A guide to
Community Alarms
and Telecare

For independence and safety at home

Occupational Therapy • Joint Equipment Centre Service
Community alarms and telecare cover a range of devices and services that use modern technology to keep you safe in your own home and help you to maintain your independence.

They add to the support and assistance you may already be getting from family and friends, and from other professional services such as care at home and occupational therapy.

This booklet explains what community alarms and telecare systems are, how they help, how to go about finding out more about them and how to apply.
What is community alarm?

The community alarm scheme allows you to call for help in an emergency at any time, day or night.

The community alarm connects to and uses your own telephone to contact a trained operator in a regional control centre.

You wear a pendant with a button which, when pressed by you, sends a signal through the telephone to the control centre. This alerts operators who are on duty 24 hours a day. They will speak to you directly without you needing to lift your phone to ask you what kind of help you need.

If, however, they cannot contact you, they will arrange for someone to check what you need. They can also contact the emergency services on your behalf if required.

You are asked to nominate up to three contacts from your family, friends or neighbours who are happy to be contacted in an emergency to come round and help you, or enable other services to gain access to your home to assist.

If you do not know anyone who would be able to do this, alternative arrangements can be made.

A telephone line is required and you will need to ensure that all costs are covered to ensure that it remains live. A 13 amp electrical socket needs to be near your telephone socket.
What is telecare?

Telecare provides a range of additional systems that can alert you when something needs your attention, or alert others to assist you when you need it.

Telecare is designed to support and maintain a person’s independence at home. The equipment is unobtrusive and is installed in your home by trained technicians with minimal disturbance. It can be installed or taken out as required.

**Examples of telecare alert systems:**

- Fall detector
- Smoke/fire detector
- Flood detector
- Gas detector
- Bed occupancy sensor (which can raise an alert if you get up from bed and do not manage back within an agreed time)
- Door sensor or property exit sensor (which can raise an alert when the door is opened)
- PIR (passive infra-red) sensor – movement detector
- Pressure pad (which detects movement or lack of movement)
- Personal trackers – to locate a person outwith their home

These are ‘passive’ systems where you do not need to actively do anything for them to be effective in summoning assistance.
What type of equipment would help me to do things for myself?

Examples of systems that support independence:

• Door opening system
• Curtain/blinds closing system (can be on a remote dawn/dusk basis or via a control)
• Remote telephone call answering
• Aids to help you use a personal computer

These are active systems where you are in control of operating them.

These are just some examples of telecare services available. There are many others which might meet your needs. These will be discussed further with you when you apply.

How can telecare help me?

Telecare:

• Offers a safer home environment
• Enables you to stay in your own home with greater control over your lifestyle
• Provides reassurance and access to immediate support and help when needed
• Can support you when you come home from hospital

Photograph of chair sensor, courtesy of Tunstall Healthcare (UK) Ltd.
Who is entitled to community alarm and telecare services?

You may be eligible if you need care and support to live independently at home, whatever your age, and if you have increasing frailty, dementia, a long-term health condition, a physical disability, sensory impairment, mental health problems, or problems with substance misuse.

In particular, if you need to be able to summon help quickly in an emergency, you may receive these services.

Services are provided to those people in the greatest need first. Council staff use eligibility criteria to judge your priority for services.

These criteria are explained in the leaflets ‘Eligibility for Community Care’ and ‘Children’s Services in Aberdeenshire’, and are also available on the Social Care and Health pages on Aberdeenshire Council’s website: www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk

How do I apply?

If you think you, or a relative, neighbour or friend, may benefit from, and be eligible for, a community alarm or telecare service, you can apply by making a referral to us.

You can do this by calling the Customer Service Centre on 0845 608 1206, or completing a self-assessment form, available from the Community Alarm and Telecare pages on Aberdeenshire Council’s website: www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk

Please send your completed form to: Joint Equipment Centre, Burghmuir Place, Inverurie, AB51 4FW, or email: jointequipmentcentre@aberdeenshire.gov.uk

or discuss your needs with health or social care professionals.
Advisors will process your personal details, and details of your three keyholders, to enable equipment installation by the telecare technicians based at the Joint Equipment Centre in Inverurie.

After your referral is received by the Joint Equipment Centre, a technician will arrange to visit to install the community alarm and/or telecare equipment as requested. You and family members will receive instruction of how the equipment works and be able to speak to the advisors at the Regional Communications Centre in Aberdeen who respond to the alarm/sensors, detectors and alerts when help is required.

The service will be regularly reviewed to make sure you are happy with the service, and that it continues to meet your needs.

To report a fault please call the Regional Communications Centre on 01224 620610.

To request equipment return and uplift, please call 0845 608 1206, or return the equipment to a local council office with customer details.

To make a complaint about the community alarm or telecare service please email jointequipmentcentre@aberdeenshire.gov.uk or call 0845 608 1206.

**Will I have to pay?**

Aberdeenshire Council operates a charging policy for all community care services which are based on a person’s ability to pay. Depending on your income and ability to pay, you may be required to make a contribution to the cost of your community alarm and telecare service.

Details, including how your income is taken into account, are available in the booklet ‘Contributing Towards the Cost of Your Care’, and on Aberdeenshire Council’s website: www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk

More information on care at home is available in the booklet ‘Care at Home’, and on the council’s website: www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk
If you would like this information in large print, braille, audio tape or a language other than English, please contact Housing and Social Work on 0845 608 1206 or social.work@aberdeenshire.gov.uk