

Call well and good

Jun 17, 2020

Isolation

When the UK's lockdown began, two million people deemed to be clinically extremely vulnerable were advised to 'shield'; staying at home at all times with food parcels supplied if they had no friends or family who could fetch essentials. An additional nine million people over 70 were advised to stay at home, minimising contact with people outside their household.

Many local authorities have implemented new initiatives to support these groups of people, including regular contact by telephone to check on their wellbeing. Some staff in roles that can't be undertaken during the outbreak have been redeployed to make calls to older and vulnerable people, acting where any risks are detected and providing valuable human contact. However, as the lockdown begins to lift, many of these staff are returning to their day jobs, and yet millions of vulnerable people are still isolated at home. In many cases, carers for these groups have also been impacted physically and mentally during lockdown, particularly as many charities can no longer offer the same services as they did pre-lockdown, and support such as lunch clubs and carers groups are no longer possible.

So how can councils continue to offer support to some of the most vulnerable people in their areas during the crisis, whilst also beginning to resume some of the other services affected by COVID-19?

New solutions

Tunstall has developed a range of solutions to help local authorities respond effectively to the outbreak, including maintaining their contact with vulnerable citizens.

Proactive Call Service

Tunstall Response is able to offer a [Proactive Call Service](#) to residents already using its community alarm/telecare services, to help Local Authorities to support people shielding and isolating, particularly where they may have no next of kin, or no family or friends close by. Response operators will call residents on a regular basis to check on their wellbeing and offer advice/signpost to other services as required. Service users can of course also press the button on their Lifeline home unit or on their pendant in the event of an emergency and be connected to Tunstall Response 24 hours a day.

Tunstall Connect

[Tunstall Connect](#) is a smart device app which enables Tunstall Response to schedule wellbeing calls with individuals who don't have traditional telecare devices and solutions. Users can easily download the app to their Android or iOS device, and will then receive a regular wellbeing call, which they are able to opt in and out of by pressing the I'm OK buttons in the app. The app also features an SOS button, which will raise a call at Tunstall Response if the user wants to request help. Tunstall Connect also has GPS functionality, which can be used after a period of social isolation to provide reassurance away from home.

A trusted service

Tunstall Response will work with authorities to agree calling schedules and escalation procedures for all services, ensuring local needs are met. As a Telecare Services Association's Quality Standards Framework accredited organisation, Tunstall Response can provide assurance to commissioners and users that the services they receive will be of a high standard, and that all operators have received extensive specialist training.

There have been many gains made using technology during the COVID-19 crisis, including realising the value of proactive contact with people who are isolated, and how this can not only support them during a crisis, but when applied longer term can prevent an escalation in care needs, as the example below demonstrates.

Case study

In Spain, proactive calling combined with telecare support has been a core part of social care delivery for many years. A recent study found that older people offered proactive and personalised technology were able to stay independent at home for on average 8.6 months (262 days) longer, before having to move to a care home facility, equating to a potential cost avoidance of £5,900 per person. Emergency calls for help were also reduced by 54% and ambulance mobilisations by 36%. Service users reported feeling significantly safer (96%) and more self-sufficient (78%) – with 98% feeling it gave peace of mind to their family, including family members caring for them.

For more information on how Tunstall Response can support local authorities during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, please [click here](#).