 Telehealth & Telecare Info for Carers

What is Telecare?

The use of technologies such as remote monitoring and emergency alarms to enable the unwell, at risk, disabled or frail to receive care at home so that they can live independently and stay in control of their support.

The following is information taken from Age UK’s website and last updated April 2023: <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/information-advice/care/housing-options/adapting-home/telecare/>

AGE UK Telehealth and Telecare

**What is Telehealth?** Telehealth equipment is designed to help people who live at home manage their long-term health conditions. These devices allow you to monitor your health without having to keep visiting your GP.

When you get the equipment, you will be shown how to take readings. They will automatically be sent to a health professional who will check your results and keep an eye on your health needs.

**How could telehealth help me?** If you have high blood pressure, a monitor can help you measure your blood pressure at home and automatically send the results to your GP. If you have asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, you can get a device that measures levels of oxygen in your blood to show how well you’re breathing. Your doctor or nurse can check these readings and give you help at an early stage.

If you’re diabetic, a glucose meter can keep a check on your blood sugar levels. You can also get a low blood sugar alarm that looks like a wristwatch. You wear it at night to warn you if your blood sugar drops when you’re asleep.

If you get recurring urinary infections, a simple telehealth device can test for this. You send the results electronically to your healthcare professional so you can get early treatment.

Ask your GP, health visitor, or community nurse about what's available in your area and whether you’re suitable for telehealth monitoring.

**What is telecare?** Telecare detects when there's a problem and sends alerts to a call centre which then organises help for you.For example, the alert might get sent if you left the gas on by accident, or a personal alarm would allow you to call for help if you had a fall.

**How could telecare help me?**

A **personal alarm**, which you wear as a pendant or bracelet, lets you call for help if you have a fall.

A **fall detector** can automatically sense if you’ve fallen. The alarm alerts someone, usually a member of staff at a response centre, without you needing to push a button.

An **intruder detector** can sense movement in your home and alert a response centre.

Pagers can notify your family or carer if a telecare sensor is activated. You can also get **bed sensors**, which let family or carers know if you get out of bed and don't return within a set period at night. This is useful if you're worried about falling in the night.

**Important \* New digital system:** Landlines across the UK are currently being switched over to a new digital system, which may affect telecare devices and personal alarms. This process will be gradual and won't be complete until the end of 2025. Your telephone service provider should contact you before the switch takes place. But you may wish to contact the supplier of any telecare devices you use to check if the device will work with the new system or whether any equipment may need to be upgraded.

*(N.B. I followed this up with BT who say: “We're making the switch because the analogue network that most home phones work on today is no longer fit for purpose and can't keep up with the demands of modern life. That outdated network will be switched off for all phone providers by 2025. This is a once in a generation upgrade to ensure that everyone stays connected now and into the future. ‘Digital Voice’ runs on the broadband network. Switching doesn’t cost anything. For most people, Digital phone lines will have no impact on how you use your home phone. You'll still have the same service, and your price plan and bills will stay the same. We'll be in contact when it's time to switch over, with simple instructions on what to do when it's your turn to make the switch. We're working closely with telecare and alarm providers to make sure that we know who is using their equipment. We want to make sure that you aren't moved over before your provider is ready, so please speak to your provider and they may ask you to call us to let us know which equipment you're using”).*

**How to get telecare products and services**

You may be eligible for help from your local council. Contact your local adult social services department and ask for a free care needs assessment. Depending on your needs, you may have a telecare service provided. Ask whether there’s a trial telecare scheme in place so you can make sure it’s suited to your needs.

Speak to your GP or an occupational therapist. They may recommend a telecare system as part of a continuing health or care package, but there’s often a charge for telecare services. Get in touch with your local council's adult social services department.

**What do I need to consider when buying telecare products?** Before spending money on a telecare product or service, you should consider some of the following things:

**Is telecare right for you?** Have you contacted your local adult social services department to ask for a care needs assessment? You may be entitled to financial help.Have you checked your benefits? If you’re eligible for a benefit such as Pension Credit, your council may charge you less for a telecare service.

**If you're buying a telecare product, you should:**

* List the things you want your product or service to do and check your list against the product's features.
* Check there’s a guarantee and a returns policy in case it doesn’t meet your needs.
* Read customer reviews to find out what other people think.
* If you need a larger or more expensive product, consider leasing or hiring it, as your needs may change in the future.
* Check different designs and think about how things will look in your home.
* Shop around for the best price.
* Ask whether the installer can come back regularly to check everything is working correctly.
* If you’re a carer, it's important that you make sure the person you’re caring for is comfortable and confident in using the product.

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Other Resources

**Living Made Easy (Previously the Disabled Living Foundation or DLF)**

Provides comprehensive lists of products and suppliers in your area for:

* Personal health alarms and alerts.
* Household alarms and alerts.
* Movement alarms and monitors
* Alarm buttons, pendants, and pagers.
* Autodiallers.
* Control boxes and monitors.

There is also an ‘Ask SARA’ option to guide you on whether a piece of kit is suitable. There are 3 steps to this – choose a topic, answer some questions and then you receive tailored advice.

Website: <https://livingmadeeasy.org.uk/>

**UK Telehealthcare**

Independent and impartial membership organisation for suppliers and providers of Telecare and Telehealth such as professionals, service providers, Clinical Commissioning Groups, Registered Social Landlords, suppliers and organisations with a related professional interest.

These may be especially useful for those with Social Landlords who may need more information to support you and your loved one.

Email address: admin@uktelehealthcare.com

Website: <https://www.uktelehealthcare.com/about-us/>

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