Torbay and South Devon
NHS Foundation Trust

Telecare (includes Community Alarm Services) (P04)



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Important: Please ensure that you are using the latest version of this information sheet. To check this, go to our information sheets page on the Trust website at www.torbayandsouthdevon.nhs.uk/disinfosheets or call the Disability Information Service on 0300 456 8373

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About this information sheet

This is one of a series of regularly updated local information sheets that aim to meet the most common information needs of people with disabilities and carers in Torbay.

Where possible, we try to keep our information up to date. However, we cannot guarantee that all our information is constantly up to date - details change often and there may be changes to services of which we are not aware. If you know of a change to any of the services listed, please advise us of this so that we can amend the details.

The information should be used as a guide only, as it may not cover all the organisations that can help with your needs. Torbay Disability Information Service (part of Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust) cannot guarantee the accuracy of the information or the quality of service provided by the organisations. No liability can be accepted for loss, damage, or injury arising out of any contract made by a private individual with any of the organisations listed.

Details change often, so please make sure you are using the current edition. Latest copies of the sheets are published on the following website page:
www.torbayandsouthdevon.nhs.uk/disinfosheets

If you do not have Internet access, you can ask for single copies from our office.

A full list of our other information sheet titles can be found at the end of this sheet.

Information can be made available in other formats and languages. Please let us know what your needs are.

Torbay Disability Information Service
4th Floor, Union House
Union Street
Torquay
TQ1 3YA
Telephone: 0300 456 8373 Email: tsdft.dis.torbay@nhs.net

Introduction

What does this Information Sheet cover?

This information sheet gives an explanation of what telecare is and who would find it helpful and provides an overview of telecare products and information. It gives details of local telecare services (including community alarm services) and signposts to national services and sources of further information, such as helplines and publications.

Who will find this Information Sheet useful?

You will find this sheet useful if you are someone who is:

- living alone and needs to get help in an emergency
- vulnerable to falls
- a relative or carer

How do I use this Information Sheet?

Please use this information sheet as a basic guide and contact services that are listed direct for further information.

Further Support

For information and advice about further support, please contact Torbay Adult Social Care Services on (01803) 219700 to discuss your concerns. If you live outside Torbay contact Care Direct on 0345 155 1007.

What is Telecare?

Telecare forms part of technology enabled care services (TEC), which also include telehealth, telemedicine, tele coaching and self-care services.

Telecare provides a range of equipment and services that support an individual's safety and independence in their own home. Telecare equipment makes it possible for people to call for help and assistance when needed. A common definition, used in government publications and by Tunstall, is :Telecare is the continuous, automatic and remote monitoring of real time emergencies and lifestyle changes over time in order to manage the risks associated with independent living.

The TEC Services Association (TSA) has described telecare as:
Support and assistance provided at a distance using information and communication technology. It is the continuous, automatic and remote monitoring of users by means of sensors to enable them to continue living in their own home, while minimising risks such as a fall, gas and flood detection and relate to other real time emergencies and lifestyle changes over time.

Telecare services range from a basic community alarm service that can respond to an emergency and provide regular contact by telephone to an integrated system that includes detectors or monitors (i.e. motion, falls, fire and gas) that trigger a warning to a response centre.

Telecare equipment can sense risks such as smoke, floods and gas, can remind you to take pills and even call for help if you fall. If any of these problems occur, a help centre can be contacted automatically so that it can be arranged for someone to come to your home or contact your family, doctor or emergency services. The system can also warn you of problems by sounding an alarm, flashing lights or vibrating a box which can be kept in your pocket or under your pillow.

Telecare and technology enabled care can:

- Increase your independence and confidence
- Assure family friends and carers that their loved ones are safe when they cannot be there themselves
- Support carers as they look after others
- Send help quickly when its needed, whether alerting family and friends or even emergency services
- Reduce risk levels
- Support traditional methods of care
- Be cheaper than having care visit

If you have carers or are considering carers, please also consider TECs options, which may give you more independence and better flexibility to stay at home.

For further definitions and information about telecare, please visit the websites below (see also 'Further Information').
Living Made Easy: www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk/telecare/
Telehealth & Telecare Aware: www.telecareaware.com
TEC Services Association: www.tsa-voice.org.uk

Is Telecare right for me?

Whilst telecare has many benefits, it is important that its use is considered carefully and that any benefits are weighed up against possible disadvantages.

Disadvantages of telecare include the effect on privacy of monitoring devices and concerns that some devices may be used to do things that an individual is still able to do for themselves and thus contribute to them losing these skills sooner than would otherwise have been the case.

It is particularly important that the user, whether this is yourself or the person that you care for, fully understands how the telecare system works and consents to its installation – this can be particularly relevant when equipment is used to support individuals with mental health difficulties such as dementia.

When considering the ethical use of telecare, it may be helpful to consider the following:

- What would the purpose be for you (or the person you care for) of using a telecare solution?
- Would there be any alternatives to telecare to solve the problem? For example, if someone gets lost when they go out an alternative would be for someone to walk with them.
- Is there more than one telecare solution available to solve your problem? Some of these will be more suitable to your needs, preferences and situation than others.

- What are your living arrangements? How much support is there from family and carers?
- What is the nature of your disability? For example, is it progressive? Do you have 'good' and 'bad' days?
- Is the telecare equipment safe and reliable?
- How will the usefulness of the telecare equipment and service be reviewed and evaluated? If it doesn't work for you, will it be easy to stop using it or to change it to a more suitable system?

For further information and advice about whether to choose telecare, you may find it helpful to refer to the page about 'ethical issues with assistive technology' on the Disabled Living Foundation's 'Living Made Easy' website at www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk.

Telecare Equipment

Community alarms are probably one of the best-known forms of telecare equipment. This section provides information about community alarms and also gives descriptions of other types of telecare equipment. For details of local community alarm and telecare services.

Community Alarms

About Community Alarms

A community alarm is an addition to your telephone that enables you to get help quickly at the touch of a button. This help is available to you whenever you need it for 24 hours a day every day of the year. When you call for help, a member of staff at the Centre will speak to you and arrange for the help you need.

Help with Telephone Repairs

Please note that BT provide a free Priority Fault Repair Scheme to people who have a chronic long-term illness or disability – see page 21 for details.

How does an alarm work?

The way the alarm works depends on the type of alarm you have. Some work by pushing a button which you carry around with you in your home. Some buttons are worn around your neck and others are worn around your wrist. There are also personal alarms that have built in falls detector. All our personal alarm equipment is digital. Some buttons are on the alarm unit itself.

Other systems work automatically if they sense smoke, an intruder, or even if you haven't moved around for a while.

The unit calls for help

Once the signal has been triggered, the alarm unit calls someone for help – this might either be a relative or friend you have named who lives nearby, or the alarm may alert a special response centre.

Your call gets through

If your call is to a response centre, your details automatically appear on a screen, so the staff know the call for help is from you. They usually try and communicate with you, but if there is no reply, they will send someone to help you quickly. If your unit is set up to contact a friend or family, the unit calls their numbers directly.

Someone arrives to help

If your problem cannot be dealt with over the phone, someone will arrive to help you. This may be a friend, relative, carer, warden from the response centre or one of the emergency services.

What to think about when choosing an alarm

- **Where can I get an alarm?**

Alarms are not usually sold in shops although you may see advertisements in magazines or newspapers. The main ways to get one are listed below (but some ways are open only to certain groups of people):

- **Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust**

See 'Further Support'.

- **Housing Associations/Commercial Retirement Properties**

Some housing associations and commercial retirement property development schemes have alarm systems for their tenants or as part of the overall service of the property development.

- **Do I buy or rent?**

If you are not getting an alarm through Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust you will need to decide whether to buy or rent – for further advice, refer to Living Made Easy's 'Choosing Telecare' guide and the Which 'Personal Alarms' guide (Further Information section, pages 21 and 23).

- **What will it cost?**

Charging for community alarms differs between the providers so ask for full details of what it will cost you when comparing different suppliers.

- **Who do I want my calls to go to?**

Will you want your calls to go to family and friends nearby or to a response centre?

- **Other questions are:**

- How comfortable is it?
- How easy is it to use?
- How well does it work at different distances away from the alarm unit?
- Does the alarm unit have a button (important if you lose the portable trigger)?
- Does it have a cancel button?
- Does the alarm unit show if the unit is working and how it is working? Also, does it show if it has a speech system and/or built-in telephone, how long the battery back-up lasts, etc.?

Other Telecare Systems

As well as community alarms, there are a range of other telecare systems that can be used either with other systems as part of a package or on their own. Some of the most common telecare solutions are listed below. If you are interested in any of the systems in this list that include monitoring, please ask your telecare supplier for details. For information about alerting schemes and systems that are not telecare enabled, please refer to our information sheet ‘Keeping Safe and Warm at Home’, P13.

Activity/Non-Activity Monitors

Activity monitoring systems monitor your daily activities in your home. Personal locators are carried by you and enable authorised individuals such as relatives or carers to find out your location by logging onto the internet from a computer. A carer can therefore see if you have not gone into your kitchen all day or have gone out and not returned.

If they have any concerns after viewing this data, they can ring you or visit you to check that you are OK or offer assistance.

Bed or Chair Occupancy Sensor

A bed occupancy sensor is a pad which when placed under your mattress can detect when you've left your bed and start a timer. If you don't get back into your bed within a pre-set time your telecare system will trigger an alarm to your help centre. This means that if you leave your bed for a short time, e.g. to visit the toilet or go for a quick snack, the alarm will not be activated but if you fall and do not return to bed the alarm will be raised. Many bed occupancy sensors can be combined with a radio controlled electric socket to automatically turn on a bedside light when you get out of bed. This helps to minimise the risk of falling in the dark.

The chair occupancy sensor works like a bed occupancy sensor but is placed on a chair or wheelchair.

Both bed and chair sensors can be configured to trigger a pager which could alert a carer or relative within the property that the individual has left their chair or bed.

Bogus Caller Button

Bogus caller buttons are also called 'panic buttons'. A bogus caller button can be installed next to the front door or beside your bed. This allows you to simply press the button, automatically raising a silent alarm to your help centre, if you fear that a bogus caller or burglar is trying to break into your property. The call centre can then listen to the situation and intervene, perhaps calling the police, if necessary.

Carbon Monoxide Detectors

These detectors provide an immediate alarm when they detect dangerous levels of carbon monoxide (exposure to this could quickly cause headaches, dizziness, nausea, convulsions and death). The alarm will sound in your home, and your help centre will be alerted via the control box.

If a telecare carbon monoxide detector is not installed as part of your telecare system, you could still fit a standard carbon monoxide alarm, which will sound an alarm if it detects carbon monoxide, but these will not automatically alert your help centre. In addition to having a carbon monoxide alarm, ensure that you have adequate ventilation.

Door Entry Systems

These systems enable to you open your front door with a remote-control system and/or enable a carer or the emergency services to open your front door with either a remote control or by contacting your help centre.

Fall Detectors

A fall detector is an alarm system with a portable transmitter that is activated when the user falls and has been lying down for eight seconds. It alerts the carer by either sending a signal to a portable pager or triggering an autodial alarm.

Fire or Smoke Alarms
Telecare smoke alarms will automatically sound an alarm in your home and send an alarm call to your help centre if they detect smoke. This gives you early warning that you should leave your property and the reassurance that help is on its way. Even if you do not have a smoke alarm as part of your telecare system you should still have at least one working standard smoke alarm in your home which will sound an alarm if it detects smoke but please note that these will not automatically alert your help centre.

Flood/water Detectors
These sensors can provide early warning of overflows and leaks that may grow to become a flood. If the sensor detects water it will trigger the control box to alert the help centre. These sensors can be especially useful for people who sometimes forget to turn their taps off and worry about the sink or bath overflowing. They will also alert you to burst pipes and leaks.

Gas Shut off Valves
Leaking gas is dangerous and can result in explosions. Gas shut off valves cut off the gas supply when triggered by a gas detector sensor connected to a telecare control box. The control unit has a key operated switch for turning the gas supply back on once the reason for the leak has been resolved. These valves are particularly useful if you are likely to have memory problems and may forget to light a gas ring or gas fire.

Incontinence Sensors
These are also called enuresis sensors. They provide early warning for individuals who experience incontinence while sleeping. If it detects excess amounts of moisture an emergency alarm call can be transmitted.

Medication Management (Reminder Systems)
Telecare enabled pill dispensers can prompt you when to take your medication and dispense the tablets you are due to take. If you do not take the tablets then your help centre is automatically notified by your telecare system and contact a carer, friend or relative who can remind or assist you. This can be helpful if you have to remember to take tablets at several different times each day or you cannot remember whether or not you have taken your medication.

As the unit only dispenses the tablets at the required time, the risk of taking a repeat dose is reduced.

Property Exit Sensors
These sensors are placed above a front and/or back door and can detect if you or someone else leaves the property and doesn't return within a certain period of time. If you do not return within the preset time period, then your help centre is automatically contacted and can alert your relatives or another appropriate person or service. This sensor is therefore useful if you sometimes become disorientated or confused and may go out at inappropriate times or often become lost after going out.

Temperature Extremes (Temperature Range Sensors)
These will detect extremes of temperature and automatically alert your help centre. This is ideal for detecting a fire in the kitchen where a smoke alarm would give false alarms, e.g. when using a toaster. The sensor will also sound an alert if the temperature becomes too cold, for example if the heating breaks down.

Wise and Smart Homes

For a very safe and secure environment, you could have your home developed into a 'Smart' or 'Wise' home. This type of home provides a complete telecare environment as it has the most important electrical appliances and services within it controlled or monitored from a command station.

A smart home could be helpful to:

- People who are less mobile, making the home environment easier to control, reducing the risk of falls and increasing independence.

- People who are forgetful, as the environment is monitored and certain tasks can be undertaken automatically. For example, the system may switch lamps and heaters on and off and open and close curtains.

- Families and carers, as it can be used for some of the tasks that they might be asked to do and provides reassurance that the person will be able to manage without help when they are on their own.

For further information, see:

- Choosing Telecare and Choosing Equipment to help with Memory and Safety (Disabled Living Foundation).

Community Alarm and Telecare Services

For details of other community alarm and telecare service providers, please refer to the TSA website at www.tsa-voice.org.uk (see also page 22). Please note that if you are purchasing a community alarm service you will probably be able to claim exemption from VAT – please see next page for further details.

Livity Life (Miguardian Services)
Attwood House, Perdiswell Park, John Comyn Drive, Worcester, WR3 7NS
Tel: 0800 130 0011
Website: www.livitylife.co.uk or www.mi-guardian.com

Community Alarm Service:
We offer a private pay service for a community alarm service that is linked to our clinically led alarm monitoring centre in the UK.
Our digital alarm packages come with everything that you need to get started and get cover immediately. The alarms are leased to the customer on a monthly subscription charge that includes the costs of 24/7 365days monitoring. All emergency calls are prioritised, and support is provided whether this is calling your next of kin, emergency contacts or the emergency services when necessary. We have devices that work in the home and others that will allow you to have cover outside the home when you are out and about.
There are no hidden charges to our plans, and you are not locked into and long-term contract.

Please contact provider for further details and prices

Taking Care
Linhay House, Linhay Business Park, AshburtonTQ13 7UP
Telephone: 0800 032 9501
Website: https://taking.care Email: enquiries@ppptakingcare.co.uk
Community Alarm Service:
The devices Taking Care offer are all fully monitored and connected to their caring and highly trained staff. Their Emergency Resolution Team is available 24/7 to resolve emergency alarm calls such as in the event of falls, medical emergencies, intruders, fires or any other distress. Taking Care Team will immediately notify family members, listed contacts and the emergency services if required, leaving you safe in the knowledge that help is always on hand.

Please contact provider for further details and prices.

VAT Relief

If you're disabled or have a long-term illness you won't be charged VAT on products designed or adapted for your own personal or domestic use (including personal alarm call systems). You will need to confirm in writing that you meet these conditions at the time of purchase. There is no one official form, but suggested templates for the declaration are included in VAT Notice 701/7:
VAT Reliefs for Disabled and Older People, available online at:
www.gov.uk/guidance/reliefs-from-vat-for-disabled-and-older-people-notice-7017

NB. Assistive equipment centres usually have their own forms.
For information and advice on the VAT reliefs available for people with disabilities and older people, contact the **VAT Disabled Reliefs Helpline** on **0300 123 1073** (see also page 22). You can also refer to VAT notice 701/7 (see above) for more detailed information.

Further buying advice can be found in our 'Equipment Centres' information sheet (P07).

Key Safes

If you would like to have a community alarm or other telecare service but you do not have a friend, relative or neighbour who could be a key holder you may find it useful to have a key safe.
A key safe is a small box that stores a key and is designed to be fixed to the wall outside your house, preferably within a discreet location. The safe is opened by a digital code that must be punched in. Although familiar numbers such as a birth date are easier to remember, for security purposes it is recommended that the code is between 5 and 7 digits long. A key safe provides a useful way of giving access to the home to regular callers, e.g. carers and relatives, and also provides a 'spare' should the homeowner leave the house without the key.

Please note that for maximum security it is advisable to purchase a key safe that is police approved and meets the British Loss Prevention Standard LPS 1175 (tested to the same standard as an external door), such as the C500, P500 or Keyguard Digital XL key safe. It is also worth remembering that the security of your key safe may determine whether it is approved by a home insurance provider. NB. To maintain police accreditation, a key safe must be installed into brick or dense concrete, not breeze block or mortar.

Key Safe Suppliers

Age UK Torbay
12 Dendy Road, Paignton, TQ4 5DB
(01803) 555181 www.ageuk.org.uk/torbay
Offers handy person services via its Home Maintenance Register. The charity is able to provide contacts of tradespeople who have been vetted to undertake small household jobs for vulnerable people aged 50+ in Torbay, who are unable to manage themselves due to disability or infirmity of age. Services include the supply and fitting of C500 police approved key safes.

Local Disability Equipment Suppliers

- **Cavendish Health Care & Mobility**

Unit 1, Babbacombe Business Park,
Babbacombe Road, Torquay, TQ1 3UP
Telephone: (01803) 220378
Email: info@cavendishhealthcare.co.uk
Website: www.cavendishhealthcare.co.uk

- **The Key Safe Company (Supra UK LTD – Trading as The Keysafe Company)**

Unit 5 Nunnery Park, Hornhill Road Worcester, WR4 0SX
Telephone: 0330 363 0303
Website: www.keysafe.co.uk Email: hello@keysafe.co.uk
The Key Safe Company can provide a wide range of key safes, including the police approved C500 key safe and related products. It can also provide an installation service.
Please contact suppliers for further details and prices.

Locksmiths

Most locksmiths are able to supply key safes. The following locksmith is the only member of the Master Locksmiths Association in Torbay, which is currently listed on their website, although the website does list some other locksmiths in Devon. Please visit the website for further details.

- **Keys and Locks Direct Ltd.**

63 Belgrave Road, Torquay TQ2 5HZ
Telephone: (01803) 475 089 Mobile: 07710 697 669
Website: http://www.locksmithtorquay.co.uk
Email: accesslocks@ymail.com

Please contact suppliers for further details and prices

Further Information

BT

Telephone: 0800 800 150 (voice) or 18001 0800 800 150 (text)
Email via website

BT provides a range of services for people with disabilities, including:

- A free Priority Fault Repair Scheme for people who have a chronic long-term illness or disability – once you are registered, BT will deal with reported faults as soon as possible, day or night, 365 days a year. Call 0800 800 151 or 18001 0800 800 151 (text) for an application form.
- Various home security and monitoring products and services. For further information, call BT or visit their website.

See also section on 'Telephone Services' in DIS information sheet P13, 'Keeping Safe and Warm at Home'.

HM Revenue and Customs

Helpline for VAT Reliefs for Disabled and Older People:
0300 123 1073
Website: www.gov.uk/guidance/reliefs-from-vat-for-disabled-and-older-people-notice7017

For VAT information. Produces VAT Notice 701/7: VAT Reliefs for Disabled and Older People (available online – see above).

Living Made Easy

Website: https://www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk/telecare/

Living Made Easy is a website that includes a comprehensive section on telecare. This section provides information and advice on telecare and telehealth, including definitions of telecare and information about the different kinds of services, equipment and systems available

TSA (TEC Services Association)
Suite 8, Wilmslow House, Grove Way, Wilmslow,
Cheshire SK9 5AG
Telephone: (01625) 520320
Website: www.tsa-voice.org.uk Email: via website
The TSA is the representative body for technology enabled care (TEC) services and has an independently run Quality Standards Framework. Visit the 'Find TEC Services' section to search for a local or national technology enabled care provider that serves your local area. NB. All service providers listed in the TSA directory are members of the TEC Services Association.

Telehealth & Telecare Aware
Website: www.telecareaware.com
Website that provides information for people who are interested in telecare and telehealth, including definitions and examples of telecare, latest telecare news and details of forthcoming telecare events.

Which? Later Life Care
Website: www.which.co.uk/later-life-care
Provides independent information to help people to make care choices, wherever they live in the UK. Information includes
Provides independent information to help people to make care choices, wherever they live in the UK. Information includes comprehensive advice about community alarms, telecare and telehealth.

Most sheets have many pages, and details change often. If you would like copies, please request no more than 5 titles at a time.

For Disability Support Series	
Bathing and Showering	P02
Day Activities	P36
Domiciliary Care Agencies	P05
Equipment Centres	P07
Equipment Hire and Loan Services (including wheelchair hire)	P08
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Home Maintenance Services and Building Adaptations	P10
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Care Home Series	
Care Homes: Assisted Living Torbay	C03
Care Homes: Nursing, Torbay	C02
Care Homes: Residential Torbay	C01

If you have any concerns or require further support with topics that are not mentioned above and are not sure where to go or who to contact, please contact Disability Information Service and we will try our best to help you.

Further information and advice

Torbay Disability Information Service has been providing comprehensive information and advice to people in Torbay for over 25 years and we are a founder member of the Torbay Advice Network (TAN). Our service is open to any resident of Torbay affected by any type of disability. We also provide information to anyone working or caring for people with disabilities.

No referral is necessary. Simply call us on 0300 456 8373 or email us at tsdft.dis.torbay@nhs.net

We offer:

- An enquiry desk service covering a wide range of topics related to disability support and independent living.
- Advice and information on disability-related issues.
- Over 19 web-based information sheets covering the questions that we get asked most frequently.

Opening hours: Monday to Friday, 9am to 4pm

Signposts for Carers

Signposts for Carers is Torbay's dedicated telephone support service, providing specialist information and advice to unpaid carers who are supporting someone who lives and/or pays Council Tax in Torbay. Contact Signposts in confidence to find out about services, equipment, benefits and rights. Support is available on a short or long-term basis.
Telephone: (01803) 666620 Email: signposts@nhs.net

Feedback Sheet

Was this information sheet useful?
We are keen to ensure that this information sheet is relevant to your needs and clear. We would be grateful if you would take a moment to answer the questions below and send your response to us either by email at tsdft.dis.torbay@nhs.net or by post.

Our address is:
Torbay Disability Information Service
4th Floor, Union House
Union Street
Torquay TQ1 3YA

Q: Where did you get this information sheet from?
Q: How old are you?
Q: Was the information easy to read and helpful? (Please tick one box only) ☐**Very Easy** ☐**Fairly Easy** ☐**Undecided** ☐**Fairly Difficult** ☐**Very Difficult**

Q: How might we improve it? …… ……
Q: What local disability related support do you struggle to find out about? …… ……

Note: Please contact us on 0300 456 8373 if you need help or have questions about the contents of this information sheet.

TORBAY COUNCIL
Partners in Care

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This document can be available in other languages and formats. For more information telephone 0300 456 8373.