

Partnership working to support people with dementia



CROYDON COUNCIL

South London and Maudsley **NHS**
NHS Trust

The dilemma

Telecare has been identified in many evaluations as an effective tool for managing risk and enabling independent living, particularly for supporting people with dementia to remain in their own home for longer and alleviating carer stress.

How can the relevant stakeholders work in partnership to deliver improved outcomes for clients and their carers using new technology?



All the reassurance you need

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“It’s vital that the assessment includes ethical considerations, and the ability of the client to give informed consent must be discussed. Clients must be involved in choices about the technology in their home whenever possible.”

Barbara Dunk, Head OT, Integrated Mental Health of Older Adults

The need

Dementia currently affects around 700,000 people in the UK, with this figure set to rise dramatically as the profile of our population ages, to 1.5 million by 2050. The incidence of the condition rises with age, with 1 in 5 of those over 80 likely to have the condition.

In the past there has been little alternative to residential care for many people living with the effects of dementia as the disease progresses. This change of environment in itself can prove distressing and often detrimental.

Telecare has been instrumental in facilitating a shift towards innovative models of support; in particular, new approaches to housing are emerging which manage risks and enable more independent living.

“Telecare has a huge role to play in supporting people with dementia and those who care for them.”

Brian Longman, Project Co-ordinator

The project

The Croydon Assistive Technology Dementia Project commenced in February 2004, and aimed to “Pilot the installation of assistive and electronic technology to support people with dementia and their carers within their own home”. The project is subject to continuous evaluation, with a report planned to be published at the end of 2005.

The aims of the project are:

- To offer a range of assistive technology and telecare products to enable people with dementia to remain living at home if that is their wish
- To promote independence and choice for both client and carer
- To reduce the risk of accidents and safety related incidents in and around the home
- To reduce avoidable entry into residential and hospital care
- To reduce carer stress and improve the quality of life for both client and carer

The project has also successfully developed a Croydon-based Resource Centre, incorporating telecare. This facility is used extensively to both promote the project to carers and professionals, and also to develop and test new dementia friendly telecare and stand-alone equipment.



Case study

Mrs A is a 90 year old widow with severe dementia who lives alone. She became known to Mental Health Services following a wandering episode during the early hours of the morning. Following her admission to hospital Mrs A continually voiced her desire to return home, but the mental health team felt that she would be too vulnerable to live alone at home. Mrs A underwent a range of assessments, which concluded that despite her disorientation, she was still able to carry out some everyday tasks, such as making a hot drink. However the mental health team were still sufficiently concerned about her memory problems, and general safety that a residential placement was considered her only option.

At this point a telecare service was being introduced to mental health in Croydon, which gave the team the opportunity to review Mrs A's options. A telecare plan was then prepared for discussion with Mrs A's family and the team. Risks and their solutions were identified as follows:

- Falls during the night - bed occupancy sensor
- Gas escapes as a result of inappropriate use of gas appliances - gas detector for both cooker and fire
- Fire - smoke alarm
- High temperature as a result of cooker misuse - temperature extremes sensor
- Hypothermia - temperature extremes sensor
- Nocturnal wandering - property exit sensor

Property exit sensors provided an immediate alert if Mrs A left the house after dark, and a time related alarm if she left the house during the day.

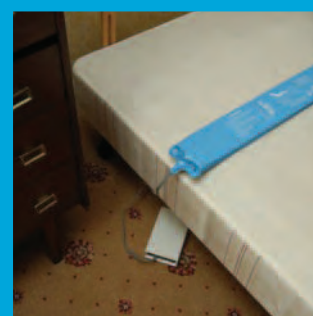
Mrs A was then able to return home, with a full care package, including telecare. The original risks identified were largely being managed by the use of technology, which had relieved many of her family's concerns.



Gas Detector



Temperature Extremes Sensor



Bed Occupancy Sensor



Smoke Detector



Property Exit Sensor

Summary

Although the project is ongoing and will not produce a formalised report for some time, many valuable lessons have already been learnt. The following offers useful triggers and guidelines for groups starting similar projects:

- The availability of local 'responders', who would be both reliable and willing to provide some assistance to the client
- A detailed environmental check of the property
- Full risk assessment

Assessment

A key part of the project is obviously assessment, and one of the major project outcomes so far has been the generation of assessment guidelines. Following an initial mental health assessment (including a risk assessment), and an occupational performance assessment, the project has found the specialist assessment should comprise (in brief):

- A detailed account of 'the client's day' over a 24 hour period

Ongoing Reviews

Regular reviews are essential, as the client's mental state and situation will change over time, and additional equipment or other changes to the care plan may be required. Clients and carers may require different levels of support as they adjust to the system and gain confidence with it, and regular contact is required with responders, both formal and informal, to monitor the health of both client and carer. A close working relationship with the monitoring centre is vital to review calls histories and amend protocols and settings accordingly.

For further information please call 01977 660479

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