

Telecare Factsheet: Telecare Services Association

13 September 2007

INTRODUCTION

The Telecare Services Association (TSA) is a membership based, not for profit, organisation. In 2005 TSA changed its name (from the Association of Social Alarm Providers – ASAP) and broadened its membership criteria with the stated objective of becoming the single point of reference for Telecare in the UK. As such it now includes member organisations who have a professional interest in the end to end service which is Telecare. This includes service providers who deliver 24/7 telecare services and commercial companies who manufacture telecare systems and provide management consultancy services.

As of September 2007, the TSA had over 300 members, of which there were:

268 Service Providers

31 Suppliers

7 Relevant Professional Interests (including Primary Care Trusts in England, Government Departments, Universities)

AIMS

TSA have 3 main aims;

- To support members.
- To promote the industry across the UK.
- To contribute to service quality via a nationally recognised Code of Practice.

A TELECARE CODE OF PRACTICE

TSA advise they make a major contribution to quality in the telecare sector through its Code of Practice, which has been developed to apply to telecare services of all sizes, operating in the public or private sector, providing a range of support services. Aims to set service standards, not technical standards. The format of the Code covers the Referral to Response Model for Telecare, and is set within a strategic framework. Over 100 Member Organisations are accredited to various sections of the Code, with many more working towards accreditation.

The Strategic Framework:

outlines the quality service providers must operate to gain accreditation, the standards to be achieved and introduces three distinct business activities that may be involved in the process of delivering a Telecare Service.

Part One - Telecare Calls Handling Operational requirements

The Planning, Management and Operation of Telecare Response Centres.

Part Two – Telecare Installation Operational Requirements

The Planning, Management and Installation of Telecare Equipment in the Homes of Service Users.

Part Three – Mobile Response Operational Requirements

The Planning, Management and Delivery of planned and/or emergency mobile response services.

TSA advises that the three parts of the Code of Practice can be delivered as individual, 'stand alone' elements. The Code aims to provide a robust framework for telecare delivery and has been given passport status in England within the Quality Assurance Framework for Supporting People Funding.

AUDIT PROCESS

TSA has contracted with an external organisation to undertake inspections against the criteria established within the Code of Practice and requires member organisations to receive an initial inspection, followed by annual inspections to ensure that compliance is maintained. Every third inspection is a full inspection to ensure compliance.

MAJOR REVIEW OF CODE OF PRACTICE

The Code of Practice is viewed as a tool for continuous improvement in the delivery of telecare services and is currently undergoing a major review. The aim is to revise the Code to reflect the significant changes currently going on within the telecare environment, including not just the changing technology but new models of service delivery, e.g. responses direct to mobile phones rather than via Call Centres. A Code of Practice Management Board has been established, and an inaugural meeting was held on 12th September 2007. The Board includes representation from the Scottish Government, the Welsh Assembly Government, Department of Health (CSIP, England), PCT Cheshire, Kent County Council, NHS Foundation Trust as well as TSA Directorate Members.

TELEHEALTH STANDARDS

TSA recognise the need for the development of robust standards around telehealth, which is often developed in partnership with telecare services. TSA have recently held a session, facilitated by Dr Richard Curry of Imperial College, to inform a proposal to the Department of Health in England for TSA to undertake further work on this issue. Workshop participants were asked to;

- Outline the key telehealth processes, and identify which individual activities make up a telehealth service.
- Identify where standards need to be developed, both for the individual activities and the overall system.

The findings from the workshop suggested that the basic service standards infrastructure for telecare and telehealth are not dissimilar, but that some of the good practice/legislative elements would be necessarily different for Telehealth and that the Response element for Telehealth would also need to be framed in a very flexible way.