

Using telecare as part of an integrated falls service

The challenge

About a third of all people aged over 65 fall each year in the UK, equivalent to over 3 million people. In the year to April 2012, 3,242 people aged over 65 in Derby and Derbyshire were admitted to hospital as a result of a fall, and 1,462 of these people had fractured their hips. NHS Derbyshire County spent more than £10 million treating this cohort of patients.¹

Hip fractures remain the most serious consequence of a fall and the most common cause of accident-related death in older people – currently 20% of people with hip fracture die within four months and 30% within a year. Approximately half of people who break a hip will never return to their full level of mobility. But there is also evidence to suggest that between a quarter and a third of falls in older people can be avoided through falls prevention strategies.²

How can including telecare within a falls prevention initiative help people who have a history or are at risk of falling to enable them to remain living independently in the community?

What we did

There are currently two falls prevention services offering telecare operating throughout Derbyshire:

The Falls Recovery Service (FRS)

The Falls Recovery Service is a partnership between Derbyshire County Council, the NHS and the local monitoring centres throughout the county. Anyone receiving a community alarm or services from Derbyshire County Council's Telecare service who falls and is unable to get up independently can request assistance around the clock from the FRS by pressing their pendant alarm button. An FRS warden will attend, usually within 45 minutes, and if there are no injuries or concerns the warden will assist the person to get up from the floor. If there are any non-urgent medical signs and symptoms the FRS warden will advise the person to telephone 111 for an assessment and advice on further action.

¹ www.derbytelegraph.co.uk/Falls-result-hospital-care-elderly-avoided/story-16419856-detail/story.html#ixzz37iw6bHKZ

² Falls prevention: new approaches to integrated falls prevention services, NHS Confederation May 2012



“As well as often resulting in injury, falls and the fear of falling can really damage the confidence of older people and greatly affect their quality of life. Providing a falls service which uses telecare to reassure users not only helps to prevent falls and reduce their consequences, but also improves physical and mental wellbeing.”

Richard Milner, Project Officer, Derbyshire Accommodation and Support Team, Derbyshire County Council

If the service user is injured or requires urgent medical attention an ambulance will be called. The warden will also notify the relevant GP that their patient has fallen to enable them to update their records and provide further care as required.

Falls Alert Service (FAST)

The FAST service was launched in October 2012. Handy Van Service staff carry out wellbeing checks and advise about potential hazards in the home as well as assessing what kind of telecare equipment would be of benefit. The FAST package can include equipment such as a Lifeline and pendant, bed occupancy sensor, automatic lamp activation, and waist-worn fall detector, which is all provided free subject to a £2.50 per week monitoring fee. Any alerts raised will be received at the local 24 hour monitoring centre who can then take appropriate action.



Results

- FRS accessed by over 3,000 people to date*, 2,500 of these were helped without an ambulance or paramedic
- FRS wardens are trained in moving and handling, emergency first aid and post fall risk assessment so are able to offer on the spot expert help, avoiding hospital admissions and A&E attendances from fallers who do not need hospital services
- The FAST service has been installed in 460 Derbyshire homes to July 2014
- Both services are linked to local GPs for coordinated care

Case study - Eva's story

Challenge

Eva is 90, and has very poor mobility, arthritis, high blood pressure and diabetes. She has lived in the same house for over 50 years and would like to remain in her home living independently as long as she is able. Eva has had a high number of falls, and recently fell asleep in her chair whilst her dinner was on the stove. She was awoken by the unmonitored smoke alarm, which she tried to silence using her walking stick, causing her to fall. Only then did she press her pendant. The response centre heard the smoke alarm beeping in the background and immediately rang the fire service to attend; an ambulance was also called as Eva had hurt herself when she fell.

Solution

The Independent Living Warden from Rykneld Homes visited Eva and they agreed that she would benefit from increased support.

A new Lifeline unit was installed in Eva's home linked to a smoke detector which will automatically raise an alert at the response centre if it detects smoke. Eva continues to wear a pendant enabling her to call for help from anywhere in her home 24 hours a day.

A referral to the handy van service was made for Eva to have a key safe fitted. When examining the reasons for Eva falling more frequently, it was found she was wearing unsuitable footwear. Liaison with Adult Care resulted in Eva having safer footwear and a walking aid to assist her around her

home. It was also identified that Eva was spilling oil onto her floor when cooking, increasing the risk of falls. Adult Care also provided Eva with an extra call in the day time to assist in the preparation and cooking of her meals.

Outcome

The new system has given Eva more confidence and the reassurance that help will be there if she needs it. The risks of Eva falling have been considerably minimised by providing suitable footwear, a walking aid and an extended care package. The monitored smoke alarm has reduced Eva's anxiety about the risk of fire considerably. She remains living independently in her home.



Case Study kindly supplied by Rykneld Homes.

t: 01977 661234
f: 01977 662570
e: enquiries@tunstall.com
w: tunstall.com

 @TunstallHealth

Tunstall Healthcare (UK) Lts is a member of the Tunstall Group