

Embargo 00.01am Thursday 8th March 2012

O2 Health takes telecare mobile

Today, [O2 Health](#) launches Help at Hand, the UK's first telecare service built around mobile technology. In a major step forward for the care industry, Help at Hand expands telecare support beyond the boundaries of the home giving people with long term conditions the freedom, reassurance and support they need to go about their daily lives – outside of their immediate care environment.

Help at Hand is a complete mobile telecare service that encompasses an easy to carry mobile-enabled pendant or wristwatch connected to a secure website and 24/7 alarm receiving centre. The service is developed specifically for health and social care settings where there is a major focus on using technology to improve care services, provide greater patient choice and manage healthcare resources more efficiently.

The use of telecare is proven to help delay or avoid unnecessary admission to care homes, reduce emergency call outs, days in hospital and importantly reduce risk to the user. In addition, where the cost benefit of existing telecare solutions has been assessed, it is estimated that a total of £5.8 million has been saved in care services – across just 1,722 service users in England.¹

However, only 1% of available telecare solutions in the UK are mobile-based, leaving many people with long-term conditions with little choice when it comes to accessing support beyond the fixed boundaries of their homes.

Keith Nurcombe, managing director of O2 Health, says: “The health and social care landscape in the UK is changing rapidly – more people require long term care, resources are under pressure, patients are demanding more choice – providers are being asked to do a lot more with a lot less. We believe there is huge potential for technology to help – in terms of giving patients more independence as well as reducing the cost and resources required for building-based care.”

¹ Review of published literature conducted by [Medipex](#), the NHS Innovation Hub for Yorkshire and Humber region

Help at Hand gives users the freedom and reassurance to get out and about, whilst staying connected to the people and support they depend upon for care. A discreet pendant or wristwatch connects them to a 24/7/365 alarm receiving centre with specially trained staff who can help. Features of the pendant or wristwatch include a fall down detector and GPS so the user's location can be identified. Safe zones can also be defined; and if the individual moves out of this zone the receiving centre is alerted and staff can take the appropriate action. Guidelines for the user's care are set up via the secure Help at Hand website.

Nurcombe continues: "For many groups of patients now being considered for telecare services, being confined to their homes is no longer acceptable. They want to be able to go about their daily lives with the reassurance that help is quickly available should they need it. Mobile technology is a natural fit – this is where we have identified a need and developed Help at Hand to meet it."

Help at Hand was developed in conjunction with [Telefónica Digital's](#) Health Research & Development team in Granada. eHealth is one of the key digital service focus areas for Telefónica's new digital business, which has been formed to create new opportunities in the digital world.

The Help at Hand service will be available from April to health and social care organisations.

- Ends -

Twitter: #HelpatHand

For more information, interview requests or further comment, please contact:

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Supporting quotes

[Devon Partnership NHS Trust](#)

Help at Hand allowed Devon Partnership NHS Trust to use software to interact with patients as and when they required help and support. "It felt like a real breakthrough," said Tobit Emmens Managing Partner, Research & Development – Devon Partnership NHS Trust. "Help at Hand really stood out as a product because it meant that we could explore patients' issues in a very defined and safe way. Telecare works best for young people when they can integrate the care and support they need with everyday life."

National Voices

Jeremy Taylor, Chief Executive of National Voices, says: “Telecare can help people with long-term conditions live more independently when it is part of a well planned, coordinated care package. As with all care, the important element is that it is driven directly by the things patients need. Quality of life comes directly from putting patients in the driving seat with the right support and with the right information to make the right choices for them.”

Telecare Services Association (TSA)

“It is clear that many in the UK healthcare industry understand the value and benefit that telecare can bring to the lives of those living with long-term health conditions. The key to implementing telecare effectively is to ensure that services meet the needs of patients, enabling them to live their lives the way they want to. One way in which this can be done is through use of mobile networks to extend telecare beyond the home and boost the independence of users,” said Trevor Single, CEO of The Telecare Services Association (TSA).

Notes to Editors

About Help at Hand

The service includes:

- A choice of specially designed devices that are discreet, easy to carry and connect individuals to an alarm receiving centre from anywhere in the UK with O2 mobile network coverage
- The secure Help at Hand website which allows users, carers or social care organisations to efficiently manage the user’s individual profile setting up bespoke guidelines based on their care requirements detailing how to react to any issues as and when they arise
- A UK-based alarm receiving centre available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year (British Standards certified and Telecare Services Association code of practice compliant)

About the Medipex literature review

A review of published literature looking at the benefits of telecare systems was carried out to identify those which looked at the cost saving benefits to social care providers associated with the deployment of telecare systems. A substantive amount of informal observational studies have been carried out across the country (mainly between 2000 and 2010) in a variety of social care settings looking at the impacts on care, quality of life benefits and the savings potential. Much of the evidence in the literature is based on an assessment on what the care provided for that individual would have been had telecare services not been put in place, so there is an element of subjectivity. However, analysis of the data showed that across 1,722 service users, estimated average cost savings of £3,370 per service user were made. The literature also identified the following benefits:

For Councils:

- The use of telecare monitoring systems is proven to result in delays in admission to care homes or avoidance altogether
- The use of telecare monitoring systems is proven to reduce risks to service users
- The use of telecare has been shown to reduce the need for day care services
- The use of telecare has been shown to reduce the level of additional home care services needed

For Service Users:

- Service users' ability to live independently in their own homes is increased
- Service users' quality of life is improved
- Service users with telecare systems at home are generally released from hospital earlier if a stay has been necessary
- Service users feel safer and more secure in their own homes

For Carers:

- Carers feel less stressed and worried about their relatives (peace of mind)
- Carers have more freedom themselves

About O2

- O2 Health is a business unit within Telefónica UK Limited, with resources dedicated to the UK health sector.
- Telefónica UK Limited is a leading communications company for consumers and businesses in the UK, with 22.2 million mobile customers and 800,000 fixed broadband customers as at 30 September 2011.
- Telefónica UK Limited is part of Telefónica Europe plc, a business division of Telefónica S.A. which uses O2 as its commercial brand in the UK, Ireland, Slovakia, Germany and the Czech Republic, and has 57.8 million customers across these markets.
- In 2006 Telefónica Europe acquired Be, the UK fixed broadband provider, and in October 2007 O2 launched its broadband service using the Be network.
- O2 is the naming rights partner of The O2, the world-class entertainment venue.
- O2 employs around 11,000 people in the UK and has 450 retail stores.
- In October 2010 O2 was voted the UK's best mobile network by the readers of both What Mobile and Mobile Choice magazines.
- O2 was ranked highest in customer satisfaction for both UK mobile and fixed broadband customers according to the J.D. Power and Associates UK Mobile and Fixed Broadband Studies 2010.
- O2's UK 2G mobile network provides voice and data services to 99% of the UK's population.
- O2's UK 3G (HSPA+ 900 / 2100 MHz) network currently provides voice and high speed data services of up to 14.4Mbps (21Mbps in the coming months) to over 84% of the UK population.
- O2 was the first UK operator to deploy a 4G/LTE trial network which has demonstrated peak speeds of over 100Mbps to a mobile device.
- Telefónica Europe also owns 50% of Tesco Mobile, which operates in the UK and Ireland, and 50% of Tchibo Mobilfunk in Germany.
- For further press information about O2 go to <http://www.o2.co.uk/news>
- For information on O2 products and services go to <http://www.o2.co.uk>

All O2 news releases can be accessed at our website: www.o2.co.uk/news