Community Alarms & Telecare (Assistive Technology) Information Sheet

Introduction

Derbyshire County Council (DCC) Adult Social Care and Health uses a range of technology to support people to live independently for longer. Via the Assistive Technology Service, we offer two main services. They are community alarms and telecare.

Community alarms

Community alarm systems have a pendant or wristband you can wear that connects to a base unit. If you need help, for instance if you feel unwell, you can get help by pressing the button on the pendant or wristband. You'll then be able to speak to an operator at a monitoring centre using the speakerphone on the base unit. The operator will get in touch with your key contact or, if required, call emergency services. If you have fallen, they may also be able to contact a falls recovery service in some circumstances.

Telecare

Alongside basic alarms, there is a range of telecare equipment that can support people with identified social care needs and their carers. Examples of some of the telecare equipment are bed and chair occupancy sensors, falls detectors, property exit sensors, and smoke or carbon monoxide detectors. The choice of equipment is tailored to your individual needs. Telecare is also usually supported by connection to a monitoring centre which can alert others if assistance is needed.

How does Assistive Technology work?

Assistive Technology is monitored 24 hours a day, every day of the year. Generally, community alarms and telecare equipment work via mobile signal or Wi-Fi (because all traditional landline services are being switched from analogue to digital by the end of 2025).

Some systems can be set to directly alert your family, friends, neighbours or carers (rather than a monitoring centre) to allow them to help you if you need it. Systems can provide reassurance and peace of mind to carers.

Who is eligible to receive Assistive Technology services?

Anyone can access community alarm and telecare equipment and monitoring services. This can form part of a care and support package or can be arranged privately. If you already have a care and support package in place, speak to your adult care worker.

To access a DCC funded service through our provider, Medequip Connect, you will need to be Care Act eligible (including needing support for preventing the escalation of your care and support needs).

Those that have a DCC care package can access a funded service as part of their personal budget. You can discuss these options with your social worker.

Those that are Care Act eligible, but who have no package of care, can still be part funded and therefore access the service at a reduced rate.

Our aim is to ensure that services are affordable. If you are Care Act eligible, you can request a financial assessment and you will be given support to understand the process. You may also be offered support to claim any benefits that you may be entitled to.

If you do not currently have a support package in place but think you would benefit from the Assistive Technology service, you can complete a 'request for assessment' form on our website at derbyshire.gov.uk/assistive-technology.

The form asks very basic questions about your care and support needs and whether the service may prevent your needs from escalating. This form can be filled in by a professional, a carer or family member, with consent, or the person themselves. You will then be contacted by a member of our Adult Care assessment and triage team. If you are unable to access the online form, you can contact Call Derbyshire on **01629 533 190**. Call Derbyshire may ask you a series of questions to establish your needs.

To arrange privately, you can contact Medequip Connect, telephone: **01706 572 460**. You would have to pay the full costs to the provider and packages start from £4.71 per week.

The following local providers can also be contacted to access assistive technology privately:

- Amber Valley Futures Housing Group - telephone: **0300 456 2531**
- Bolsover District Council - telephone: **01246 242 309**
- Chesterfield Borough Council - telephone: **0300 303 3378**
- High Peak Borough Council - telephone: **01298 813 395**
- South Derbyshire District Council - telephone: **01283 228 789**

There are national companies that also offer community alarms and telecare. The Elderly Accommodation Counsel (eac.org.uk) has information on these products and services and lists all providers in any given area, both local and national. They have a section on community alarms.

Other technology to help you live independently

A community alarm and telecare package can help you to maintain your independence at home. Other kinds of technology could support you too, including devices that you already own or have in your home.

Voice controlled technology products (such as the Amazon Alexa, Amazon Echo and Google Nest) can be used to support your independence. You can connect your mobile phone to some devices and phone or message anyone hands-free, which could help in an emergency.

If you already own a smartphone or smartwatch, these may already have features installed. Or you can buy apps that allow you to contact or locate friends or family easily and quickly.

There are also many options available purchase privately and can provide an alternative to a traditional community alarm pendant device.

Examples of these are, assistance buttons or keys to attach to a mobile phone you already own, customisable devices and watches that you can wear outside of the home or voice operated technology devices to help you make calls and send and receive messages.

Many organisations will also provide free, general advice about the alternatives available to you. The following organisations are a good place to start if you're looking for information and want to see what options are available to you:

- Age UK - ageco.co.uk/independent-living-solutions
- Citizens Advice - citizensadvice.org.uk
- Scope - scope.org.uk/advice-and-support/learning-new-assistive-technology-disability-equipment#Learning-to-use-assistive-technology-click
- Which? - which.co.uk/assistive-technology