Case Study: Northern Ireland Association for Mental Health

Going beyond Lone Working. Working safe, working smart...

“As a result of using Guardian24’s technology, there is a greater degree of confidence amongst Lone Workers”

The Customer
Niamh (the Northern Ireland Association for Mental Health), is the largest and longest established independent charity focusing on mental health and wellbeing services in Northern Ireland. Their mission is to build a flourishing society in which all people have access to services and support appropriate to their mental health and wellbeing needs. Niamh currently employs 650 staff and supports thousands of people every year.

The Challenge
At the core of Niamh’s services is the community-based support it provides to people who have had experience of mental illness. This includes regular visits to those living in supported housing services provided by Niamh which accommodates over 430 people. By the very nature of the tasks undertaken by the charity’s lone working Floating Support Workers, an additional level of personal protection was required to help safeguard them from potentially harmful incidents such as accident and injury.

Niamh recognise that supporting people within supported housing and the community is both rewarding and, often, challenging. Nationally, nine out of ten social workers have suffered verbal and physical abuse according to a recent report. Niamh already have robust risk policies, procedures and training in place for practicing safe lone working, but equipping staff with a mobile-based means of raising an alarm in the event of an emergency was agreed to be a necessary requirement as an additional level of support.

Vincent Lavery – Head of Corporate Services at Niamh stated “We have a Lone Working Policy but this needed to be supported by hard controls which Guardian24’s Android BS 8484 certified application has since provided.”

The Solution
Niamh examined and analysed a number of lone worker protection providers and found that Guardian24 met all of their needs. Vincent explained that having a “local Guardian24 contact was critical for our decision. As a customer with many responsibilities and challenges, this personal touch is extremely important as is the responsiveness to our many queries and needs.”

The charity opted for Guardian24’s smartphone application which could be easily installed on their employee’s existing Android-operated mobile phones. The application allows the user to discreetly raise an alarm in the event of an emergency, directly linking them with highly-trained Controllers at

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Guardian24’s Alarm Receiving Centre. Upon activation, the Controllers will know who is calling, where they are (via GPS tracking technology) and will covertly listen in and assess the situation. If it’s safe to do so, the Controller will use the phone’s two-way communications to talk and reassure the user.

Utilising all the information available and any voice communications and recorded memos, the Controllers will manage the incident; contacting the emergency services and/or the organisation’s nominated responders, ensuring that help is summoned fast!

The software also comes equipped with a ‘check in/check out’ function. This allows lone workers to log in and out of daily tasks, leaving details of their location and the expected duration.

If an activity over runs, Guardian24 will automatically call the lone worker to verify their safety. If the lone worker cannot be reached, a nominated respondent will be notified informing them of the overrun activity. At this stage an agreed protocol will be followed to verify the lone worker’s safety and location. This has already been proven in use with Niamh amongst many other organisations using the software.

As Vincent Lavery explains, Guardian24’s smartphone application is “a good system that’s easy to train, easy to use and is always developing.” However, it wasn’t just the connection tool that impressed Niamh, with Vincent commenting that “The customer support is the most impressive part about Guardian24.”

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Vincent Lavery: Northern Ireland Association for Mental Health

The Benefits

Not only is Guardian24’s smartphone application one of the most cost-effective and easy to use systems in the marketplace, but the service is fully accredited to the highest industry standards, including BS 8484:2016, BS 5979 (Category II) and ‘Secured by Design’. Having these certifications enable Guardian24 to request a priority “Level 1” response from the local Police force – thus providing a far quicker deployment of the emergency services over more traditional methods.

Vincent commented “In terms of applying this, we have a robust procurement process with a critical element being quality and assurance. BS 8484 meets this and therefore enables us to demonstrate not only quality but also a value for money solution. Within the social care sector this is critical.” Incidents can be few and far between but by equipping their staff with an additional layer of protection, it offers greater peace of mind to those working alone in sometimes difficult situations.

Vincent continues “As a result of using Guardian24’s technology, there is a greater degree of confidence amongst Lone Workers plus a realisation that as a responsible employer we place their safety squarely front and centre.”

“Staff have embraced this and have all stated they find it an excellent piece of technology to give further assurance. Staff buy-in is evident when running usage reports as we are able to see instantly that they are now using Guardian24 to log every lone worker visit. With Guardian24’s ARC response being a part of the service this has provided staff with reassurance that in the event of an emergency somebody will be listening live within seconds.”

“Furthermore and from an internal perspective, it is a demonstrable feature as to how a responsible employer engages with modern technology as a means to address what can be risky endeavours. This is a key component of our Health and Safety strategy and a positive Health and Safety culture.”

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