

7 Minute Briefing: Telecare and Fire

1 Background:

More people are expected to receive care at home. Telecare is a way of providing support and assistance, when required, by using equipment which is monitored at a distance by an organisation, enabling people to live independently at home. Devices such as pendant alarms, fall detectors and pull cords alert the responsible organisation that a vulnerable person needs urgent assistance. When installed and operated in accordance to the relevant British Standards, telecare linked smoke detection can improve an occupier's likelihood to survive a fire.

2 The role of smoke detector linked telecare during fires:

- Early detection of fire in the room of origin.
- Alerting the occupier to escape or raise the alarm (if possible).
- Reduction of delays in summoning the fire service due to the automatic fire alarms.
- Provision of an emergency line of communication, which can facilitate vital fire survival guidance during a fire.

3 Why linked smoke detection matters:

Data shows people have died in accidental dwelling fires where they have had telecare in place, but it was not linked to smoke detection. HWFRS recommends all users of telecare have linked smoke detection.

4 More people are expected to receive care at home:

In the years to come the demand for adult domiciliary care is projected to steadily increase to high levels, largely due to the England's ageing population.

The Dept of Health & Social Care (DHSC) predicts that 57% more adults aged 65 and over in England will require care in 2038 compared to 2018. According to the National Audit Office there were 814,000 adults in England receiving domiciliary care in March 2020.

The [NHS Long Term Plan](#) states that people will be increasingly cared for in their own homes with the option for their physiology to be effortlessly monitored by a wearable device. This means that the 1.7million people who receive telecare in the UK is likely to rise.

5 Fire risk assessment and British Standards:

Fire risk assessment:

The use of telecare must be considered in your fire risk assessment to ensure that all reasonably practicable steps are taken to reduce the risk of a fire and its likelihood of occurring.

British Standards:

The following British Standards must be complied with to ensure that residents have a reduced probability of dying in a fire:

- **BS 9518:2021** Processing of alarm signals by an alarm receiving centre.
- **BS 5839 Part 6 2019** Fire Detection and Fire Alarm Systems for Buildings.
- **BS 86041:2019** Social alarm systems Design, installation and maintenance of social alarm systems in specialized grouped living environments.

6 What to do:

The following recommendations were issued by coroner Fiona Wilcox following [the death of Elizabeth Griffin](#):

- All users of telecare systems should have some form of fire detection linked to FAMOs.
- Contractual requirement, for new and existing clients to have linked fire detection. In the same way such providers insist on the provision of keys to access client's home.
- Telecare system operators should apply the call handling protocol in British Standards.
- Telecare Providers should base staff training for appropriate response on British Standards.
- Training on what smoke alarms sound like in the background of a call to a client
- It should be recorded which clients do not have linked detection. The response in life critical situations should be based on this knowledge.

7 Questions to consider:

1. Do they have telecare?
2. Are the smoke detectors linked to the telecare system?
3. Are the systems working and being used effectively by the occupier?
4. If not present, would the occupier benefit from having telecare and linked alarms? For example, do they have reduced mobility and/or cognitive/ mental health/substance abuse concerns that could impair their ability to react to a fire appropriately or effectively?