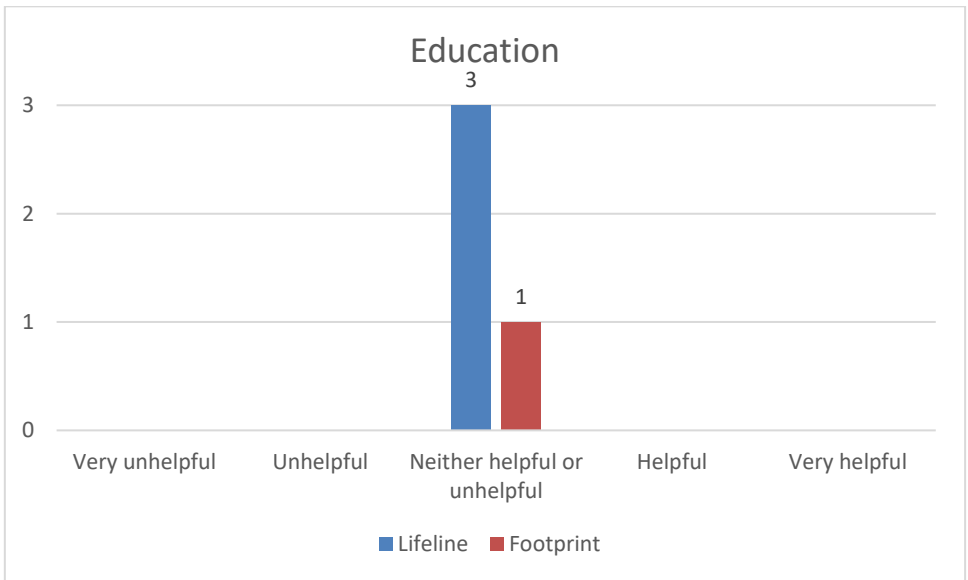
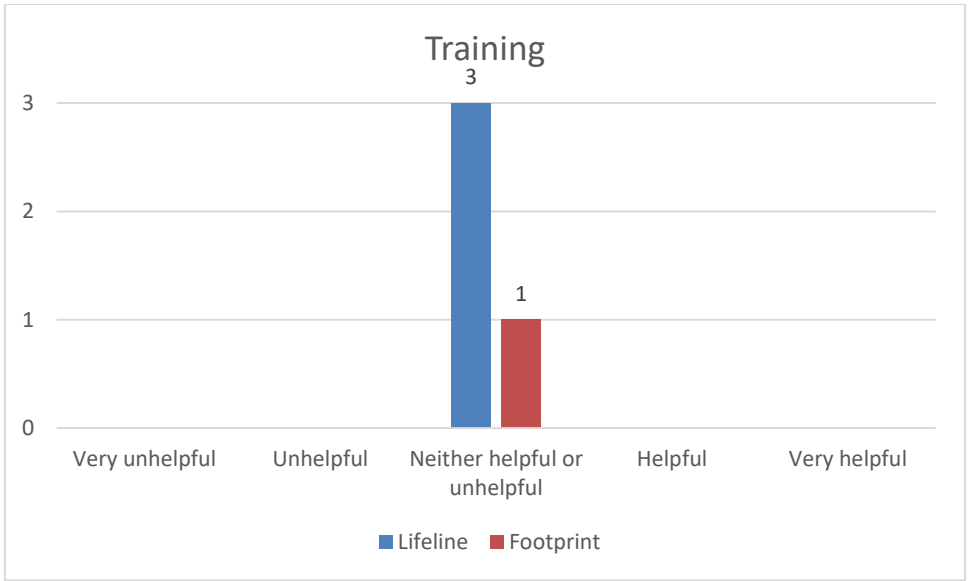
**Question 4: How helpful has technology been in supporting you regarding:**

This question pulls responses to how helpful technology has been in helping people with work and leisure, training, education, volunteering, fitness and hobbies. For those to whom it was relevant:

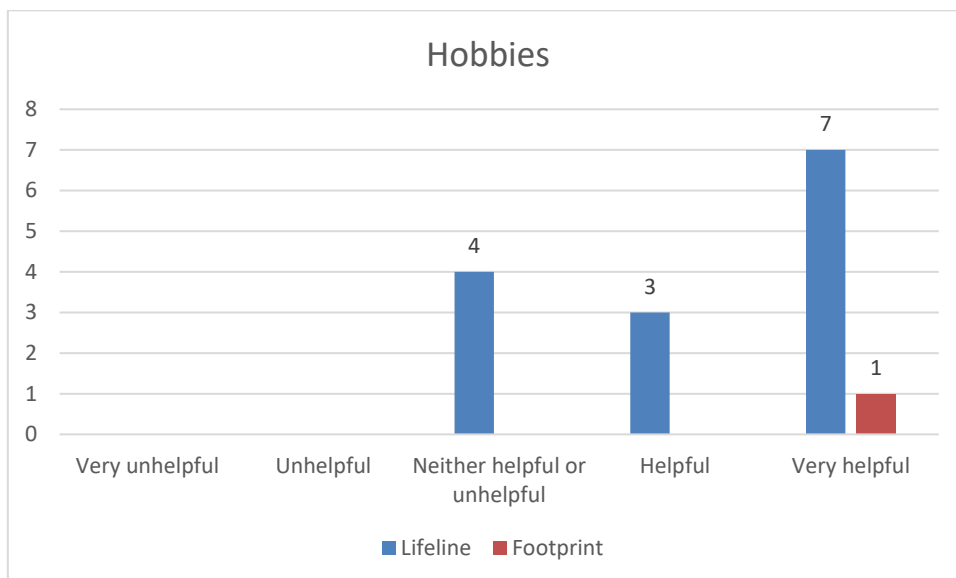
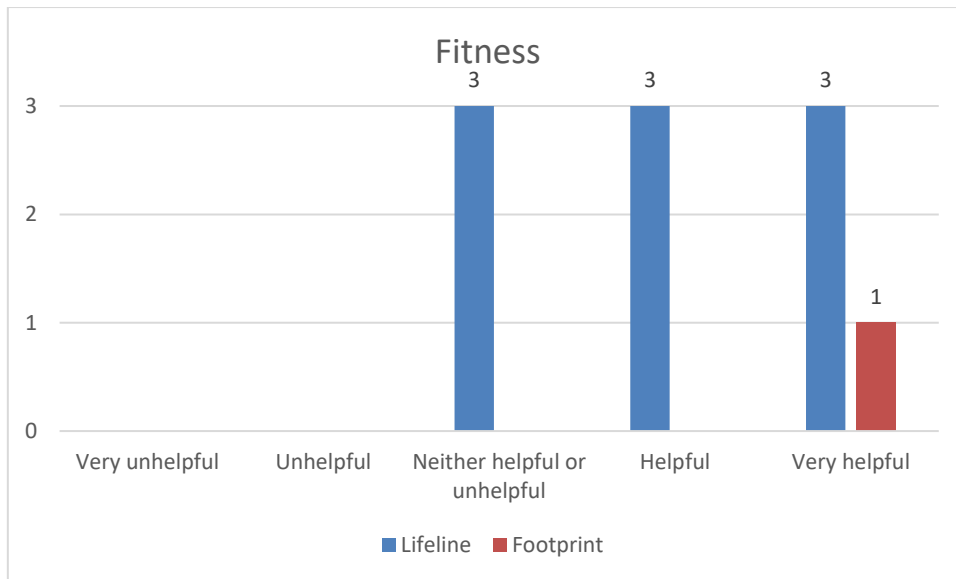
- eleven respondents found the technology was either helpful (3, 10%) or very helpful (8, 28%) with work and leisure;
- eleven respondents found the technology was either helpful (3, 10%) or very helpful (8, 28%) with hobbies;
- and seven respondents found the technology was helpful (3, 10%) or very helpful (4, 14%) with fitness.

The following graphs pull out the responses to each heading:









Comments:

Responses below are all about the Lifeline unless stated otherwise.

General:

- “It has helped me to enjoy these things more”
- “I have more freedom and peace of mind”
- “I can do more knowing he can get help quickly if needed”

Work and leisure

- “It has enabled me to go to work feeling less worried”
- “I do not feel I have to check up every 20 minutes now so I can get on with my day and work” (Footprint)
- “It has enabled me to keep my existing pattern of work”
- “I have time when the boys are at college to do my own things”

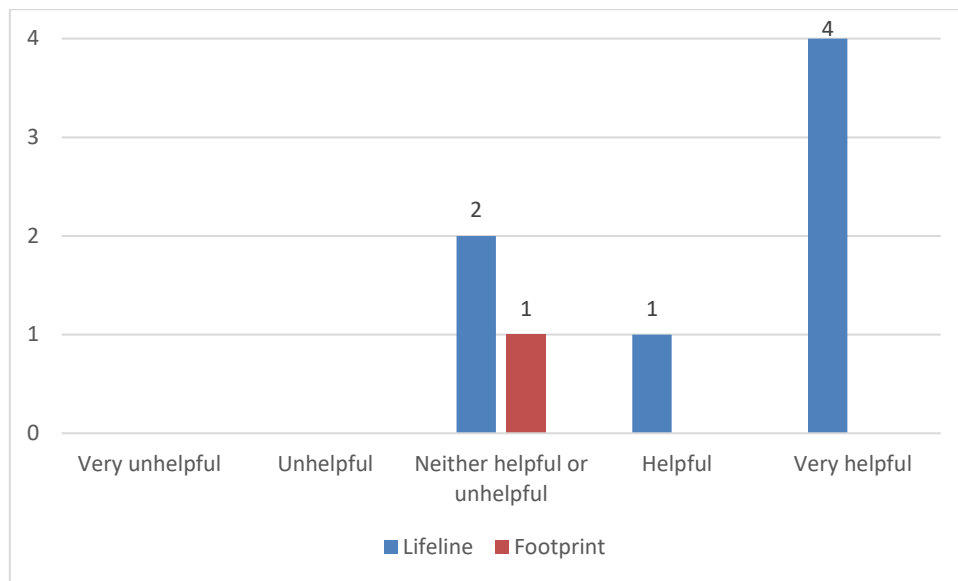
## Volunteering

- “We both help at our church”

## Hobbies

- “I can attend my swimming club and meet friends occasionally with less worry”
- “I have mental freedom when I am gardening or pursuing other personal interests”
- “I can go out to do my flower arranging and out for lunch with my friend without having to worry about rushing back”

### Question 6: How helpful has technology been in helping you to achieve your personal goals?

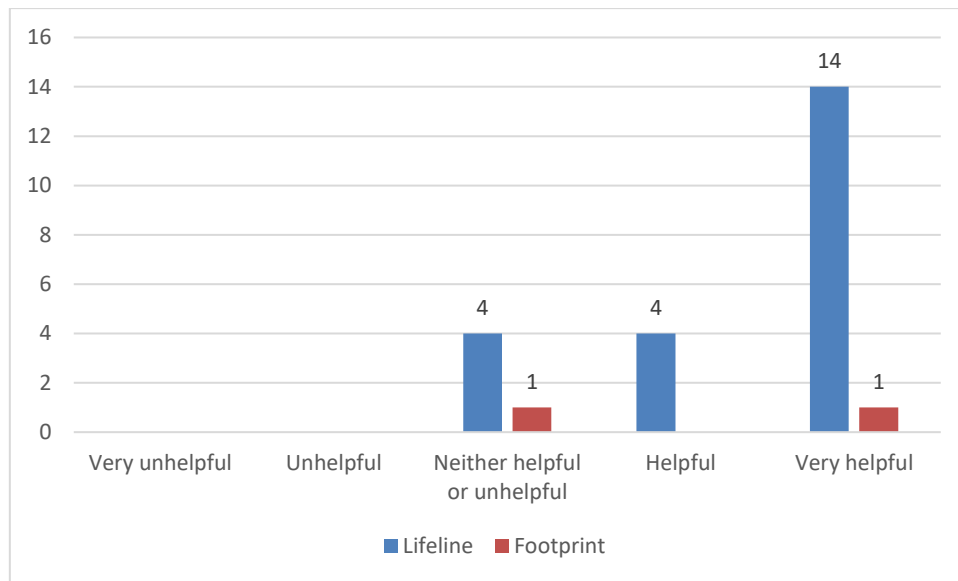


With four respondents finding technology very helpful and one finding it helpful to achieving personal goals, there is only a small number who have benefited in this way. It is, however, so very important for those who have seen this change.

#### Comments:

- “Enabled myself and step-sister to maintain existing roles, with the knowledge that he is safe”
- “I can get on with things better, it has reduced my worrying”

**Question 7: How helpful has technology been in helping you to gain more control in your everyday life?**



The majority of respondents (66%) either found technology very helpful (52%) or helpful (14%) in helping them to gain more control in their everyday life.

Comments:

The following relate to the Lifeline unless stated otherwise.

- Four people said the technology gave them freedom;
- Two said it relieved stress / worry (one referring to the Footprint);
- One has more time (Footprint);
- One said it made them more aware;
- One reflected on it giving them a back-up now;
- Finally, one respondent said that “life is much easier and more ‘normal’”.

*“I have more physical time and a freer mind. Less anxiety” (Footprint)*

**Question 8: How helpful has technology been in supporting you with other caring responsibilities?**

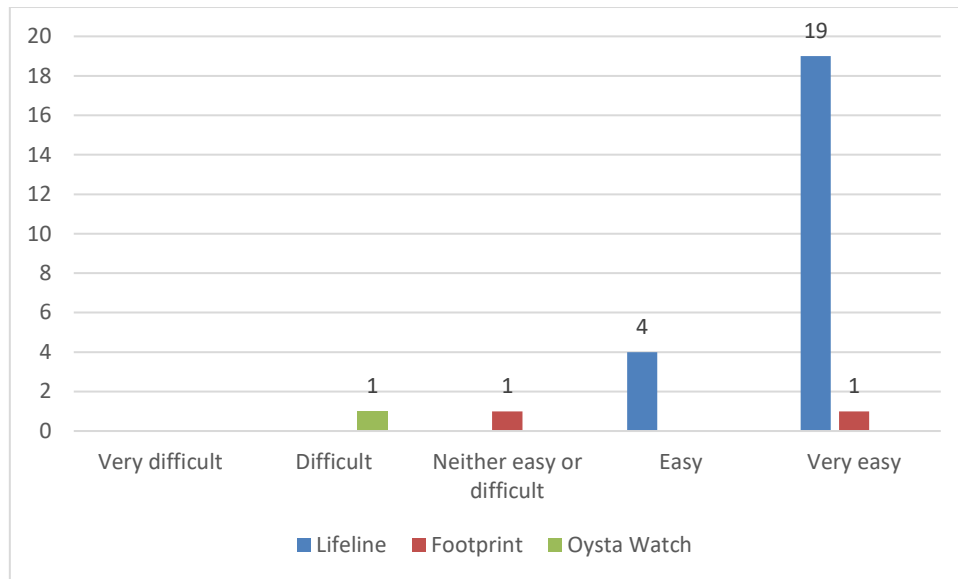
- Only three people answered this question as it was not relevant for the other 27 respondents.
- Of those who responded, two said it was very helpful and one said it was helpful (Footprint).

**Question 9: How helpful has technology been in helping you with accessing childcare?**

- There was only one response to this question, stating it was very unhelpful. No comment was received to say why this was.

**Question 10: How would you rate the ease of using technology / digital equipment?**

The Lifeline was by far the most popular item, with 26 out of the 28 respondents referring to it. The ease of use reported appears in the chart below:



Comments about the Lifeline are as follows:

- 23 people said the Lifeline is easy to use (4) or very easy to use (19).
- One said they need to know how it works better.

In addition to the Lifeline, two people used the Footprint, with one reporting it very easy to use and the other neither easy or difficult. One commented on the Footprint, saying it was easy to use.

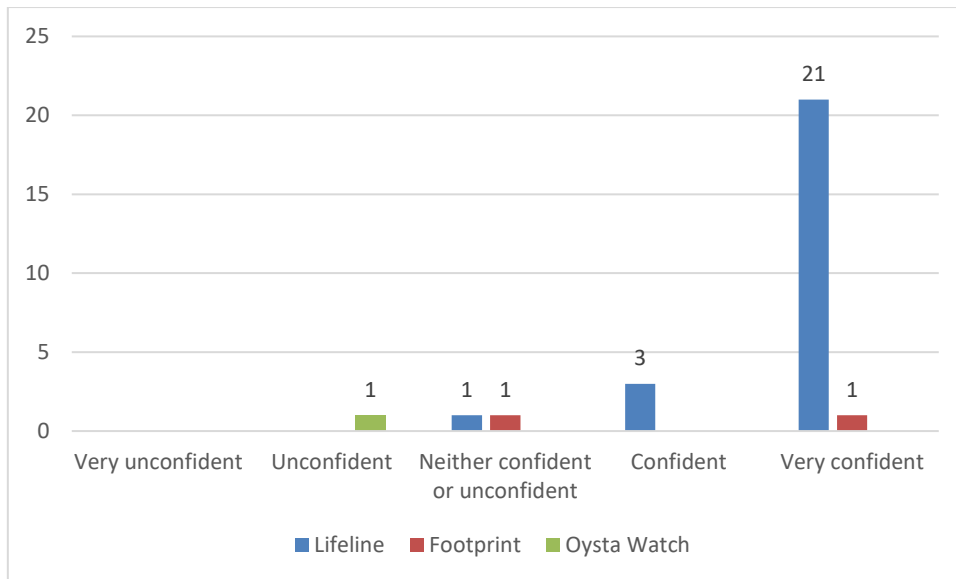
One person had the Oysta watch and said it is difficult to use. They pointed to the fact that the screen did not give a constant display and the person they care for, who has dementia, couldn't work it or see it as a watch. They said it needs to give a constant display to be seen as a watch by the wearer.

**Question 11: How would you rate confidence with using the technology / digital equipment?**

The vast majority of respondents who had the Lifeline were either confident (3) or very confident (21) using the product. One was neither confident or unconfident.

The two Carers who had the Footprint recorded one 'very confident' and one 'neither confident or unconfident' response.

The one person who used the Oysta Watch said they were unconfident using the technology.

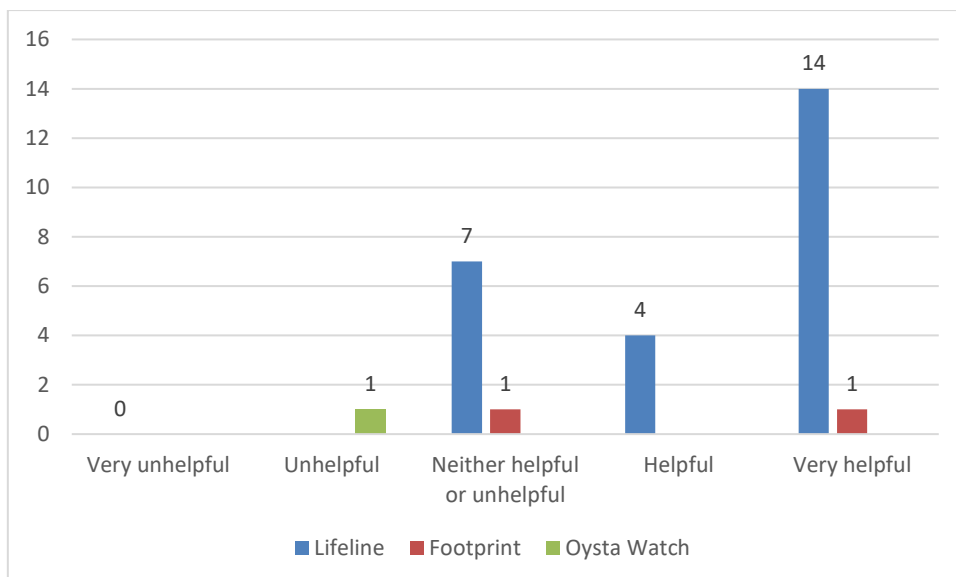


Comments (these were all from people using the Lifeline):

- Twelve people said they were confident or very confident using the product
- Two need to understand it better
- One said the person they care for will not use the product.

**Question 12: How has technology helped the person you care for in increasing their safety, health or wellbeing?**

With 29 out of the 30 responses referring to the Lifeline see the breakdown below:



The bulk of respondents found the items they use very helpful or helpful (68%).

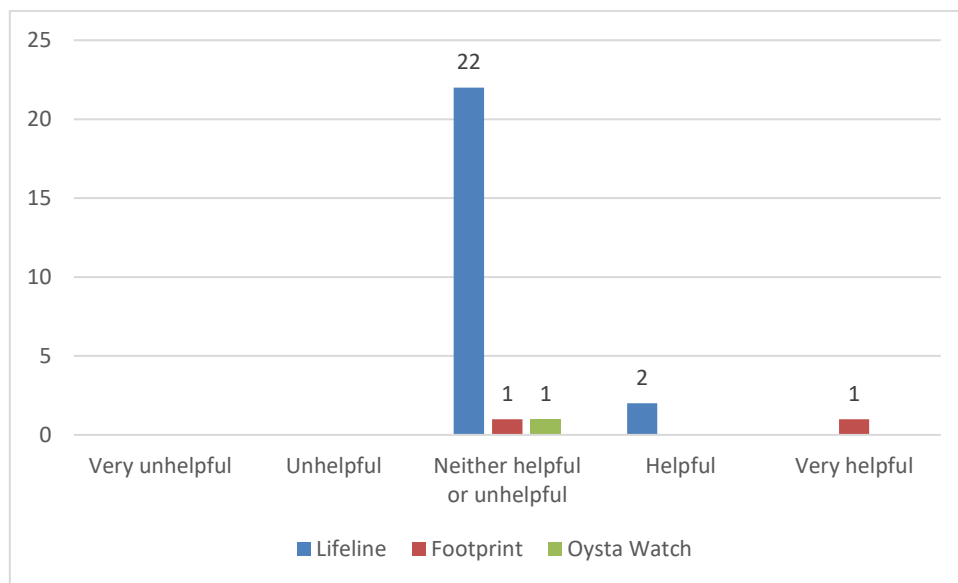
Comments on the Lifeline focus on how the person they care for feels safer (6 responses) or are safer (3 responses). One Carer reflected that it did not work outside the home, and another that the person did not press the alarm when they fell. This shows the importance of the correct type of

equipment being installed and of people being clear / confident how to use it. Other responses were as follows:

- The cared for person feels better knowing the Carer isn't so worried all the time.
- The cared for person is more independent and feels better about himself (quote below).

*“He puts his pendant on every day and has started to plant beans in the garden and do simple tasks around the house. Make tea and toast etc. This makes him feel much better about himself”*

**Question 13: Has technology helped the person you care for in prevention of admission to hospital or residential care or to speed up hospital discharge?**

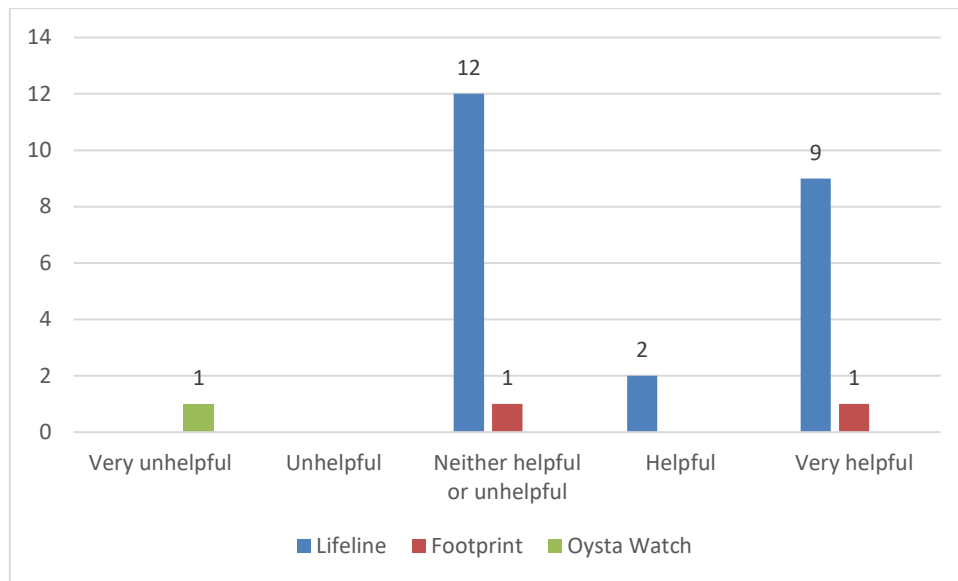


Whilst the vast majority of respondents haven't found their technology to be helpful in preventing admission to hospital or residential care or to speed up discharge, there were three positive responses.

The 'very helpful' response referred to the Footprint, and the response was "I think this could do exactly that, getting the appropriate help quicker".

Two 'helpful' responses referred to the Lifeline, with one referring to the peace of mind overnight, avoiding the need for overnight care or residential care, and the other saying they think it could do in the future.

**Question 14: How has technology helped the person you care for in supporting their independence or behaviours?**



With 48% of responses finding the technology either ‘helpful’ or ‘very helpful’, the Lifeline evidently makes a difference to supporting a lot of people’s independence or behaviours. Comments are summarised below:

- Six respondents referred to the person they care for being more confident as a result of using the Lifeline. Comments referred to the people they care for being both more confident when getting out and about and when alone.
- One of the responses referred to the Lifeline being a contributing factor in preventing a deterioration in the condition of the person they care for.

Quotes about the impact of the Lifeline:

*“He feels like he is managing completely independently which is really important for him psychologically, and I believe has therefore prevented a deterioration”*

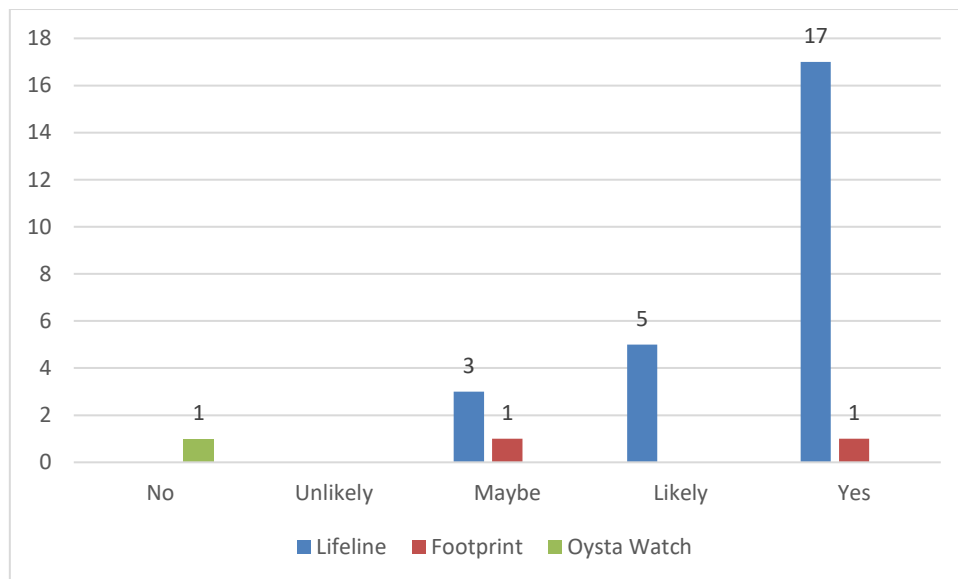
*“She seems much more willing to do more stuff for herself. It has definitely been a contributing factor in the improvement of our situation”*

*“He is able to do quite a bit more than before”*

The positive response relating to the Footprint referred to the person who is cared for being able to do more now away from the house.

### Question 15: Will you continue to use this piece of technology?

The table below shows that 17 out of 25 (68%) would like to continue to use their Lifelines. The Carer who responded about the Oysta Watch would not like to keep it.



#### Comments:

The comments relating to the Lifeline responses were split between those who will definitely continue to use it (13), those who would like to, but it depends on the cost (9), and those who are less keen on keeping the item (2). One person said they would not keep the item as it isn't being used properly by the person they care for and another said that the person they care for is not living with them any longer so they'll return it.

For the two people who were using the Footprint, one is keen to keep it, but would need to consider how this could be funded, and the other won't keep it because their mother refuses to use it. They feel if she understood how it works it would have been very useful indeed.

The person who had the Oysta watch will not keep it, but they are now trialling the Footprint as an alternative.

#### Conclusion

The short-term equipment loan was very beneficial to the Carer and the person for whom they care. Some were eligible for Adult Social Care ongoing support, but many chose to self-fund the equipment after the pilot period.

The Lifeline alarm was the most commonly installed equipment and the most beneficial. Further evaluation is required for other equipment due to low numbers to enable us to understand the value of other technology.

Peace of mind was reported as the major impact for most Carers, enabling a huge reduction in stress and hence in Carer breakdown.



Carers also reported an impact on their Care Act outcomes of a break from their caring role, increase in ability to undertake work / leisure or hobbies, an improvement in family relationships and most reported an improvement in feeling in control of their life.

The main impact on the person that they cared for was an improvement in their safety, health or wellbeing. It also improved their behaviour and independence, and in a few cases prevented admission to residential or hospital care.

Where there were issues with the equipment (eg cared-for person not understanding it), these could have been resolved if Carers Service or NRS had been made aware. Therefore, the referral form and introductory leaflet will be amended to ensure that any issues are picked up promptly.

The Carers' TEC loan pilot has had impressive impacts on outcomes for both Carers and the person that they care for. As 3-months' Lifeline rental costs less than £60, this represents a very cost-effective service supporting Carers at a time when there are significant issues sourcing replacement care. Therefore, the trial offer will be continued.

## Appendix 1: Technology evaluated in the survey

### Lifeline

The Lifeline VI Home Unit is a system that connects into the landline telephone and is supplied with one MyAmie pendant.

A call for help can be activated by pressing the large button on the Lifeline VI Home Unit, or by pressing the red button on the pendant, which is worn around the home or garden. Up to 15 sensors and pendants can be connected to monitor events such as falls, bed leaving, smoke or property exiting.



Once a sensor has been activated or button pushed, the call centre will activate the loud speaker on the home unit to communicate with the caller, they will also call whoever is set up as a responder(s)\* and if they are unable to communicate, or are aware it is an emergency situation, they will also call an ambulance.



### Footprint

The Footprint is a wearable GPS location device that can be programmed to raise a number of different alerts. The call centre will be able to see the type of alert raised, as well as the location of the user.

The Footprint has a built-in fall detector, which will automatically raise an alert if a drop in gravity has been sensed. The user can also manually raise an alert by pressing the SOS button on the front for three seconds. Once either of these have been activated, the call centre will activate the loudspeaker on the Footprint to communicate with the user, they will also call whoever is set up as a responder(s)\*.

Because the Footprint is a GPS location device, it can also be programmed to raise other types of movement alerts, which can be tailored to suit the needs of the user. A Geo Fence Alarm can be programmed to send an alert if the user leaves or enters up to three specified areas. A Movement Alarm can be programmed to send an alert if the user moves more than a certain distance (similar to the Geo Fence alert) and an Over Speed Alarm can be programmed to send an alert if the user is travelling faster than a certain speed.

## Oysta Watch

The Oysta Watch works everywhere, with a roaming SIM that uses all UK mobile networks, and a powerful GPS module. GPS is used for checking location, finding users in emergencies, and alerting if a user has wandered in and out of pre-set zones.

Two-way speech with loud speaker and auto-answer so a conversation can be had even if the user cannot press any buttons.

