

LIFELINE SERVICE

A Service User Guide to community-based Lifeline services within
Winchester City Council



GENERAL INFORMATION

Who runs the Lifeline Service?

Winchester's City Council lifeline Service is a department the Council's Housing Services that works in partnership with an accredited call centre to provide a complete service.

Who can use the service?

A 24 hour a day, 365 days a year, monitoring service. Service Users access this service by the installation of a Lifeline, linked via a normal telephone line to our Control Centre.

What are our Standards of Service?

We promise that:

- All Service Users will be treated fairly, in accordance with their needs and wishes;

All calls will be treated as potential emergencies until proven otherwise;

- We will liaise with other agencies and nominated contacts to ensure the well-being of our Service Users;
- All calls will be treated as potential emergencies until proven otherwise;
- We will record, maintain and update records in a confidential and secure manner;
- All our staff will be trained to a high standard;
- All calls will be monitored and recorded at the control centre
- We will fully investigate any complaints and inform the complainant of the outcome within the timescales outlined in the Winchester City Council Complaints procedure – that is, acknowledging the complaint within 3 days and sending a full reply within 10 days. Further details of our Customer Care commitments can be found in our document "Customer Care Philosophy and Policy", which can be obtained from Winchester City Council (back page for contact details).

What equipment does Winchester City Council provide?

We provide you with a Dispersed Alarm Unit and a pendant, both of which are rented and remain WCC property. The Alarm Unit is placed conveniently for Service Users use and the pendant can be worn either around the neck, wrist or waist.



Pendant



Alarm Unit

What can the Dispersed alarm be used for?

Here are some examples of when a Service User might need to use an alarm especially if they could not get to the phone

If they needed the emergency services

If they were unwell

If they had fallen

If they were injured in some way

If there was an intruder in their property or garden

If there was a problem with their equipment

How is an alarm call made?

If help is needed the Service User presses either the button on top of the alarm unit or the pendant - this sends an alarm signal to the Control Centre. There will be a sound and flashing lights on the unit to confirm the call is being sent and to reassure the Service User.

Who answers an alarm call at the Control Room?

Calls are answered by a team of fully trained Operators.

Personal details are accessed automatically as soon as the call is received. The microphone in the alarm system is sensitive so that in most instances the Service User can be heard wherever they are in their home. However the only time the Operators can hear or listen to a Service User, is when the Service User initiates a call by pressing the button.

Please note that the Operators will do everything they can to obtain assistance for you. They must also keep to detailed guidelines, aimed at protecting service user independence and security.

Responding to an alarm call

Once the alarm has been activated, the CAC operators will decide with Service User the best course of action.

This can include calling a named contact person, the emergency services, or maybe just discussing the Service User's situation with them and offering advice, for example about contacting other organisations who will be able to help them.

We will take Service Users' wishes into account at all times, but we reserve the right to act against those wishes in certain circumstances, such as a serious concern for health and safety. When we do this, we will fully explain the reasons for our decision

The Monitoring Service: For this service, we ask Service Users to provide at least three local contacts who can be called on their behalf, to be available 24 hours a day.

What happens if we get no response from you?

As our Service Users' well-being is important to us, then if we cannot make contact with the Service User through the Lifeline system, we will ring them on their ordinary telephone. If there is still no response, we will call the named contacts and ask them to ensure the Service User is all right. If necessary, and if we cannot make contact any other way, we will call the emergency services, who may have to make a forced entry if a key is not available.

HOW TO OBTAIN THE SERVICE

How do I request an alarm unit?

We can be contacted by the Service User themselves, or by relatives on their behalf, at any time by phone, or by post or e-mail. See the end of this brochure for contact information. An officer will take your phone number, and you will be called back by a member of our Installation Team who will answer any questions and explain more about the available services.

If Service Users are still interested, we will make an appointment for a free demonstration in the Service User's home.

The purpose of this visit will be to explain the service and the equipment, and to make an assessment of what the Service User may require.

Service Users are most welcome to invite members of their family or friends to see the demonstration to help them with their decision.

Applications will normally be dealt with in date order - however we will make a special arrangement if there is an urgent or special need.

Important: Please note our staff will not call without an appointment, and will always carry identification. If you are in any doubt, you should call the number in this brochure and check that your visitor is from the Lifeline Service.

What happens during the demonstration?

We will assess the Service User's needs and suggest what equipment they may need.

We will give a full demonstration of how the equipment works and give the Service User the opportunity to try it out themselves, by making some calls to the Control Centre.

The Dispersed Alarm requires both an electrical power point socket and a telephone point. For safety reasons, these must be sited on the same wall, to avoid hazardous trailing wires across floors or doorways.

Occasionally there are other technical complications, which we will check during this visit. Some telephone line supplier's services can cause complications. The installation staff will be able to advise on any extensions or adaptations that may be necessary; however we are unable to make purchases, or supply or recommend products or tradesmen.

There is no pressure on the Service User to make an immediate decision, and we will be happy to leave them to think further about it, and perhaps discuss it with a relative or friend.

What happens during Installation?

If the Service User is certain that they want the equipment installed, we will carry on with the work. If not, and they decide to go ahead later, we will come back another day. When we do install the equipment permanently, the Service User will need to sign a contract, and to give our staff certain information. This includes their name and address, phone number, doctors, medical details, next of kin, contacts details and any special details about their home, such as locks or access. There is a minimum period of four weeks.

We will also note any problems for our control staff, such as the house number not being visible, hazardous steps or unlit areas

The Service User will be left with a Service User Pack, which will give them all the information that they will need, including an equipment User Guide.

AFTER INSTALLATION

Using the equipment

You will be supplied with a guide to using the equipment and your installer will also explain it, if you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact us and we will explain again, or arrange for a member of staff to call and demonstrate for you.

Testing your Lifeline.

The battery should last for five years, depending on use, but it is strongly recommended that your pendant be tested regularly, to check the battery and to make sure you are familiar with the equipment and how to use it.

We ask that you test your Lifeline by pressing the button on the pendant. You can do this any time, day or night. When making a test call, please ensure that when your call is answered, you state clearly that it is just a test call; otherwise we will assume that you need assistance.

If you do not undertake these tests, then when an emergency arises, the equipment might fail to work and we will not be able to help you.

Ensuring your Lifeline continues to work

Please take care with the Lifeline, if you or your visitors damage it we will charge you for its replacement - and this will be at least £100. For your Lifeline to work. You need to make sure:

- that it is plugged in to the mains socket
- that the socket is switched on
- that your lifeline is plugged in to the telephone socket.

Please note your pendant is only shower proof, and cannot withstand prolonged

immersion in water - please take care to avoid this, and especially not to leave it in your washing! Remember, if you damage it, we will charge you for its replacement - and this will be at least £100. There is a limit to the amount of items that can be connected to a single telephone line. Any changes you make to your telephone lines or to your supplier, or such activities as installing Broadband, may affect the service. Please let us know of any changes you intend to make so that we can check it for you.

If equipment failure has been caused by other suppliers' equipment, e.g. extension leads or adaptors, or by changes either to your telephone supplier or to your phone system (e.g. by Broadband installation), we cannot be held liable and you will be responsible for any repairs or replacements so that the alarm system is able to operate.

Reporting Faults

If you try to use your alarm in an emergency and it does not work, ring 01962 855 335, or the out of hours service 01243 778 688 for assistance on your phone.

If your alarm is not working properly, please check that everything is plugged in before ringing.

Please call by the normal phone, as your alarm is for emergencies and testing only.

Should any part of the equipment that has been provided become faulty or damaged in any way, we will aim to rectify this within 1 working day. If the fault is major, then we will exchange the equipment at no cost to you.

What happens if I activate the alarm by accident?

Don't worry! It happens all the time! An Operator will answer the call as normal. Please do not leave your property until your call has been answered, so that staff can establish that it is a mistake. They will talk to you and, once they have confirmed that it is a mistake, will end the connection. If we receive a number of false alarms we will contact you to see if any more assistance can be given.

Cancelling an alarm call

A call can be cancelled by pressing the **GREEN BUTTON** on the unit for two seconds. Don't worry if this doesn't work, as it just means that the unit has already started to contact the Control Centre for you.



Making and answering a telephone call

If your telephone rings, then you may answer it in the normal way by picking up the handset.

You may use your telephone to make calls in the normal way, but please ensure after use that you replace the handset properly. If the handset of the telephone is not on properly, the alarm unit will not work, so if you do have an emergency, your call will not reach the Control Centre and we will be unable to help.

Please refer to the user guide for further instructions.

Keeping us informed

The service we can offer you is very reliant upon the information you give us, and it is vital that you keep this up to date. You must tell us if:

Your circumstances change - especially if this affect your health.

Your contact details change - for example your telephone number.

The information we use to get you help changes - your doctor, or his telephone number or address, your contacts or their telephone numbers or addresses.

Anything changes which affects how we gain entry to your home - changes of locks, or the codes for your key-safe, or the fitting of intruder (burglar) alarms.

Yearly Visit to Service Users

Once a year, The Lifeline service will contact you to arrange to visit. The visit from a Officer will be to update your details, clean the unit and change the pendant necklace.

Charges

The current charges are contained in a leaflet that the installer will give you, and they will explain them to you. Please note that non-payment may result in the termination of service:

You will be notified in writing about any increase in charges, which will usually take place once a year.

You may be exempt from paying VAT on the Lifeline unit if you are disabled or chronically sick. Our staff will discuss this with you.

Payment

An invoice will be sent out annually in April for payment in advance. Payment can be made by:

ONLINE:

You can pay this invoice on line at www.winchester.gov.uk

Select the option

'E-Payments -General Invoices'

You will need your invoice and your debit/credit card details to proceed

BY PHONE:

You can pay by phoning The Customer Service Centre on 01962 840 222 between the following times:

8.30am to 5.00pm (Mon to Thurs) and 8.30am to 4.30pm (Friday)

You will need your invoice and your debit/credit card details to proceed

DIRECT DEBIT:

Please ask your installer for more details.

BY POST:

You can send your payments directly to us by cheque or postal order, made payable to 'Winchester City Council' and addressed to:

Winchester City Council Cashiers Section
City Offices
Colebrook Street
Winchester
Hampshire S023 9LJ

Write your customer number and invoice number on the back of the cheque, these can be found on the front of your invoice.

Post-dated cheques cannot be accepted.

IN PERSON:

Payment can be made at the City Offices in Colebrook Street. Opening hours are 8.45am to 4.00pm (Mon-Fri)

Confidentiality

All the information we obtain from you is kept secure and safe, and treated with the utmost confidentiality - it is covered by the Data Protection Act.

You may request to see this information at anytime. If you have any concerns, let us know.

The Control Centre have a close working partnership with the ambulance and other emergency services and will share appropriate personal information with them on a need to know basis. This is covered by an agreed information-sharing protocol.

Your welfare

Your welfare is important to us. Your installer will leave you a leaflet "Protecting People from Abuse", aimed at helping you to appreciate if you are being taken advantage of, and telling you how to report it.

We operate according to strict Health and Safety Policies, aimed at protecting both Service Users and our staff. They will pay particular attention to any electrical dangers (such as old wiring), to making sure there are no trip hazards, and to placing the

equipment so that it can be used easily. Please report any concerns you may have immediately, either by phone or by using the Lifeline.

We have a detailed Complaints Policy - please write, phone or email the Sheltered Housing Team on the address at the end of this leaflet.

What happens if you want to change the service you receive from Winchester City Council Lifeline Service, or no longer require it?

If you would like to change the service provided to you by Winchester City Council Lifeline Service, please call the office and one of the team will discuss your needs and will advise you further.

If you would like cancel the service, please complete the cancellation form that will have been given to you during Installation and return it, by post, or by hand to the address below or to the Winchester City Council Offices. One month's notice of cancellation is required, however under certain circumstances we will accept a shorter notice period.

You will be charged at least until the equipment has been returned to Winchester City Council. On the equipment's return, you will be given a receipt; our staff will process and check the equipment and will then notify our accounts department.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

For an initial discussion and demonstration, please contact:

Winchester Lifeline
Hyde Lodge
Worthy Lane
Winchester
SO23 7AB

PHONE: 01962 855 335
(answer phone available 24 hours a day)

E-MAIL:
shelteredhousing@winchester.gov.uk

For your safety and security all calls to the Winchester City Council are recorded.

This brochure is available in other languages and formats, such as large Type or audio, if required. Please see below for more information.



CUSTOMER
SERVICE
EXCELLENCE



The Government Standard

If you have any particular needs which affect how you are able to use or be involved in our services or how you would like to receive information for example translation, interpreters, Braille, audio tape, large print, sign language - please contact the Customer Service Centre either by

telephone 01962 840 222

or by email customerservice@winchester.gov.uk