

Assistive Technology Information Sheet

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Aim of the document

This document lists assistive technology that could be used for those experiencing homelessness in Westminster, either on the streets or in supported accommodation. It explains how assistive technology can be accessed and things to consider. Thank you to Karen Bradshaw from Westminster City Council for helping with this information sheet.

Things to consider

- The Herbert Protocol is a national scheme that encourages carers, family, and friends to provide and put together useful information, which can then be used when a vulnerable person goes missing. WCC adheres to this. If required, services can use the following [information sheet](#) to have this information readily available, however, this is a long document. In short, the document needs to provide information on:
 - medication required
 - mobile numbers
 - places previously located
 - a recent photograph
- The technology available will not be suitable for everyone. Adaptations may be needed.
- The client must consent to the technology unless they have been assessed as lacking capacity.
- The Universal Care Plan could be used to flag the individual as requiring complex support so that London Ambulance Services are aware.
- Services must follow data security policies and procedures related to assistive technology use.

How to access assistive technology

- Ask for a referral to Technology Enabled Care via social services. Refer to the [HHCP Adult Social Care referrals toolkit](#) if required.
- Through Adult Social Care (ASC), assistive tech is free.
- If the client is not under ASC, individuals can be referred as a preventative measure, to help them **before** their needs become serious enough to require formal social care.
- Technology can also be purchased via Direct Payments.
- Digital inclusion programme via Westminster City Council – SIM cards, mobiles, and other digital devices for clients. To access digital inclusion resources in Westminster, you can start by contacting Age UK Westminster at 020 3004 5610 or digital@ageukwestminster.org.uk. Alternatively, you can email digitalinclusion@westminster.gov.uk to join the waiting list for a device if you need a laptop or tablet.

GPS Tracking

GPS tracking suits individuals who wander and get lost from their accommodation. Alerts are sent to a monitoring centre if someone leaves a defined safe area. There needs to be agreed-upon responders to go and check that the person is OK and help them return to safety.

Requirements: Battery life of around 14 hours, so ensure the person is located on the device before this time frame. It can't be worn in bed, so it is not suitable for night-time wandering. A photo of the individual is required.

Find My Family Apps: For clients with mobile phones, staff can track their location via the service's smartphone, if permitted by the service.

Community Alarm Service

- Requirements: The person needs a mobile phone. If they don't answer, a welfare visit is made. A responder must be designated – for hostels, this could be on-site 24/7 staff.
- If a staff response isn't possible, then two local emergency contacts are required in case the alarm is activated.
- If local emergency contacts are not available, then Westminster Social Care could hold a key for emergency access.
- **Note:** Repeated false activations can be a problem.

Memory Aids

Flooding

- **Magi plugs** can be purchased via the service – need to ensure they fit the plug hole.
- The other alternative is to have **the taps changed to timer taps**.
- There are **flood detectors** that can be either standalone or linked to a community alarm, but they tend to get moved and thrown away so have not been very reliable
- If a **memo minder** would be useful to help the person as they leave the room to check taps, this could be ordered.

Heat Sensors: Detect if a stove or heating element is left on. Some can automatically shut off the power to a hob or be linked to telecare or alarms systems to alert a carer or support service.

Heat Detector Alarms detect rapid rise in temperature (rather than smoke), suitable for kitchens. Again these can be linked to telecare or alarm systems to alert a carer or support service.

Cookers that limit cooking time and give audio alerts can also be used to help manage this.

Medication Dispensers: Hold up to 28 doses. The alarm alerts the client. If not taken within 10 minutes, a call centre intervenes. **Note:** It is not suitable for warfarin or liquids/ the device is quite large. One or two dispensers may be required depending on how they are to be delivered. Dispensers are taken to the pharmacist several days before the installation is due so they can fill them.

Medication Watches: Wearable devices with scheduled medication reminders.

Mobile Phone Alerts: Timed medication reminders via phone apps using the client's phone.

Large clocks: available from retailers like Amazon to help individuals orient themselves with time and day.

Fall and Bed Sensors

Generally, a pendant is a much more reliable device than a fall sensor. If the pendant isn't working for them, consider why the person is unable to use the pendant – is it cognitive or physical?

- **Cognitive reasons:**
 - The person forgets to wear it
 - They don't remember how or when to use it
 - They don't understand its purpose (e.g., dementia)
- **Physical reasons:**
 - They cannot physically press the button
 - They remove it due to discomfort or sensory issues
 - Limited mobility prevents them from reaching it when needed

Fall sensor

- Will only activate with a hard fall (not slips or gradual slides)
<https://youtu.be/inTEkHUGgxo>
- The **fall detector** is unlikely to activate if someone breaks their fall or stumbles down.

Bed Sensors

- Tracks when someone leaves the bed and doesn't return after a set time.
- If a **bed sensor** is being considered, we need to know what time the person goes to bed; what time they get up in the morning and how long they are generally up for. This means we can set the bed sensor to monitored them during these times.
- Does the person live alone or with someone? If they do, the equipment can be **linked to a pager** rather than the community alarm. This would be ordered through the equipment service by yourselves.

Fire and Safety Technology

Smoke alarms, extreme heat sensors, vibrating pillows, and visual light alarms (for those with hearing impairments). These devices link to monitoring centres that can contact emergency services. If used in hostels, they would first link up to the main phone number to alert them that the vibrating pillows/ light alarms are activated.

You can also arrange a [free home fire safety visit](#), which is provided by the London Fire Service (LFB). This service provides tailored advice and assistance. Try to attend the visit to support the individual in implementing the recommendations. LFB can provide fire alarms and fire retardant bedding.

Environmental Adaptations

Access modifications such as ramps should be assessed by an Occupational Therapist and funded through a Disabled Facilities Grant.

Digital Key Safes: Open via smartphone app and personal code. (Manual versions available on request.)

Lifestyle Monitoring Systems: Sensors in the property track movement patterns over 2–4 weeks. Useful for those with dementia to assess routines.

Community Alarms for People Rough Sleeping

Difficult to implement due to lack of a consistent responder. In most cases, 999 should be called.

OwnFone: Small, credit card-sized phone with pre-programmed emergency numbers. No GPS tracking. Approximately £85 plus SIM card (£10/month). Needs charging every 5 days, takes 2 hours to charge. May require Direct Payment.

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