



PR 399

Date Issued: 22 October 2009

For Immediate Release

Award for innovative health care

NHS Norfolk, Norfolk County Council and two private sector partners have won an award for their use of hi-tech equipment which is helping people to live independently.

The award recognises the partnership working between **NHS Norfolk** and **Norfolk County Council** to deliver **Telecare**, which allows patients to live independently and safely, and **Telehealth**, which allows patients to measure their own vital signs, such as weight or blood pressure. The vital signs can then be accessed electronically by clinicians.

The Telehealth equipment, supplied by **TeleMedCare** is being trialled in Woodside House, a care home run by the **Barchester Healthcare Group**. It is planned to further develop the use of both Telecare and Telehealth in care homes to support independence and reduce the number of admissions to hospital.

Both Barchester Healthcare and TeleMedCare were also recipients of the award, in the "Best Use of Telehealth and Telecare" category of E-Health Insider Awards 2009.

NHS Norfolk's Assistant Director for Out of Hospital Care, Wendy Hardicker, said: "We are absolutely delighted to receive this award as it demonstrates our commitment at NHS Norfolk towards supporting individuals to live as independently as possible."

Tim Hammond, Managing Director, Barchester Healthcare, said: "At Barchester we strive to provide the best care possible and the Telehealth initiative is a great example of this. It has truly benefitted our residents, leading to an 80% reduction in hospital admissions, so we are very pleased to be recognised for our involvement in this pioneering trial."

Tracey Burt, General Manager at Barchester's Woodside House care home said: "The system gives us an excellent insight into a resident's general health and well-being and helps us to continue to provide high quality care."

The use of telehealth equipment in care homes and in patients' private homes is known as "assistive technology". Its implementation in care homes and in patients own homes is a crucial part of NHS Norfolk's five year strategy to support people with long term conditions. The overall aim is to give people independence while ensuring they are kept under close observation.

Any serious developments in their conditions can be detected early, meaning patients receive the care they need sooner and, in many cases, avoid hospital admission.

Saneth Wijayaratna from TeleMedCare explained: "It gives people choice.

"It allows patients to stay at home where they want to be and self-manage their conditions; it also allows clinical care teams to remotely support people within the community whilst reducing numbers of admissions to hospital and A&E."

Councillor David Harwood, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Services at Norfolk County Council, said "Thanks to this technology more people can stay safe and independent in their own homes for longer. It also helps us to provide a more efficient service."

Norfolk County Council's Assistive Technology Service has been supporting people in Norfolk for the past five years. In the region of 25,000 people are supported with a community alarm and last year upwards of 4,000 people were supported through the provision of Assistive Technology.

A special DVD is now available online featuring actor Ricky Tomlinson, which shows a range of impressive technology available to help older people live independently in their own homes. Ricky, who recently turned 70, gave up his time for free to take part. To watch the film, log on to www.youtube.com/NorfolkCountyCouncil

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Media contact: Tim Curtis
07971 274993
pressofficer@norfolk.nhs.uk

Barchester Healthcare: Aisling Kearney or Chantel Gohil
0207 352 2224
Aisling.kearney@barchester.com
Chantel.gohil@barchester.com