

Dementia telecare services

The challenge

The Alzheimer's Society estimates that in 2007 there were 5,520 people in Wiltshire living with dementia, and that this figure will rise to 8,367 by 2021¹. Two thirds (425,000) of people with dementia in the UK live in the community, and one third (244,000) in a residential home². It is currently estimated that 150,000 people with dementia live alone³ and many of those living in their own homes rely on support from an elderly carer.

In February 2009 Selwood Housing was commissioned by Wiltshire Council to provide a telecare pilot for people who have dementia living in West Wiltshire and Devizes area. The pilot aimed to establish how well telecare could help to support people with dementia to live independently in their own home, and assess the impact on carers.

1 www.alzheimers.org.uk
2 www.alzheimers.org.uk
3 www.dementiacentre.com

About Selwood housing

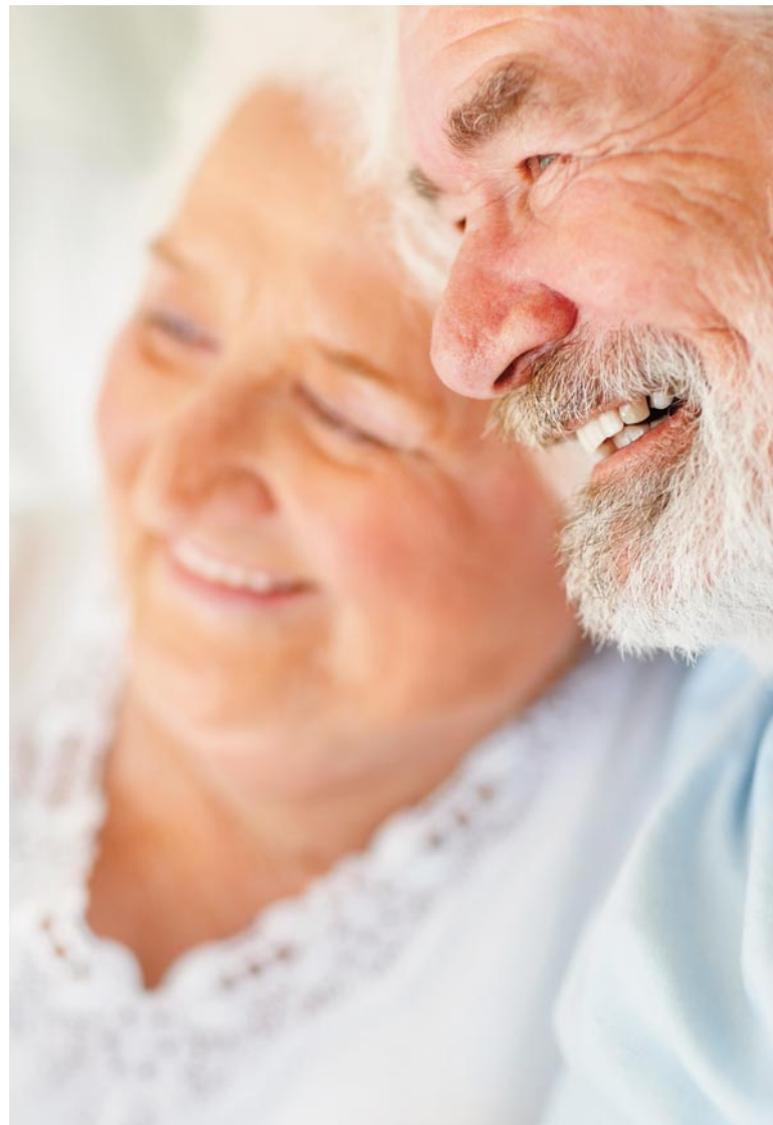
As a housing association and social enterprise, Selwood Housing is working to improve homes and communities. It has 5,500 homes across Wiltshire and Somerset, including affordable housing, sheltered housing, care homes and independent living centres.

Selwood Housing also offers 'floating support,' which helps people to live independently in their home as well as community alarm and telecare services called Selwood Lifeline.



I used to worry about my Mum going out and getting confused about finding her way home. Now with the telecare and the property exit sensor I get a phone call if my Mum has been out for a long period of time.

Quote from carer using telecare service



Background

In setting up the telecare pilot service Selwood Housing worked closely with the Community Mental Health team, Reablement teams, Advice and Assessment teams, Care Agencies and voluntary and support groups such as Alzheimer's support. These agencies were consulted on the referral criteria and the process from referral to installation.

The service

The telecare service is provided free of charge for adults in the West Wiltshire and Devizes areas with dementia or memory loss who have a critical or substantial need for the service.

A telecare co-ordinator was recruited to conduct assessments, installations, equipment management, removals, promotion to other services and reporting to the working group. The co-ordinator undertook relevant training in the use and installation of telecare equipment and has undertaken specific dementia awareness training as well as mental health first aid training.

Partnerships were formed with Care Connect as the call monitoring centre and Wiltshire Medical Services who provide the response service. These partnerships enabled a full service to be provided to the customers having telecare services installed.

Some carers and potential customers had some initial reservations about the use of the technology, feeling that it would result in 'big brother' watching their every move. However, with customers suffering from dementia or other memory loss the installation of equipment proved to be less disruptive and intrusive than the introduction of additional care staff.

Initial concerns and doubts were easily overcome through the service being recommended by stakeholders and the introduction of the service through an in-depth needs assessment undertaken by the telecare co-ordinator. Many of the assessments involve not only the customer but also the carer (usually a family member) and other professionals involved in supporting the customer. This helped to lower anxiety as the customer and their carer already know some of the individuals involved in the process, and resulted in the users being happy to try the equipment and report back on the results.

The aims

The intended outcomes of the pilot were to:

- Prevent the number of re-admissions to hospital
- Delay the need for admission to a care home
- Promote independence
- Enable customers to stay at home longer
- Provide support to the carers of customers
- Form part of care packages, reducing the staffing hours and cost

A working group consisting of telecare providers, Wiltshire Council, Wiltshire Medical Service, Care Connect and representatives from Health agreed a set of key performance indicators including installations, equipment costs, call outs, value for money and length of time the telecare package was in place to identify and measure outcomes. Statistics and qualitative evidence from customer and carer feedback was collated by the relevant parties.

Case studies

Telecare helps to keep lady with dementia at home

Mrs Green is a 96 year old lady with a diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease who lives alone. She has a very supportive family who visit everyday, and she also receives a care package. Mrs Green was referred to the telecare dementia pilot by her occupational therapist as she was having cooking accidents regularly, and had burnt her legs by sitting too close to her gas fire. Mrs Green would also leave her home to go shopping alone and then become disorientated. The family spent a considerable amount of time looking for Mrs Green and they received several calls from neighbours concerned about her safety.

The solution

After completing a joint assessment with both the family and the Occupational Therapist the telecare team suggested that:

- A Lifeline unit and pendant should be installed to enable Mrs Green to easily call for help
- A smoke detector and carbon monoxide detector be provided to raise an alarm at the monitoring centre if Mrs Green gets into difficulty cooking a meal
- A temperature extremes sensor be fitted in the sitting room to monitor for sudden bursts of heat from the gas fire which would hopefully prevent any further burns to Mrs Green's legs
- A property exit sensor should be installed that would inform the monitoring centre when Mrs Green had left her home and not returned within the pre-determined time. The monitoring centre would then contact the family so they could respond

The outcome

Mrs Green's family are less anxious as they know that if there is a problem, the monitoring centre will contact them, and that they can spend more quality time with Mrs Green. Mrs Green is happier as she feels safer in her home and knows if she is worried she can speak to the monitoring centre at any time.

Older carer supported using telecare

Mr White is a 78 year old man with front temporal lobe dementia who lives with his wife who is his main carer. The couple have four carer visits a week to enable Mrs White to go out. Mr White was referred to the dementia pilot as his wife was having difficulty managing his continence. Mrs White had also had a fall recently and was unable to summon help.

The solution

Following an assessment, recommendations were made for a Lifeline unit and two pendants, one each for Mr and Mrs White, along with a smoke detector. An enuresis sensor connected to a DDA pager was also installed, meaning Mrs White would be alerted when an episode of incontinence had occurred.

The outcome

The results of this installation are that Mrs White is now less anxious about having a fall as she knows she can call the monitoring centre for help and someone will respond. Mr White is now sleeping better due to having the enuresis sensor fitted as he is only disturbed when he has been incontinent, rather than his wife checking. Mr White's appetite has improved, and he has more energy and is becoming more involved in things. Mrs White is also sleeping better as she doesn't have to get up several times a night to check



Result

There are 184 customers receiving a telecare package as part of this service, and referrals continue at a rate of around 18 per month. Some customers remain in their own home two years into receiving the service and very few (33) installations have been removed since.

The average cost per installation is £300. When this is compared to 10 weeks of residential care for dementia at around £750 per week, approximate savings are £7,200 over the same period for one installation.

(Figures correct at 15.09.2010)

Outcomes noted:

- Hospital and care admissions are reduced/avoided/delayed
- Carers feel supported and reassured and able to have respite for short periods as they feel the customer is safe with the technology in place
- Customers are happier with a telecare installation compared to additional care staff as the equipment is less intrusive to their lives
- Customers are able to stay at home for longer which is their primary aim
- Medication can be better managed with the support of the equipment and monitoring centre
- The risks to the customer from fire, flood, temperature extremes, wandering, bogus callers and other factors are significantly reduced through the equipment installed

Next steps

The service continues to grow and show good outcomes. The cost savings and qualitative results show that the equipment installed is making a real difference to the customers, their carers and the other services that support the individual.

There are a small number of customers receiving telecare packages within a supported living setting and small care home environment, and it is planned to continue to demonstrate the application of telecare within a care setting to support the individual and the carers, affording the customer a greater level of independence.

Now the tangible benefits of telecare have become clear, the health and social care teams have wholeheartedly embraced the technology and telecare referrals are now included as a standard part of assessments. The service has proved to be especially successful in helping to integrate dementia services into mainstream services which has proven difficult in other areas due to the complex needs of the client group and their carers.

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