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Alarm that supports people to live at home upgraded

Work has now finished to upgrade the Community Alarm System (CAS) to a digital system as part of a drive by Health and Community Services to deliver more care in Islanders' homes.

Earlier this year, HCS announced that it was replacing the analogue CAS, which automatically calls for help when a service user presses an emergency button. The system needed to be replaced as it had not been updated for many years, there were difficulties in finding the necessary parts to fix broken alarms and there have also been advances in technology.

The Government of Jersey ran a competitive tender to identify the most suitable partner to provide the new digital telecare system and awarded a three-year contract to Airtel-Vodafone. The system supports people to live independently in their own homes by enabling them to be monitored in familiar surroundings with the reassurance that if they need help, they can access it immediately at the touch of a button.

Since July, Airtel-Vodafone engineers and Community Support Workers have been replacing the 1,040 analogue systems with digital versions. This work has now been completed.

The new system offers multiple connectivity methods – mobile network, Wi-Fi and battery backup – in case one method fails. It can still operate during power or network outages and offers an enhanced call quality. The system can also provide additional reassurance to a service user's family and friends by offering secure monitoring through a mobile app.

Merle Sellars is one of the service users who has been moved onto the new system. The grandmother-of-two, who decided to get an alarm several years ago after having a number of falls, says one of the benefits of the new system is that it has a greater range meaning she can call for help even if she is in her garden.

Merle, an 80-year-old retired nurse from Les Quennevais, said: "Having the alarm gives me reassurance. It gives you that independence. If I fell outside, where I usually have my falls, the old alarm didn't work. This system is much better."

Merle added that the system gives her sons peace of mind that she will be able to call for help if needed and aid that she has already recommended it to a number of her friends.

Starting early next year, service users will be able to choose to add devices to their package which will support them to retain their independence for longer, better monitor their health and wellbeing as well as help to reduce the amount of support they may need at home.

One of the devices that can be added to the system is a portable alarm which helps people remain independent inside and outside their home with its one-touch SOS button, real-time location updates, automatic fall detection, two-way calls and audio reminders.

Other examples of devices that will be available are falls sensors, motion sensors and pill dispensers. These devices report on activities for daily living. For example, a smart plug on a kettle could send an alert to a family member using the app if the appliance has not been used for a period of time.

The Minister for Health and Social Services, Deputy Karen Wilson, said: "It's great news that the upgrade to a digital community alarm system is now complete. Technology is going to play a pivotal role in healthcare in the future and we want to ensure that where appropriate, Islanders feel supported to live confidently with their condition in their own home. This new system will help to do just that by allowing Islanders retain their independence by giving them the ability to call for help easily when they need it."

Airtel-Vodafone's project manager Ben Laffoley said: "The feedback we have received from service users and healthcare professionals has been very positive. Users are benefitting from enhanced call quality and greater reliability and the new system means that the team at HCS24 can now monitor whether a device is working properly when previously they could not. This gives added reassurance to service users and their families.

"The transition to the new system has gone well and we're excited that new digital devices will be available to Islanders in the new year to further support independent living."

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Notes to Editors

1. For further information, please contact the press office on 01534 440430 or pressoffice@gov.je