Tunstall

Enabling independent living

London Borough of Hillingdon – using telecare to support people with learning disabilities

Hatton Grove aims to promote and enhance the lives of all our service users through privacy, dignity, independence, choice and protection of rights.

The challenge

Hillingdon is London's second largest borough, and is home to around 278,000 people. The council's vision for 'putting our residents first' is driven by taking a forward-thinking and innovative approach to a range of initiatives, including the delivery of social care.

Hillingdon Council's Adult Social Care, working in partnership with the NHS in Hillingdon, has recently developed a new model of care incorporating telecare and reablement services, reducing reliance on residential care. The aim is to create a fundamental shift in service provision away from institutionalised care, towards home-based support, risk prevention and early intervention. This transformational approach to social care has already delivered significant financial and quality-of-life benefits, by supporting people in their own homes.

However, there will always be a need for provision of care for those people who cannot be supported at home, including people with adults learning disabilities and more complex needs.

How can telecare contribute to making residential care settings places that enhance the lives of the people who live and work there?

Highlights

- Privacy and independence of service users enhanced
- Staff feel better able to offer individualised support
- Service users' safety protected
- Staff have more time to interact with service users
- Telecare can be easily adapted to changing needs

> Whilst recognising that the preferred housing options for people should be personalised, it is also necessary to offer a range of accommodation that meets the needs of Hillingdon's residents, including residential care.
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> In Hillingdon, the services offered in a care home include the latest technology to enhance quality of life for residents and ensure safe and individualised service delivery.
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> Hillingdon continues to work towards greater independence, where appropriate, for its residential care users and telecare forms part of the support package that enables people to lead full and independent lives.

Sandra Taylor, Service Manager, Resources for Adults and Older People

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Background

Hatton Grove is a Care Quality Commission (CQC) registered residential care home in Middlesex, supporting adults with a range of learning and physical disabilities. The home is divided into four units, and can support up to 20 adults, each benefiting from their own personal space. Hatton Grove also contains a small flat to support a service user to live independently.

At Hatton Grove, all service users need 24 hour care and support. All have complex health needs and physical disabilities and half need two members of staff to assist with all transfers.

As none of the service users can access the community on their own, due to their complex disabilities, a range of support is offered by the in-house teams ranging from aromatherapy and speech therapy to help accessing online education. Hatton Grove provides a warm, caring and stimulating environment in which the people who live there are able to develop skills and achieve maximum quality of life. Staff aim to encourage the intellectual, emotional and social development of service users through guidance, support, counselling and by providing positive role models.

How has telecare been used at Hatton Grove?

Each of the four flats at Hatton Grove is staffed separately, with eight staff on shift at any one time covering all the flats during the day. During the night, two waking night staff are onsite along with a duty senior. Occupancy levels vary from flat to flat, with six people living in two of the flats, five in another and three in the last.

> To me, supporting the people that live here is as much about encouraging their passions and developing their abilities as it is about ensuring their personal care needs are met.
>
> Telecare has been fantastic for us. Not only does it help to manage risk and preserve dignity, it also frees up staff, enabling them to spend more personal time with the people they work with.

Jenna Cowling, Registered Care Manager, Hatton Grove

Despite the high level of care provided, staff continually seek to improve the lives of people living at Hatton Grove and night staff in particular sought a means of ensuring they would still be aware of any seizures, falls or incidents but without the need to make impersonal and undignified half-hourly checks, disturbing service users.

In 2010-11, Hatton Grove completed the Dignity Challenge, a 10 step process designed to ascertain how people's dignity is respected. As a result, small changes were made, including staff using small torches rather than turning main lights on during night time checks. However, further changes were required, and it was decided to evaluate the advantages of using telecare.

Telecare was introduced gradually to Hatton Grove - initially, with a small number of sensors being used for a week - to assess the benefits to service users. The aim was to maintain privacy and dignity whilst keeping service users safe.

What solutions were employed?

Sensors have been put in place to support the night staff team, with sensors active from 9pm until 6am.

Epilepsy sensors have been used to support service users who have a diagnosis of epilepsy but are largely seizure free. Staff no longer need to make checks on these service users every half an hour during the night, helping to maintain their dignity and privacy.

A door sensor has been used for one service user whose mobility means she is at a greater risk of falling if she leaves her room, and as she becomes distressed when other service users enter her room. Staff are now immediately alerted if the door opens during the night, indicating one of these events. See Helen's case study on page 4.

A bed occupancy sensor has been fitted for an older service user who leaves his bed at night to visit the bathroom and is at risk of falling. Previously, he would often wake when staff checked on his safety in the night and he would get out of bed and follow them. Now he remains undisturbed, but staff will be alerted if he leaves his bed and can assist him to the bathroom.

A PIR (movement sensor) has been used to support a service user prone to leaving her bed at night, but for whom a bed occupancy sensor wasn't appropriate due to her sleeping positions. Previously staff inadvertently woke her on occasions when making their checks, but they are now immediately alerted if the PIR senses her leaving her bed. See Emma's case study on page 4.

The CareAssist pager receives alerts from all of the other sensors, and indicates to staff which device has been activated so they are able to offer swift support to the correct service user.

Case study - Helen and Emma have lived together for 60 years, latterly at Hatton Grove.

Helen's story

Challenge

Helen is 68 and has a dual diagnosis of severe learning disabilities and mental health issues. Although she is unable to communicate verbally, Helen makes it very clear she does not want any night staff in her room. Helen also has arthritis in both knees and whilst quite safe in her room, she is at risk of falling in communal areas. Other service users at Hatton Grove sometimes enter Helen's room at night, which she finds upsetting and on occasion their boisterous behaviour has been of concern to staff regarding Helen's safety. Items have also been taken from Helen's room, and sometimes thrown from her window.

Solution

A door sensor has been fitted to the main door of Helen's flat, which immediately alerts care staff via the CareAssist pager so they are able to offer her assistance.

Outcome

Since the door sensor has been fitted, staff no longer need to make frequent checks to ensure Helen's wellbeing as they will be alerted if she leaves the safety of her flat, thus complying with her desire for privacy. The system also means staff can be on hand if Helen ventures into the corridor at night, helping to mitigate the risk of her falling.

Helen's flatmates are now aware that staff will be immediately on hand should one of them enter her room, which has considerably reduced the instances of night-time disturbance. The use of telecare at Hatton Grove has reduced the number of night time checks staff need to make, increasing the time they have to spend with service users. Now, if Helen chooses to leave her room during the night, staff are able to sit with her, spending social time with her interacting and looking at books.

Emma's story

Challenge

Emma is 69, and has severe learning disabilities, along with Crohn's disease and has periods of hyper-mania. She walks and spins in circles constantly and can be awake for 24-36 hours at a time. When she does go to bed, she may get up three or four times during the night. Staff were checking on Emma regularly when she was asleep to ensure her safety, but this often woke her and was having a detrimental effect on her mental health.

Solution

Because Emma often sleeps curled up in different parts of her bed, a bed occupancy sensor was not appropriate. Instead, a bed level PIR (movement sensor) was fitted in Emma's room and configured to alert staff if she leaves her bed. An override switch was fitted to enable the PIR to be turned on and off during the hours the telecare system is usually operational (9pm to 6am) to accommodate Emma's irregular sleeping patterns. Should Emma leave her bed during this time period, staff can switch off the PIR and switch it on again when she returns to bed.

Outcome

Emma is no longer woken up by care staff checking on her wellbeing whilst she is asleep, and seems more content. She enjoys company and because telecare has freed staff time, Emma is able to enjoy more one-to-one social interaction, improving her quality of life.
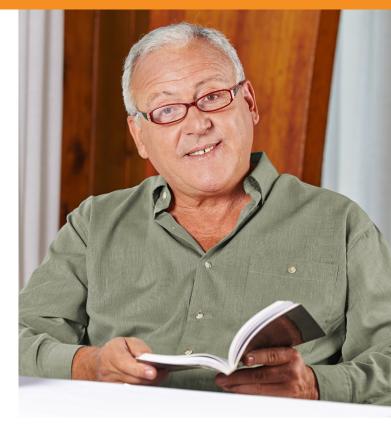
Results

A before and after survey showed staff saw a significant improvement in how well they were able to respect service users' privacy and automony.

Staff no longer feel they are invading people's privacy by making regular checks, or disturbing their sleep, yet still feel reassured that the people they are caring for are safe. Despite some initial scepticism about the technology, care workers at Hatton Grove now trust telecare, and find it a great support to them in their jobs. Care workers can also spend more quality time with the people living at Hatton Grove, and can accommodate individual needs and interests more easily.

Prior to telecare being used, staff spent much of their time, particularly at night, walking from room to room to check on the welfare of the people they support. Now they have been able to significantly reduce these regular checks, which has freed their time to undertake more meaningful activities, such as e-learning, to aid their professional development. Staff also have the time to write night reports in a much greater level of detail than was previously possible. This in itself has brought numerous benefits including enabling all stakeholders to gain a more holistic and detailed picture of a service user's health and wellbeing over a period of time and revealing any decline at an earlier stage than may otherwise be the case.

Service users have not found the technology intrusive. Many of the sensors are largely invisible when in place, and those that aren't have not proven to be of interest to service users. The introduction of telecare has also helped family and friends to feel reassured that their loved-ones are safely supported.

> **The epilepsy sensors are fantastic because we now don't disturb anyone through the night. We now only make one check to make sure service users are safe and comfortable.**
>
> **Support worker at Hatton Grove**

Next steps

The staff at Hatton Grove remain committed to providing appropriate, personalised care and support, adapting plans according to the changing needs of the people who live there. The telecare solutions employed will evolve as part of these changing requirements. Over time, new service users will be welcomed to Hatton Grove, and their needs will be reviewed to assess how telecare may provide beneficial support.

Telecare has made significant improvements to the level of privacy and personalised care provided at Hatton Grove, and whilst it remains a residential care home, it is in no way an institution.

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