

# Using technology to ensure communication in sheltered housing

**Tunstall**

## The challenge

Moat is a housing association developing around 500 homes each year for people across the south east of England. For over fifty years Moat has delivered high quality and affordable rented, supported and retirement homes, while maintaining a strong home ownership offer. As a not-for-profit organisation, all of Moat's financial surpluses are reinvested to deliver additional affordable homes and services.

Recently Moat's refurbishment programme has focused on enhancing safety and communication functions in its supported and retirement homes. But how has the latest technology played a role in delivering this objective?

## What we did

As part of Moat's ongoing programme of renewals and upgrades to its housing stock, old warden call systems at four schemes were replaced with Communicall Vi in 2016. Each flat has been equipped with a speech module, pull cord, smoke detector and MyAmie pendant to enable customers to ask for assistance should they need it, 24 hours a day. If a customer presses their pendant or the button on the speech module, or in the event of a smoke detector being triggered, a call will be raised at the Centra monitoring centre, where an appropriate response can be arranged.

In common with most sheltered housing developments, these schemes rely on a single telephone line for all communications. If the phone line fails or is already in use when an emergency occurs, there can be a significant delay in the alarm being raised.

Tunstall has installed a Safelink device and GSM module at the schemes to raise an alert at the monitoring centre if the phone line fails, and provide a secondary means of communication until the line is fixed.

Safelink is a small device which is fitted close to the scheme alarm panel. It continually checks the telephone line for voltage and dial tone, notifying the monitoring centre if the line fails. It also places regular test calls using a free phone number to ensure end-to-end calls can be made and received.

“Moat is an innovative social business and, as part of our approach, we constantly review the ways in which we can support the independence of our customers. We're the first housing association in the UK to combine these technologies and guarantee that we're providing the best possible service in what can be critical situations.

**Deborah Gregory, Project Officer, Moat**



In addition the GSM module will automatically divert the line over the mobile network, ensuring that alarm calls can still be received by Centra until the landline is restored. The GSM module uses a roaming SIM card to ensure it can always use the strongest signal available. Operators at Centra are still able to have two way communication with customers, and receive relevant information about the nature of the call on their system (e.g. Flat 12, smoke alarm).



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# Results

Every day hundreds of phone lines around the UK are out of service due to technical difficulties, network maintenance, cable theft, slamming, upgrades and storm damage. The Safelink and GSM solution ensures that:

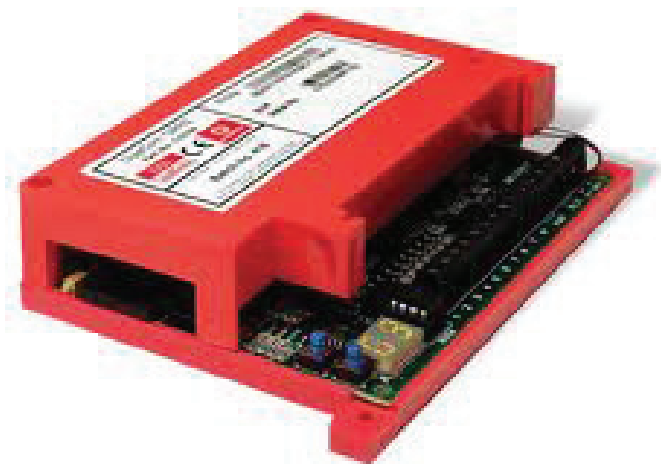
- The telephone line is checked constantly for voltage and dial tone, with regular test calls made to Centra
- The line is automatically switched over to a GSM mobile number if no voltage or dial tone detected
- Up to 12 separate inputs or applications can be monitored at each scheme e.g. fire alarms, lift alarms
- There is no system downtime due to telephony failure
- There is no requirement for additional staff involvement if a line fails
- Customer and building safety is maintained at all times

The system also helps to ensure that Moat's fire systems meet the requirements of Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, avoiding any enforcement notices being served by the relevant fire authority due to non-compliance.

Safelink and GSM modules will now be fitted to all Moat schemes.

“The safety of our customers is our priority, and this solution gives us the reassurance that not only will we be alerted to any line failures, we'll also have another means of communication in place automatically whilst the line is being fixed.”

**Deborah Gregory, Project Officer, Moat**



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