

asap guardian

Assured safety, alarms and protection

The regular newspaper from the Association of Social Alarms Providers

Government backs social alarms standard

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has reaffirmed its endorsement of the ASAP Code of Practice as "the applicable technical standard for the funding of alarm services from Supporting People budgets" (in England). As a result, all housing support services providing an alarm system to their clients or tenants will need to ensure that their service meets the requirements of the ASAP Code of Practice. For those providers purchasing alarm services, the best measure of compliance is provided by audited accreditation to the ASAP Code of Practice.

ASAP is continuing to work with the Welsh Assembly, the Northern Ireland Executive and the Scottish Executive to obtain a level playing field for all alarm services and ensure that all customers receive the protection afforded by the ASAP Code of Practice.

John Hennock, Executive Director of ASAP said, "We are delighted with the endorsement of our belief that a commonly adopted standard, voluntarily maintained but audited by an independent body, is the right way to ensure quality and safety for customers".

Also in this issue:

ASAP telecare conference / Guildford falls project / Dementia sufferers can stay home longer **p/2**

A day in the life / New ASAP website on line **p/3**

Healthy independent people awareness week / More members opt for code compliance **p/4**

asap

ASAP Guardian is the regular newsletter of
The Association of Social Alarms Providers
4 Beaufort House, Beaufort Court, Sir Thomas
Longley Road, Rochester, Kent, ME2 4FB
Tel: 0870 043 4052 Fax: 01634 281234
Email: info@asap-uk.org
Website: www.asap-uk.org

Telecare 'not an age thing'

To some the wearing of an alarm pendant is seen as a 'stigmata of age', but this is a rapidly changing view as the benefits of social alarms are extended to more of society's vulnerable members.

Social alarm systems are being increasingly relied upon to enable people to lead independent but secure lives either in their own homes or in managed and sheltered accommodation. Alarms can help not just older or disabled people, but also people with allergies, individuals recovering from serious illness, or potential victims of crime.

Police forces in many areas in Britain are using alarm systems and call centres to protect people of all age groups who may be prey to such risks as domestic violence, racial harassment and abuse, including small shopkeepers in areas with a high incidence of crime.

In a letter to ASAP member Vale Housing, Jon Smith, Thames Valley Police Community Safety Inspector says "...the allocation of the domestic violence alarms by the Vale Housing Association is greatly valued.

Fortunately, it is rare for the alarms that are fitted to be activated. However, the comfort and reassurance that they offer to people is immeasurable."

The protection of children, too, can be enhanced by the use of social alarms. Where both parents or a single parent are working, children returning from school to an empty house can be 'logged in' and protected by the alarm service until a parent returns. Remote workers or staff who have to pass through isolated or high risk areas in the course of their work can be monitored continuously or periodically to ensure their safety. Estate agents' staff who show individuals they do not know around empty premises can also be protected in this way.

Call centres all over the country are being asked to co-operate in the development of services to enhance the security of people of all age groups and backgrounds, contributing to the ongoing safety of our communities.



ASAP telecare conference showcases pioneering work

ASAP organised a ground-breaking conference on the impact of telecare technology and services on people's lives earlier this year. Speakers from national and local government, healthcare professionals and researchers combined to show how rapidly developing telecare initiatives can keep people in their homes longer and more safely.

Geoff Bashton, from the Department of Health, urged delegates to work closely with their local hospitals and GP surgeries to ensure that they fully understand the part that telecare can play in helping to enable people to remain in their own homes for longer; get easier access to services and greater control over them, access greater choice and support carers.

"... Telecare.... is about meeting individual needs and requirements, but we must also be aware of the balance between civil liberty and actual personal needs", said Mr Bashton.

He described ways in which the government is seeking to achieve 15% more usage of telecare by 2004 and called for suppliers to research people's needs more closely to develop 'high-street' products which

heighten public awareness of the benefits and encourage a freely operating market in telecare products and services.



Geoff Bashton, Department of Health.

Dementia sufferers can stay home longer

Brian Frisbee and John Woolham of Northamptonshire Social Services described the 'Safe at Home' project, which took telecare into the challenging world of dementia care and delivered substantial benefits to individuals and the welfare budget, by helping people to stay safely in their own homes for longer.



John Woolham of Northamptonshire Social Services.

It is well known that dementia sufferers experience a marked deterioration in their condition when taken from their home environment into a nursing home. It therefore makes sense to explore ways in which a relatively superior quality of life can be maintained at home, for as long as possible, without risk of accidental harm.

A sample group of 12 service users was supplied with a limited range of sensors and devices such as automatic gas and electric cooker switch-offs, passive alarms to alert a remote call centre in cases of wandering etc, and alerting devices for resident carers. The study concluded that the technology

Guildford project reduces risks from falling

Helping older people to remain independent and in their own homes longer was a recurring theme at the conference. 'The Guildford Falls Project' presented by Gerry Allmark and Barbara Collins described ways in which remote monitoring devices could play a part in reducing emergency response times and minimise the need for hospital admissions. Their survey assessed the acceptability of remote monitoring to people at risk of falling and their carers.

Carers are often overlooked when assessing the needs of patients at risk of falling or more vulnerable people living alone. Both professional carers and families and friends looking after older people were aided in a practical way by the effective deployment of interactive sensing, monitoring and communications devices in the home of the patient. To many, it was the key to sleeping properly, and being able to assess remotely whether immediate help was needed.

The users concluded overwhelmingly that the use of monitoring and communications devices had improved their quality of life.



Gerry Allmark from 'The Guildford Falls Project'.

definitely assisted dementia patients to maintain their independence. The quality of life of carers was also improved, with less anxiety and improved sleep cited as much valued benefits.

Northamptonshire Social Services achieved a net saving of some £23,000 over a 6 month period in care costs, considerably less than the cost of installing and maintaining the equipment.

A day in the life

One of the latest members to achieve ASAP Code of Practice accreditation, South Somerset Carelines, is no stranger to standards awards. The Yeovil-based telecare service has twice been awarded a prestigious national Chartermark (each award runs for 3 years) and its staff have been commended as "...excellent ambassadors for Careline".

South Somerset Careline was established by South Somerset District Council in 1981, principally for more vulnerable tenants in the Council's sheltered accommodation. The centre now serves a more diverse customer base, with over 5,500 direct connections, most of whom are over 65 years of age, although there is an expanding younger client group. Their clients include South Somerset Homes and they also monitor 8 private schemes in the South West and a range of private clients using dispersed alarms.

As well as the general monitoring service for older and vulnerable people, the Centre provides an increasingly important service in conjunction with Somerset Police to monitor racial harassment and domestic violence. In addition, 'Careline' covers all out-of-hours calls for the Local Authority and South Somerset Homes' maintenance service. They already offer lone worker monitoring and are continuing to develop flexible procedures and care for people in potentially hazardous situations, a growing need in today's increasingly uncertain society.



Mary George, Customer Support Officer, shows a new customer how the system works.

The staff team consists of 11 operators working shifts to provide a full 24-hour service, a Customer Support Team of 4 who also install equipment and train customers to use it correctly, 2 administrative staff and the manager, Debbie Gough.

Induction training for new operators consists of 4 weeks intensive personal training, then the 'trainee' shadows operators on a mix of shifts, working through a checklist of competencies in order to ensure that the appropriate skills are thoroughly learned. They always have 3 operators on duty from 8.30 am to 9.30 pm, 1 night operator and a second night operator sleeping on site.

The team is highly committed to customer care and listening to customers is a key part of this process, as Judith Wilkins, Customer Support Team Leader, explained. "We formed a User Panel in 1998 as part of

our preparation for our successful Chartermark application. The Panel comprises a mixture of tenants from sheltered accommodation, non-scheme managed sites, Scheme Managers and dispersed alarm users. We meet every couple of months at the Careline offices in Yeovil, and the informal meetings have proven extremely useful in ensuring the service meets customer needs."



South Somerset Careline's service centre.

New ASAP website on line

The ASAP website www.asap-uk.org has been completely revamped with attractive new design and much new content. The site includes a wealth of information about telecare, what it is and who can benefit, and enables members of the public to find approved local suppliers of telecare services. It also provides a range of information for telecare providers and other professionals with an interest in telecare.



ASAP major sponsor for 'Healthy Independent People' event

'Healthy Independent People' (HIP) Awareness Week was organised by the national sheltered housing consortium EROSH, and launched at the House of Commons, with the launch event and exhibition sponsored by ASAP.



Imogen Parry of EROSH, Kevin McSorley of ASAP & Jacqui Smith, MP.

Over 90 housing providers and telecare users gathered to hear speakers, including Government Health Minister Jacqui Smith, who endorsed the position taken by ASAP on the need to provide appropriate housing support in the community. Kevin McSorley, Chair of ASAP, gave an overview of telecare provision and 95 year old Percy Morris described his rigorous daily schedule of exercise and activity, which left many far younger people in the audience gasping!

During the event, prizes were presented to the winners of the EROSH 'National Activity of the Year' competition. Among the winners were no fewer than staff and residents from 4 ASAP member organisations:

Anchor Trust's 'Northgates Singers' were joint winners (with Central and Cecil Housing) of the 'Making Music Award'. The group comprises around 20 singers, made up of residents from Northgate House, Wetherby and people from the local community, together with their teacher / pianist. They are popular performers both



Anchor Trust's 'Northgate Singers'.

at the scheme itself and in various venues around their area.

The residents of Hanover Housing Association's scheme, Hanover Court in Tewkesbury, put their creative skills to good use and were delighted to receive the 'Best Practice in Communications' Award for their newsletter and internal communication amongst themselves and their estate manager.

Residents and staff of Warrington Borough Council's sheltered scheme, Woolston Hall, won the 'Helping Others' award for their wide range of fundraising efforts.

Trent & Dove Housing Ltd received recognition for their innovative 'Extend' movement to music classes. These weekly classes are attended by 100 tenants and people from the local community (aged 55 – 96) and won them the 'Healthy Agenda' award.



Trent & Dove Housing movement to music class.

The House of Commons launch event heralded the start the nationwide awareness initiative, which featured a whole host of events up and down the country.

More members opt for code compliance

Social alarms providers large and small, from all over the country, are achieving accreditation against the new ASAP Code of Practice. This means that an ever-larger group of users among the public are benefiting from the assurance that their alarm service provider works to the highest standards of quality and service.

At the time of going to press, 14 ASAP members have completed the independent auditing process and achieved accreditation. Together, they serve around 110,000 alarm users. A further 5 service providers are awaiting audit, and their successful accreditation will swell the numbers of users who have the assurance the Code brings to around 146,000.

All members who have completed the Code accreditation process speak of the boost to staff morale as a result of achievement. "It has been a great team effort and it is very satisfying to have your achievement recognised in this way" is a typical response from these call centres who work on a day-to-day basis, around the clock, to ensure the safety and well-being of their customers.

We would like to run regular features on care teams and people in the ASAP Guardian. If you think your telecare centre, housing scheme manager or mobile warden service would make an interesting story, why not call us and arrange a special report. Contact the ASAP Head Office on 0870 043 4052. ASAP Guardian welcomes readers' letters or suggestions for future items.