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SAFETY IN THE HOME

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Personal Alarms

Special equipment and monitoring services can provide people with the ability to get help in an emergency at home. Such services are known by various titles – personal alarms, care alarms, community alarms, carelines – and are provided by a number of different organisations.

What are personal alarms?

You might feel a personal alarm would be useful if you or your family are concerned that you could be unwell and unable to reach the phone to ask for help. The alarm is a button worn around the neck, on the wrist or on clothing, which you can press to call for help. It sends a signal through your phone line to telephone a pre-set number. In most systems, the call will go to a call centre or monitoring service which operates 24 hours a day to pick up the calls. The call centre operator will alert a chosen relative or friend who lives nearby or, if necessary, the emergency services. There are also systems which can be programmed to telephone a chosen relative or friend directly in the first instance, instead of going through a monitoring service.

What equipment is necessary?

A transmitter - a pendant or wristband with a button which transmits a signal when you press it.

A receiver - which can be part of a standard phone or additional to it. This plugs into the socket which connects your phone to the telephone system. When you press the button on the transmitter, the receiver picks up the signal and automatically rings a monitoring service or a chosen relative or friend. If you are near the receiver you may be able to speak directly to the person who answers the signal. There may be a choice of range for the alarm which can be selected to suit lifestyle.

As landline telephone systems are going digital, changing the way the telephones work, (expected to complete by January 2027,) personal alarm providers are introducing digital alarms which may not require a landline.

What does a Personal Alarm monitoring service do?

The monitoring service is like a call centre operating 24 hours a day to respond when you press the button on the care alarm. They will then call the relative or friend whose name and number you have given them as contact, or the emergency services as required. If they cannot talk to you, they will call the relative or friend directly so they can go to your home and find out what has happened. Most systems with a monitoring service require you to provide at least 2 contacts living within easy distance of your home so that they can reach you quickly.

How do you pay and how much do they cost?

With most systems that provide a monitoring service you rent the equipment and pay a monthly or annual subscription fee. There is often a one-off set up charge to be paid. The current cost varies with the type of contract but could be around £300-350 for the first year, including a set up charge.

Telephones which can be programmed to call a relative or friend directly are usually for purchase with no maintenance service attached. Current costs are between £100 and £250.

Personal alarms are VAT exempt if you, or the person you are ordering for, have a condition that requires regular medication, are chronically sick or are registered disabled. You can read more about VAT exemption later in this leaflet.

SUPPLIERS

Personal alarms with a monitoring service:

Age Co Personal Alarm through Taking Care	0800 011 3846 ageuk.org.uk/products/mobility-and-independence-at-home/personal-alarms/ Taking Care on 0800 023 4327	Require at least 2 contacts living nearby Equipment ranging from personal alarms, personal alarm watch and GPS-linked "taking care anywhere" alarms. Nov 2025: set-up fee from £70; Rentals from £21 per month One month free when paying by annual direct debit.	National provider thru' "Taking Care"; monthly or annual subscriptions
Chubb Community Care	0800 321 666 Uk_chubbpersonalarm@Chubbs.com	Require at least 1 contact living nearby; Call to check current rates	National provider; monthly subscriptions
Community Alarms South Lakeland	01539 735805 lakelandalarms.co.uk	Require 2 contacts living nearby & key safe Call to check current rates	Local provider; 3 month minimum rental

LifeConnect24	0800 030 8999 or 0808 304 1592 Lifeconnect24.co.uk	Require at least 1 contact, Offer digital alarm up to 600m range or GPS with fall detection. Rates from £17 per month when paying annually	National provider; Save £10 on an annual plan using "SAVE10"
MEDeQUIP	0800 910 1390* medequip-connect.com	Require at least 2 contacts living nearby; free pendant with range up to 300m/ GPS-linked wearables for anywhere. No landline required for digital/GPS; rentals from around £5 per week	National provider; *Call & quote CONNECT30 for 30% off first 3 months
The Royal British Legion/ thru Careline 365	01603 964306* Careline.co.uk	Available though assessment by a R. Legion Care Worker for those on low income with minimum of 7 days' paid service in the armed forces, including National Service. Non-landline digital alarms with 600m range or GPS. Rental from around £30 per month when paid annually	National provider to qualifying candidates. *Call and quote AUSL45 for £45 off any alarm plan
Taking Care	0800 085 7371 Website: taking.care	Offers a range of personal alarms using digital or GPS technology.	National provider; monthly or annual subscriptions

Telecare24	0800 180 8540 Telecare24.co.uk	Offers a range of personal alarms using digital or GPS technology.	National provider;
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Other providers are available online – none of the providers listed is recommended by Age UK South Cumbria

An Alternative to Personal Alarms

Alertacall Ltd	0808 208 1234 Okeachday.co.uk	Requires a named contact. Telephone with daily check service and free automated task reminder. Cost from about £20 per month	National provider;
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Doro Leva X10 mobile telephone

Available through the manufacturer or through online retailers including Sarabec, which has advisors to discuss features or requirements.

It has a simple key layout with four dedicated speed dial buttons for outgoing calls making it simple to use. An assistance button and a safety timer can be used to send GPS location and alert contacts that help is needed.

There is a special feature for relatives, which enables selection of the appropriate level of protection and ease of use.

Relatives can also get the user's GPS location at any time via SMS request.

All settings are protected in the administrator menu to minimize the risk of accidental changes.

Doro AB	0800 0265 479 Doro.com	Offers a simple mobile phone for easy use: Doro Leva X10	National provider;
Sarabec Ltd	01642 247 789 Sarabec.com mail@sarabec.co.uk	Supplier of products for hearing impaired including Doro Leva X10	National provider; offers guidance on product selection

Home Monitoring Systems – Providing Extra Support

What does home monitoring mean?

Home monitoring systems offer a care alarm which provides a wider range of support. This may include sensors placed in the home, which can detect things like fire and smoke, carbon monoxide, extremes of heat and bogus callers. It may just consist of a monitor in your home, giving information which can, for example, signal when you have had a fall and are unable to summon help.

Who is it for?

Adult Social Care provides a monitoring service for older people with long term conditions, especially those who are unable to deal with risks in the home, are increasingly frail and at risk of falling. This can offer people a safer environment giving them support at home and help in an emergency. Private clients who do not meet Adult Social Care's eligibility criteria, may also contact the same provider and pay for their own system.

How does it work?

Depending on the provider, a system of sensors, detectors, and buttons in the home, in addition to the pendant/wrist alarm, can be triggered by events in the home or directly by the resident. There is no camera or microphone but there is a sensor which uses digital technology to 24 hour a day telephone link between the home and the Lifeline call-handling centre. Depending on the system, it may require a telephone line and an electric power point or be wholly digital.

How much will I pay?

Monitoring equipment, installation and ongoing monitoring may be provided free of charge if the client's needs are deemed critical or substantial by Adult Social Care. You may, however, be asked to contribute to the cost of monitoring.

How do I apply?

You can get more information by contacting Adult Social Care: 0300 373 3301

W & F Adult Social Care (ASC)	0300 373 3301	Menu-based telephone centre directs caller to appropriate department within ASC	Westmorland & Furness administrative area
Careium	0300 333 6511 Careium.co.uk	Personal alarms from £18 /month & add-ons for monitoring activity from £19 /month and smoke alarms from £2.10 /month	National provider;

Fire Safety Checks

Every home in Cumbria is eligible to apply for a **free Home Safety Visit** to help them deal with any potential fire hazards in their homes.

They can help you design a fire plan so that you and your family will know how to react if you have a fire. They will also fit, where applicable, a battery powered smoke alarm free of charge.

This service for the residents of Cumbria is completely free, normally takes about 30 minutes and is undertaken by **Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service** personnel.

All Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service personnel carry an identification card. Never let anyone into your home unless you know them or they can prove their identity.

Cumbria Fire & Rescue Service	0800 358 4777	Free Home Safety Visits arranged	Cumbria
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Home Security

The Handy Person Scheme* is available for elderly or vulnerable householders who are unable to undertake simple but essential tasks around their homes.

W&F Council Housing Standards	0300 373 3300	Request help from scheme	Westmorland & Furness area
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**See last page for more information*

Trading Standards may be able to help with **doorstep traders** who call unannounced at your home. They can also offer advice on consumer rights when dealing with other “rogue traders”.

If you have doubts about the credentials or practices of a doorstep seller you can call the Council

W&F Council Trading Standards	01539 713594	Report a problem	Westmorland & Furness area
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Falls Prevention

Falls in the home can be caused by problems with balance, eyesight, weak muscles and unstable joints, or the effects of medication such as antidepressants, sleeping pills and some heart tablets which can lead to dizziness. Whatever the cause, it is possible to reduce the risk of falling by taking some easy preventative measures. Some examples are listed here.

Action Plan to Prevent Falls In The Home

Take **regular exercise**, even if this is only a short walk, to keep muscles strong and joints supple.

Keep stairs and living areas **well lit**, use 100 watt bulb equivalent where appropriate. Keep a torch by the bed.

Keep stairs and walking areas **free of objects** which may be tripped over and keep flexes and cables away from walking areas.

Fit **handrails** on both sides of the stairs.

Use **non-slip rubber mats** in the bath/shower. Fit a handrail near the bath or toilet.

Avoid the use of **rugs**.

Minimise bending and climbing by keeping frequently used items on racks or in drawers at an easy level. Have a letter tray fitted on your letterbox.

Get up slowly from chairs and beds. Blood pressure falls as you get up and your body may take longer to adjust as you get older.

Avoid **poorly fitting shoes** or slippers, and high heels.

Avoid **long or trailing clothes** which may trip you up.

Have regular **eye tests** to ensure your eyesight has not deteriorated.

Don't rush to get up to answer the phone or the door. It is a good idea to have a cordless or mobile phone which you can carry with you.

Keep your **phone(s) charged**.

If prescribed **medication** is making you feel dizzy, keep taking it, but consult your GP.

VAT Exemption

If you are chronically ill or disabled, and can declare yourself as such, you will not be charged VAT on products designed or adapted for your own personal or domestic use. Also, you will not be charged VAT on:

- the installation and any extra work needed as part of this
- repairs or maintenance
- spare parts or accessories

ask your supplier (if possible prior to any work starting) for a VAT Exemption Form.

Chronically ill means that you have an illness that is likely to last for a long time, such as arthritis. Disabled means a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term effect on your ability to carry out normal activities.

To claim the VAT exemption and get the product VAT free, you will be required to complete a form which the supplier of the equipment and the person making the claim will need to sign. This 2 page declaration form is available to download here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a805151e5274a2e8ab4f751/Eligibility_Declaration_Disabled_-_March_2015__2_.pdf

Alternatively, we would be happy to provide you with a printed copy of the form.

Handy Person Scheme

As mentioned above, Westmorland and Furness Council operates a Handy Person Scheme designed to help elderly or vulnerable people to carry out simple but essential work at their homes. The service is free but a charge is made for materials, unless the materials are provided by a partner agency which has agreed to cover the cost.

To be eligible: you must be 65 or over, live in the Westmorland and Furness area and be:

Disabled, or

Vulnerable, or

Recently discharged from hospital, or

At high risk of falling owing to a medical condition

Work is limited to 3 labour hours on site if one handy person attends (1.5 hours if 2 handy persons attend together.)

Gardening and Decorating are **not** included in this service.

For further information, including about the types of work covered, contact the Westmorland and Furness Housing Standards Team on **0300 373 3300**.