

NEWS RELEASE

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Released by: Home Telehealth Limited - Bristol

Belfast Water Shortage – affecting local people with long-term health conditions

Thomas Gorman who lives in East Belfast suffers from severe diabetes. Thomas who lives with his disabled wife has been without water for over 4 days. Thomas and his wife have been unable to go to the water collection points setup by Northern Ireland Water.

Thomas who is an insulin dependent diabetic had resorted to drinking lemonade to keep him hydrated, unfortunately this had the adverse effect of increasing his blood sugars over the past 24 hours.

Thankfully, Thomas is monitored daily using Telehealth technology provided by The Ulster Hospital. The Telehealth service is delivered by a Bristol based company, Home Telehealth Limited (HTL), through its Telehealth Care Centre, located at Weavers Court, Belfast.

Thomas is one of 150 patients in both Belfast and South Eastern Trust who carry out a monitoring session each morning in the comfort of their own home using a Telehealth monitor which connects to their telephone line. The monitor gathers their vital signs such as Blood Sugar, Blood Pressure, Heart Rate, Blood Oxygen levels and Temperature as well as asking the patients questions about their health status. The monitoring session lasts for around 5 minutes after which all the information is sent securely down the phone line to the HTL Telehealth Care Centre nursing team.

The information sent from the patient is reviewed by HTL's Telehealth Nurses within 30minutes. The nurses look for trends or vital signs that are outside the normal limits for that individual patient and if an abnormality is detected the Telehealth Nurse will contact the patient by phone and carryout a consultation with the patient to ascertain their medical condition.

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Today, one of the HTL's Telehealth Nurses was reviewing the vitals sent from Thomas' Telehealth monitor and she noticed a significant increase in his blood sugar readings in the past 24 hours. Thomas was contacted by the Telehealth Nurse and through clinical questioning Thomas informed the nurse that he had no drinking water and due to his medical condition and his wife's disability he was unable to get to the water collection points and resorted to drinking lemonade which had increased his blood sugars to a very high level.

Making further enquiries the Telehealth Nurse discovered that Thomas had no family who could bring him water. The Telehealth Nurse decided that this was a critical situation for Thomas and after numerous calls made contact with Northern Ireland Water and explained Thomas' situation. Northern Ireland Water agreed that they would deliver bottles of water to Thomas as a matter of urgency.

Thomas stated today that he is so glad he had the Telehealth monitor installed. The monitor has given him great confidence and assurance. Knowing that a nurse is reviewing him every day is fantastic and he feels that he is able to manage his condition with all the support he gets from the nurses at the Ulster Hospital and the HTL Telehealth Nurses who phone him most days.

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Notes to Editors:

What is Telehealth?

Telehealth is a method of care delivery that is being widely used throughout the UK and Northern Ireland to manage patient suffering from long term conditions such as Chronic Pulmonary Disorder (COPD) Congestive Heart Failure (CHF) and Chronic Diabetes.

Patients have a Telehealth monitor installed in their home which is connected to their phone line of a mobile network. The monitor the size of a digital alarm clock records their vital signs and asks specific question about the health status. This information is sent to a clinician who can review the data to see if a patient is deteriorating and may need medication or treatment. Telehealth has been used widely throughout the world to prevent patients with chronic conditions ending up in A&E or hospital.

Telehealth brings about a number of benefits both for patients and the NHS including:

- Reduction is hospital admissions
- Reduction in GP visits
- Reduction in community nursing costs
- Allows community nursing teams to increase their case loads and reduce bed blocking
- Allows patients to be better self managers of their medical conditions
- Provides patients and families with reassurance

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About Home Telehealth Limited (HTL)

Home Telehealth Limited (HTL) is a provider of Clinical Telehealth Managed Services dedicated to bringing innovation to Health, Social Care Providers, Industry and Consumers.

Home Telehealth Ltd (HTL) is a company based in Belfast, Cardiff & Bristol. HTL has been delivering Telehealth Services to both the Belfast and South Eastern Health & Social Care Trusts for the past 4 years. During this time over 1,200 patients have benefited from the Telehealth managed service which is delivered 365 days a year.

HTL is one of the fastest growing Telehealth companies in the UK and has been established since 2002 both as a technology supplier and service delivery company.

HTL won National Awards in 2008, 2009 and 2010 for “Partnering with the NHS and delivering Innovation” leading to improved patient care whilst reducing operating costs for the NHS.

HTL has been awarded a four year framework agreement by Buying Solutions for the supply of Telehealth Products, Telehealth Services, Telecoaching Products and Services and Managed Services.

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