

Words by ALEX JACKSON
Photos by IAIN GARRETT

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

IN THE HOME

THE Trust has been working on a unique initiative with Oxfordshire County Council to promote the independence of the people we support.

The Wallingford Call Centre Project, which has been developed over the last year, is proving popular with service users and staff alike. Service users who are supported to live as tenants in their own homes in Wallingford were assessed to see whether they would benefit from the use of assistive technology in their homes. The idea was that with this technology installed, they would have more independence in their home and that night time staff would no longer be required.

The system works in a way that every service user involved has a pendant, and should they need support during the night hours, they press this and are put through to a call centre. The centre will then call a responsive night worker from Ridgeway who will visit the home.

A number of service users were at first very sceptical about the idea of relieving the presence of night time staff, none more so, than Karen Harris.

"At first I wasn't exactly sure how it would work and didn't like the idea of not having night time staff around the home," said Karen.

"It has however surprised me and been really useful. It is nice and comforting to know I've got someone to call and speak to on the other end of the phone.

"Since the night time staff stopped, I've been getting used to being on my own in the evenings and started to enjoy more independence, after the initial nervousness.

"It's the first time living in my own home and since the project begun, I've started doing more things physically, including making the bed and doing the sheets. It has been a confidence boost knowing that if I fall I can press the red button or pull the chord in the bathroom." Other Wallingford residents, who are supported by the Trust, also believe the project has worked wonders for their independence and has been beneficial in case of emergencies.

Ian Barwell, said: "I think it's a great idea and I've had no



Karen Harris at home in Wallingford

problems at all since it has been in place."

Peter Parnell, who lives in the same home as Ian, agreed: "I wasn't overly keen at the start, but I've got used to it now and have used it on a number of occasions. It has definitely helped me live my life in a more independent way."

The initiative was thought up a number of years ago, but it wasn't until a successful three month trial period, that it was launched on 26 August 2009.

Support worker, Carol Robinson, said: "From a service user's point of view, it is a marvellous invention which has had a hugely positive impact on their lives".

Contact for further information:
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Hear more about the Call Centre Project at the Annual General Meeting on 22nd September 2010.

Peter Parnell



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Ian Barwell



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