

Using telecare to support prisoners with care needs

The challenge

Recent years have seen a dramatic increase in the number of older prisoners in the UK, with the number of prisoners over 60 tripling in 15 years and 14,000 prisoners over 50 predicted by June 2020.¹ Some of the older prisoners, and others with disabilities or health conditions, have care needs which must be met as a requirement of the Care Act 2014.

How is HM Prison Wymott near Leyland in Lancashire using telecare technology to effectively support prisoners with health and care needs?

What we did

Lancashire County Council is working with Tunstall Healthcare and Progress Housing Group, a local social housing provider, to make much greater use of telecare services in Lancashire, as part of its commitment to preventing, reducing or delaying the need for health and care services; improving people's outcomes; and giving carers peace of mind.

Since the service was introduced in 2015 about 6,800 people (as at October 2017), who all meet the national eligibility threshold under the Care Act, are supported with telecare. This includes a number of prisoners at HMP Wymott.

A Lifeline Vi+ home unit has been installed in a secure room of the relevant wing of the prison, which is connected to a dedicated telephone line. Eligible prisoners are referred to the telecare service by social workers, and have use of a bed occupancy sensor and/or a Vibby wrist worn fall detector according to their assessed needs. The bed occupancy sensors will raise an alert if they detect a prisoner has left their bed for more than ten minutes during



the hours of 8.00pm and 8.00am. The Vibby will raise an alert if it detects a heavy fall, and wearers can also press the button on the face of the Vibby if they require help. All alerts are received at Progress Housing Group's Control Centre, and a trained operator will then call the Communications Room at the prison which is staffed 24 hours a day to let them know which sensor has alerted. A member of staff will then check on the wellbeing of the prisoner.

“ We've recently started using telecare in prisons to help meet the care and support needs of prisoners, as required by the Care Act. This is a great example of how collaboration and creativity can help manage risks and meet people's needs in a cost effective way.

Tony Pounder, Director of Adult Services, Lancashire County Council.

¹ Nigel Newcomen, Learning from PPO investigations: Older Prisoners, June 2017

Results

Since the system was introduced in September 2017, six prisoners eligible to receive ongoing social care support at Wymott have needs which have been met safely and in a cost effective way by use of telecare (as at December 2017).

Using the system means that staff are quickly alerted if a prisoner experiences a critical health event, such as a seizure, fall or cardiac arrest. Within a few days of the system being installed, an alert was received as a result of a prisoner suffering a major stroke. Staff, who would otherwise have been unaware, were able to respond and summon the necessary medical assistance.

Prior to the system being installed, three waking watch carers were employed each day between the hours of 8.00pm and 8.00am. Telecare has meant this is no longer required, as the system provides constant monitoring. Cost savings made as a result will be significant.

Six bed occupancy sensors and six Vibby fall detectors have been supplied to the prison and can be used for any prisoner referred to the service. The equipment is easily transferable between prisoners as their needs alter over time or as the occupants of the wing change.

Telecare is an innovative and cost effective means of managing risks 24 hours a day, supporting the independence of prisoners and helping to improve their quality of life. This helps Lancashire County Council to fulfil its obligations under the Care Act, which requires that all adults in prison settings should expect broadly similar access to and levels of social care and support as the rest of the population.



“ We are looking after older men, and men who are at risk of falling or other incidents which require a quick response. The telecare system means we’re alerted if an event occurs, and helps us to ensure prisoners’ safety and wellbeing without the need for intensive monitoring by staff. The system has been very successful to date and I would heartily support its introduction in other prisons.

Mick Butler, Custodial Manager, HMP Wymott