

Case Study

“I know I’m making a difference to someone’s life”

Saving lives is a role often associated with doctors and nurses. nevertheless, the anonymous people at the Aid Call Response centre in Devon also face difficult circumstances each day, and their decisions and responses to emergency situations can often save callers lives.

Jo Cartwright is a Response Operator at Aid Call, a personal alarm and emergency response service that provides 24-hour care to older people and those with disabilities or debilitating illnesses. There are over 40,000 users of the service across the UK and the centre receives over 1,700 calls daily.

Users are given pendants or Aid Call buttons which they can press to summon help if needed - within seconds, they will be talking to a response operator, who will arrange the appropriate help: either sending round previously nominated neighbours, friends or relatives, or by calling out the emergency services if necessary.

Aid Call is a lifeline for many users who contact the centre in their moment of need. Response Operators are trained professionals who deal with the calls and deliver people to safety. Jo has been working at Aid Call for 4 years and feels a huge sense of self-satisfaction in her job. This is her story.

I worked as a personal assistant before I took a break to have children and look after my family. When I started looking for work again, I wanted to find something that was more fulfilling and work for a charity organisation, so I trained to be a response operator at Aid Call.

Now, I get the opportunity to speak to lots of people every day, comfort them if necessary, and sometimes even save their life. I know that I’m really making a difference in the world and helping people and their families. It is such a satisfying feeling.



It's not just older people that use Aid Call, other users are either disabled or have diseases such as Parkinson's or Epilepsy, anything really that can affect the way people live. But by having access to an Aid Call alarm, the user has much more independence and feels secure that they can go about their normal lives but just in case anything happens, we'll be there to help them.

Aid Call is run by Age Concern, the leading charity in the UK. All the profits from Aid Call's service helps to fund the works of the charity in campaigning and lobbying at a national level, and providing essential services to the older community at a local level.

The technology we use at Aid Call is quite advanced. When a user presses their Aid Call button or pendant, a radio signal sends the call centre their details, including their medical history, and we go about our processes to make sure nothing serious has happened. Our initial step is to get in touch with either the user or nominated friends and family members. If that fails, then we'll contact the emergency services who will visit the premises of the caller and force their way in if they have to.

Our procedures are strict, and all calls are recorded, the telephone line is a speech link into the home, which enables us to speak to users, and if they have fallen, are ill, or in a stressful situation, we can reassure them that help is on the way.

Recently, I took a call from a lady who had slipped down the side of her bed and couldn't move. She activated the Aid Call button on her pendant but couldn't answer her house phone, as she couldn't move. After trying all her named contacts, I had to call the emergency services to scene. Her medical notes showed that she suffered from Osteoporosis, so I was able to notify the paramedics and give them a breakdown of what they needed to know, like how brittle her bones were or what medication she was taking. In this case, as the lady couldn't move, the paramedics had to break into her house and rescue her from her bedroom. The service doesn't stop there though, we track which hospital our callers go to and make sure their next of kin knows where they are. It's awful when you think about what could've happened to that lady if she didn't contact Aid Call. Some elderly people very rarely have visitors, so she could have been stuck there for days without food or water.

To find out more about Aid Call or to arrange a free no obligation demonstration please call 0800 77 22 66 or visit www.aidcall.co.uk/personalalarms.

We don't always deal with serious accidents though. One 80-year-old gentleman presses his Aid Call button monthly just to check it still works, but refuses to wear his pendant because it interferes with his backhand while playing tennis. During another emergency call recently, we contacted a neighbour and sent them round to check on a 90 year-old lady, and it turns out that she accidentally set off her Aid Call alarm whilst up a ladder, pruning her apple tree.

It's amazing. Most Aid Call users are often fine, fit and fighting to keep their independence, which is why we are there, just in case an accident happens. It saddens me to hear people in pain or panic stricken, but it's very inspiring at the same time, to speak to people who want to be self-sufficient and are determined to carry on enjoying their lives, but are just staying on the safe side and making sure there is a way they can get help.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

ABOUT AID CALL:

Aid Call is a discreet personal alarm system owned by Age Concern that summons help, at the touch of a button. Over 40,000 people throughout the UK rely on the Aid Call emergency alarm service. Users are not exclusively older people; some have a physical disability, or a chronic condition such as epilepsy or diabetes, some are recovering from illness, while others are more concerned for their security than their health.

All of Aid Call's profits help to fund the works of Age Concern, both in campaigning and lobbying at a national level, and providing essential services to the older community at a local level.

ABOUT AGE CONCERN:

Age Concern is the leading charity in the UK concerned with ageing and older people, and works to improve the quality of life for all older people. Nationally, it is involved in campaigning, policy guidance, research and information, and through its trading arm, Age Concern Enterprises (ACEnt), offers a range of products and services specifically designed for older people.

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