

ricability



Calling for help



A guide to
community
alarms

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Calling

The simplest type of alarm unit – just one button to press when you need help



This alarm unit has a built-in telephone



Portable triggers can be worn as a pendant, on a wristband or on clothing



for help



A guide to community alarms

A community alarm means you can call for help from anywhere in your home. If you or your family are concerned that you might fall and not be able to get up, then carrying a small radio device (see the picture) means you will be able to set off an alarm telephone call just by pressing a button. In fact once you have a community alarm, you should not use it only for emergencies. Press the button whenever you feel concerned and need reassurance and someone to talk to.

Over one and a half million older and disabled people in the UK use community alarms. Most have their calls answered by a local alarm centre. This guide explains how alarms work (over the page) and the types of organisations that run alarm schemes (pages 6 and 7). We have tested 13 different models – all on the market in Autumn 2003. Results and photographs are given in the Summaries (pages 12 to 19) and in the Table (on pages 20 and 21) so you can compare across all the models. We go through the service and model options (on page 11). If you are offered an alarm that we have not tested, the advice and checklist (on pages 8 and 9) suggests things to look out for when deciding what will suit you.

Having a good community alarm can give you the confidence to continue living at home independently, knowing that help is at hand if you need it.

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How does an alarm work?

You press a button when you need help and a call automatically goes through to an alarm call centre or to a friend or relative



1 The fall

Tom is working in the garden when he trips on the edge of the patio



2 Setting off the alarm

There is no one in calling distance so Tom pushes the alarm button on his wristband trigger. That sends a signal to the alarm unit in the house to automatically dial the call centre





5 Up and around
Tom just needed help getting up this time. He was back in the garden the same afternoon, but knows the system will work if he has a bigger problem

4 Help arrives
The centre rings Tom's daughter who lives in the next road, saying there might be a problem, and she comes round straightaway



3 Call centre alerted
The centre receives the call from Tom's unit and his details appear on a computer screen. The operator tries to talk to Tom but he is too far from the unit to hear her



Where can you get an alarm?

You won't find much choice of alarm units in high street shops – so where do you start?

Local authorities

There are some 300 alarm schemes around the country. These are run mainly by housing departments but also by social services departments. In Scotland they are run by social work departments and in Northern Ireland by the health and social services boards.

Most schemes provide services to local authority and private tenants and to home owners. Charges vary from one authority to another, and also according to the service provided. They are mostly around two or three pounds a week and generally cover renting and maintaining the alarm and the response service.

When the centre receives a call they can automatically identify who it is from. They will have your details and contact numbers for the people you have nominated as helpers. Other centres send

out a mobile warden - a member of the centre staff. Some also offer the option of telephoning or calling occasionally to see how you are.

You may need to meet the scheme's eligibility criteria. Many give priority to older and disabled people and those who live alone, or with someone who is also frail.

If your own local authority does not run a scheme, there are some that take on people outside their area. Most alarm schemes are members of the Association of Social Alarms Providers (ASAP). Contact them for information on schemes that operate in your area. See page 23 for contact details.

Housing associations

Some housing associations have alarm schemes for their residents and some of these offer services to other people. They operate in the same way as the local authority schemes. Again, contact ASAP for housing association schemes in your area.

In recent years some housing associations have taken over the responsibilities of local authority housing departments, including their alarm services.

Charities

Two charities provide alarm services nationally.

Help the Aged runs SeniorLink which has rental options from free (depending on your finances) to £4.29 a week for the first quarter then £3.75 a week.

Alternatively they sell new or reconditioned alarms (Horizons) and charge £1.50 a week for the service. They will contact volunteer keyholders if necessary.

Alarms can give people the confidence to live at home independently



Age Concern Aid-Call rents alarms (Lifelines) and also calls out nominated helpers with a key to your home. Payment options include varying initial fees plus a subscription that works out between £1.50 to £2.96 a week.

A number of other charities provide alarm services for their beneficiaries.



Staff at the centre are trained to take appropriate action whatever the call

Commercial firms

Most alarm manufacturers and distributors sell and rent direct to the public; others sell only to organisations. Some telephone and security shops and centres for disabled people stock a few community alarms. Ask the manufacturers (see page 23) where you can buy or rent their products. Some security firms that monitor burglar alarms take on community alarm clients too. ASAP can tell you of their member firms.

Finding a good alarm service

A community alarms service is there to respond to calls from people needing help. A good centre will do this reliably and sympathetically. So, how do you find a good centre?

The majority of community alarms services in the UK belong to ASAP. Its members have to meet or be working towards standards set out in its Code of Practice. Check to see if any service you are considering is a member of ASAP.

Alongside is a checklist of what any good community alarms service will provide. Talk to the centre staff and to people already using it - ask to be put in touch if you don't already know anyone.

Tick off the points - the more ticks the better.

- Does the centre provide cover 24 hours a day, 365 days a year?
- Are all calls answered quickly - ASAP requires 80% in half a minute and 98.5% in one minute?
- Are there at least two operators at all times to answer calls?
- Do all operators take account of the user's wishes when deciding what to do?
- Are there procedures to ensure operators provide appropriate assistance in a wide range of circumstances?
- Is all information on service users kept and handled confidentially by all staff?
- Does the centre work well with emergency services in your area?
- If the centre holds keys to users' homes, are they kept securely and identified only by code?
- Does the centre check from time to time that users are satisfied with the service?
- Does the centre have a complaints procedure which all users are told about?
- Can the centre continue to work if essential services fail such as telephone or electricity?

What to look for when choosing an alarm?

Below is advice on alarm unit features. If you're looking at an alarm we have not covered, use the checklist opposite - the more ticks the better

Alarm unit

Speech systems

With all the units tested you could speak with the person answering your alarm call without picking up a phone. If your hearing is good, you don't have to be very close to the unit to do this. If you are hard of hearing, you are likely to need a unit with alarm speech volume rated at ✓✓ or ✓✓✓ in the results pages (12 to 21). As well as a volume control on the alarm unit, the centre will be able to adjust the loudness of their speech for you.

Depending on the centre that you use, most alarm units can provide full two-way speech, like speaking on an ordinary telephone. With some alarms the centre has to switch between speaking and listening, which means you have to wait before you can speak. The results pages tell you which system each alarm had.



Choose a portable trigger that you find comfortable to wear

The alarm-only units had a socket to plug in an ordinary telephone. With almost all of these you can answer an ordinary phone call by pressing on the portable trigger - without having to go to the phone and pick up the receiver. See the results pages for which.

Making an alarm call

All the alarms tested had an alarm button on the unit - useful if you are not wearing your portable trigger. Make sure you can see and press it easily. If you are fairly able, see the first ease of use ratings in the results pages. Use the later ones if you have weak or painful grip, or a visual impairment or a severe or profound hearing loss. The units reassure you that the call is going through with small lights, beeps, recorded speech or a displayed text message.

Power cuts and other faults

All the alarm units need to be plugged into the mains and a telephone socket, and all had back-up batteries in case the mains failed, though some lasted much longer than others. Visual or audio warnings were given if the power or phone lines failed. These were also in the form of lights, beeps, recorded speech or a text message. Phones plugged into the units, and the built-in handsets, continued to work without mains or battery power. The units automatically dialled out to tell the centre of a power failure.

All the units could still make an alarm call if the plugged-in or built-in phone was off the hook, but most could not call if a different extension phone was off the hook. Some units alerted the telephone user by sending tones down the line.

Some manufacturers told us their units have not been tested to work with telephone services, such as voicemail and call diversion or barring. If you or your helpers subscribe to these, check with the alarm centre that the system will work.

Check the trigger will set off the alarm from the end of your garden



Triggers

Portable triggers

This is probably the most important part of the system. Always try out a portable trigger before you accept it. Make sure it is comfortable to wear and move about with, and that you can set it off with a light touch - see our ratings (pages 12 to 21). When you have a system installed, try setting off the alarm from around your house and from the bottom of your garden. The operating ranges we have given from manufacturers are outdoor distances.

Extra triggers

You can have extra triggers fitted around the home - see pages 12 to 19 - to alert your helpers or a call centre without you pressing your portable trigger or the unit button. You may have to pay more for these. They can be connected by wire to the unit or some work by radio, with no wires. They include wall buttons and pull cords, and also sensors that set off the alarm if, for example, there is a fire or gas leak. A few units can be used to control systems in your home, such as opening a door by pressing the button.

Most of the units also had a built-in habit cycle alarm, so an alarm call is sent if you are not up and around. The unit dials out if you don't press one of the buttons or lift the phone handset within a programmed time.

Checklist

Portable trigger

- Is it comfortable to wear?
- Can it be worn in different ways - around your neck, wrist or on clothes?

- Is it easy for you to press the button?
- Will it set off the alarm from anywhere in your home and garden?
- Does it look substantial enough to stand up to knocks and drops?
- Does it automatically send a low battery warning to the alarm centre?
- Does the manufacturer or alarm scheme regularly replace triggers or their batteries?

Alarm unit

- Does it provide full two-way speech?
- Will the button be easy to see and use in an emergency?
- Does it have battery back-up power that lasts at least eight hours?
- Does it warn you if mains power fails or back-up batteries run low?
- Does it warn the centre if power fails or batteries run low?
- Does it give clear signals to show that an alarm call is getting through?
- Does it warn you if the telephone line is faulty or disconnected?
- Can it be used with other types of triggers that you need?

When and how to use an alarm

Press the alarm button whenever you need help or reassurance, and try it out from time to time - it will remind you how to use it

Never worry about being a nuisance. Community alarm centres are always open and ready to take your call. Talking through your problem can sometimes deal with it. The alarm centre will send someone to help you only if you need them. Friends and relatives are more likely to worry if they know you are reluctant to bother them.

Wearing a portable trigger

It is safest to wear the trigger all the time you are up, so you can set off the alarm from anywhere in your house or garden. Most portable triggers now come with different holders, so you can wear them whichever way suits you best. Take the trigger with you if you get up in the night and when you use the bathroom - almost all are waterproof but check with the provider. We judged the triggers to be strong and durable but have told the manufacturers that some of the holders broke in our tests.

Cancelling a call

If you set off the alarm without meaning to, it's possible - but not always easy - to stop it dialling out at the unit. Don't take the risk of rushing to do this. Better to let the call go through and tell the centre staff or your helper when they speak to you.



Wear the trigger around the house so you can call for help from anywhere



Choosing your helpers

Whether your alarm calls go to a call centre or direct to your friends or relatives, the person who comes to help you will need a key if you cannot let them in. It is better to double lock the door - and give keyholders both keys - than to bolt the door from the inside.

An alarm scheme with mobile wardens might ask you to make an arrangement for perhaps two neighbours to hold your keys. Alternatively the scheme might keep keys, in which case they will be locked at the centre or in the warden's van, and coded for safety.

In choosing people to come to help you, they should live or work nearby, and of course be willing to be called out at any time.

If your helpers have telephone services such as call minder or caller identification, tell the alarm centre. If they have an answering machine, it should be switched off whenever they are at home.

Alarms on test: the options

If you are going to get a community alarm, you will need to decide on the type of service and equipment to have

Who will receive your calls?

The safest option is to subscribe to a community alarm scheme. There will always be staff on hand to answer your call. You will probably have to pay a few pounds a week for the service, but it is likely to cover the installation and maintenance of the alarm unit and triggers. Schemes which contact your friends and relatives are generally cheaper than those which send out their own staff - mobile wardens.

The alternative is to have a unit which can be programmed to dial your friends and relatives directly. Your helpers receive a recorded message that you need help. The units could be set to dial at least three different numbers, several times each if necessary. They can include a mobile number. You avoid ongoing service charges, but remember all your helpers could be unavailable when you make an alarm call. A third option is to have an alarm centre as your last number.

The BT In Touch 2000 is designed to contact individual helpers instead of an alarm scheme. When used with the In Touch 2000c carer's unit (see page 19), it has good features to warn the helper of an alarm call.

Which centre?

If you want to use a community alarm scheme, we suggest you try your local authority or housing association first, to see what services they provide. If that fails, contact ASAP (see page 23) to find out which of their members take on clients in your area. If you want a particular model, contact the manufacturer (also listed on page 23) for information on centres which provide their products.

A built-in phone or not?

An alarm with a built-in telephone can replace your existing phone. Of the models tested, only the BT alarm units had built-in handsets. They also had a range of push button features - some people might find all the buttons a bit daunting.

If your current telephone has features that you need, such as good volume controls or large numbers, and you find it easy to use, go for an alarm-only unit, and plug your phone into it.

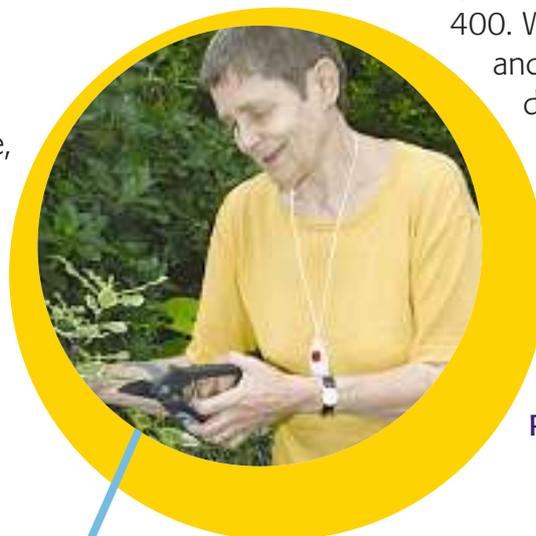
Which alarm?

To compare all the models tested, use the table on pages 20 and 21. The summaries on the following pages give details of each alarm.

Over the last 20 years that we have been assessing community alarms, standards have been introduced and met and technological improvements made. Manufacturers have provided some of the technical details on their products for this Guide and we have made assessments on how easy they are to use.

As the following summaries show, many models had a mix of good and not so good features, so you will need to pick out the alarms that suit your abilities. Best overall were the In Touch 1000 and 2000, though these models with handsets had no extra triggers like most other alarms, followed by the Lifeline

400. While the CareSec and IntelliLink units did well, they were let down by their triggers - IntelliLink's will soon be replaced.



Press the trigger and someone will come

Alarm summaries

Here are photographs and details of all the alarms we have tested.

The prices are for a unit and one portable trigger, excluding VAT. Community alarm products and services are zero rated for VAT when bought by or for people with disabilities. What you pay for the alarm and any services will depend on who supplies them.

The information on each alarm's features and options has been supplied by its manufacturer, along with the time for which the unit back-up battery will operate and the trigger's outdoor operating range. The ease of use ratings are based on the assessment of the units and triggers by experts from the Royal National Institute for Deaf People.

Key to ratings

✓✓✓	very good
✓✓	good
✓	average
X	poor
XX	very poor

alarm only



Antenna Princess AP1000

£105

- Distributor: TeleAlarm
- Unit 4x21x23cm (height x width x depth)
- Full 2-way speech or switched
- Built-in habit cycle
- Can answer telephone calls with portable trigger
- **Portable triggers:** pendant, wristband, clip-on
- **Fixed triggers - radio operated:** pull cords, wall buttons, room temperature, smoke, gas, carbon monoxide, intruder, movement, health monitor, extra microphone, extra speaker, home controls

Alarm unit

Ease of using alarm button	X
Alarm speech quality	✓✓
normal volume	✓✓
maximum volume	✓✓
Stated back-up battery duration	120 hours

Signals and warnings

Unit has received signal	light + sound
Centre has received call	voice of operator
Power failure warning	light + sound
Loss of phone line warning	light + sound
Plugged in phone ringing	none

Portable trigger

Ease of using alarm button	✓
Stated outdoor trigger range	300 metres
Low battery warning to user	yes
Low battery warning to centre	yes

Setting off alarm with:

	unit	trigger
poor grip	X	X
poor sight	X	✓
poor hearing	X	✓



Antenna AP2000

£155

- Distributor: TeleAlarm
- Unit 5x21x23cm (height x width x depth)
- Full 2-way speech or switched
- Built-in habit cycle
- Can answer telephone calls with portable trigger
- **Portable triggers:** pendant, wristband, clip-on
- **Fixed triggers – radio operated:** : pull cords, wall buttons, room temperature, smoke, gas, carbon monoxide, intruder, movement, health monitor, extra microphone, extra speaker, home controls

Alarm unit

Ease of using alarm button	X
Alarm speech quality	✓✓
normal volume	✓✓
maximum volume	✓✓✓
Stated back-up battery duration	120 hours

Signals and warnings

Unit has received signal	light + audio message
Centre has received call	voice of operator
Power failure warning	light
Loss of phone line warning	none
Plugged in phone ringing	none

Portable trigger

Ease of using alarm button	✓
Stated outdoor trigger range	300 metres
Low battery warning to user	only when trigger used
Low battery warning to centre	yes

Setting off alarm with:

	unit	trigger
poor grip	X	X
poor sight	X	✓
poor hearing	XX	✓



CareSec

£99

- Manufacturer: Hybrid Integrated Systems
- Unit 8x12x29cm (height x width x depth)
- Can send alarm calls to friends direct
- Full 2-way speech or switched
- Can answer telephone calls with portable trigger
- **Portable triggers:** pendants, wristband, clip-on
- **Fixed triggers– radio and/or wired:** pull cords, wall buttons, room temperature, smoke, gas, carbon monoxide, intruder, movement, extra microphone, extra speaker, home controls

Alarm unit

Ease of using alarm button	✓✓
Alarm speech quality	✓✓
normal volume	✓✓
maximum volume	✓✓
Stated back-up battery duration	48 hours

Signals and warnings

Unit has received signal	light + sound
Centre has received call	voice of operator
Power failure warning	light + sound
Loss of phone line warning	light + sound
Plugged in phone ringing	light + sound

Portable triggers

	trigger 1	trigger 2
Ease of using alarm button	X	✓
Stated outdoor trigger range	300 m	300 m
Low battery warning to user	only when trigger used	only when trigger used
Low battery warning to centre	yes	yes

Setting off alarm with:

	unit	trigger 1	trigger 2
poor grip	✓✓✓	X	X
poor sight	✓	X	✓
poor hearing	✓	XX	✓

alarm only



Homelink Extra II
price not supplied by manufacturer

- Manufacturer: Cooper Security
- Unit 5x21x27cm (height x width x depth)
- Can send alarm calls to friends direct
- Switchable 2-way speech
- Built-in habit cycle
- **Portable trigger:** pendant, wristband, clip-on
- **Fixed trigger – radio and/or wired:** pull cords, smoke, intruder, movement, extra microphone, extra speaker, home controls

Alarm unit

Ease of using alarm button	✓
Alarm speech quality	X
normal volume	✓✓
maximum volume	✓✓✓
Stated back-up battery duration	30 hours

Signals and warnings

Unit has received signal	light + sound
Centre has received call	voice of operator
Power failure warning	light
Loss of phone line warning	light
Plugged in phone ringing	none

Portable triggers

	trigger 1	trigger 2
Ease of using alarm button	✓	✓✓
Stated outdoor trigger range	70 m	70 m
Low battery warning to user	none	none
Low battery warning to centre	only when trigger used	

Setting off alarm with:

	unit	trigger 1	trigger 2
poor grip	✓	X	✓✓
poor sight	✓	X	✓✓
poor hearing	✓	X	✓✓



Horizon II £124

- Manufacturer: Attendo Systems
- Unit 4x20x24cm (height x width x depth)
- Can send alarm calls to friends direct
- Full 2-way speech or switched
- Built-in habit cycle
- Can answer telephone calls with portable trigger
- **Portable trigger:** pendant, wristband, clip-on
- **Fixed trigger – radio and/or wired:** pull cords, wall buttons, room temperature, smoke, gas, carbon monoxide, intruder, movement, high heat detector

Alarm unit

Ease of using alarm button	✓
Alarm speech quality	✓✓
normal volume	✓✓
maximum volume	✓✓
Stated back-up battery duration	72 hours

Signals and warnings

Unit has received signal	light
Centre has received call	voice of operator
Power failure warning	light + sound
Loss of phone line warning	light + sound
Plugged in phone ringing	none

Portable trigger

	trigger 1	trigger 2
Ease of using alarm button	✓	
Stated outdoor trigger range	50 metres +	
Low battery warning to user	yes	
Low battery warning to centre	yes	

Setting off alarm with:

	unit	trigger
poor grip	X	XX
poor sight	✓	X
poor hearing	✓	✓✓



IntelliLink

£120

- Initial Community Care
- Unit 6x19x21cm (height x width x depth)
- Can send alarm calls to friends direct
- Full 2-way speech or switched
- Can answer telephone calls with portable trigger
- **Portable trigger:** pendant, wristband, clip-on
- **Fixed trigger – radio and/or wired:** pull cords, wall buttons, room temperature, smoke, flood, gas, carbon monoxide, intruder, movement, health monitor, extra microphone, extra speaker, home controls, fall detector

Alarm unit

Ease of using alarm button	✓✓✓
Alarm speech quality	✓
normal volume	✓✓
maximum volume	✓✓
Stated back-up battery duration	24 up to 36 hours

Signals and warnings

Unit has received signal	light + sound
Centre has received call	tone + voice of operator
Power failure warning	light + optional sound
Loss of phone line warning	light + optional sound
Plugged in phone ringing	light + sound

Portable trigger

New trigger from November 2003

Ease of using alarm button	✓
Stated outdoor trigger range	200 metres
Low battery warning to user	yes
Low battery warning to centre	yes

Setting off alarm with:

	unit	trigger
poor grip	✓✓✓	✗
poor sight	✓✓✓	✗
poor hearing	✓✓✓	✓



Lifeline 400

£149

- Tunstall Telecom
- Unit 6x12x20cm (height x width x depth)
- Can send alarm calls to friends direct
- Full 2-way speech or switched
- Built-in habit cycle
- Can answer telephone calls with portable trigger
- **Portable trigger:** pendant, wristband, clip-on
- **Fixed trigger – radio and/or wired:** pull cords, wall buttons, room temperature, smoke, flood, gas, carbon monoxide, intruder, movement, extra microphone, extra speaker, strobe sounder, home controls, fall detector

Alarm unit

Ease of using alarm button	✓
Alarm speech quality	✓
normal volume	✗
maximum volume	✓✓✓
Stated back-up battery duration	30 hours

Signals and warnings

Unit has received signal	light + sound
Centre has received call	voice of operator
Power failure warning	light + sound
Loss of phone line warning	light + sound
Plugged in phone ringing	light + sound

Portable triggers

	trigger 1	trigger 2
Ease of using alarm button	✓✓	✓✓
Stated outdoor trigger range	250 m	250 m
Low battery warning to user	yes	yes
Low battery warning to centre	yes	yes

Setting off alarm with:

	unit	trigger 1	trigger 2
poor grip	✓	✓	✓✓
poor sight	✓	✓✓	✓
poor hearing	✗	✓✓	✓✓

alarm only



Lifeline 4000 £181
also available with display screen

- Tunstall Telecom
- Unit 6x17x23cm (height x width x depth)
- Can send alarm calls to friends direct
- Full 2-way speech or switched
- Built-in habit cycle
- Can answer telephone calls with portable trigger
- **Portable trigger:** pendant, wristband, clip-on
- **Fixed trigger – radio and/or wired:** pull cords, wall buttons, room temperature, smoke, flood, gas, carbon monoxide, intruder, movement, extra microphone, extra speaker, strobe sounder, home controls, fall detector

Alarm unit

Ease of using alarm button	✓
Alarm speech quality	✓✓
normal volume	X
maximum volume	✓✓✓
Stated back-up battery duration	20 hours

Signals and warnings

Unit has received signal	light + audio message
Centre has received call	voice of operator
Power failure warning	light + audio message
Loss of phone line warning	light + audio message
Plugged in phone ringing	sound

Portable triggers

	trigger 1	trigger 2
Ease of using alarm button	✓	✓✓
Stated outdoor trigger range	250 m	250 m
Low battery warning to user	only when trigger used	only when trigger used
Low battery warning to centre	only when trigger used	only when trigger used

Setting off alarm with:

	unit	trigger 1	trigger 2
poor grip	X	X	✓✓
poor sight	X	✓	✓
poor hearing	X	✓	✓✓



Lifeline 4000+D £191
also available without display screen

- Tunstall Telecom
- Unit 6x17x23cm (height x width x depth)
- Can send alarm calls to friends direct
- Full 2-way speech or switched
- Built-in habit cycle
- Can answer telephone calls with portable trigger
- **Portable trigger:** pendant, wristband, clip-on
- **Fixed trigger – radio and/or wired:** pull cords, wall buttons, room temperature, smoke, flood, gas, carbon monoxide, intruder, movement, extra microphone, extra speaker, strobe sounder, home controls, fall detector

Alarm unit

Ease of using alarm button	✓
Alarm speech quality	✓✓
normal volume	X
maximum volume	✓✓✓
Stated back-up battery duration	20 hours

Signals and warnings

Unit has received signal	light + audio + text message
Centre has received call	voice of operator
Power failure warning	light + audio message
Loss of phone line warning	light + audio message
Plugged in phone ringing	sound

Portable triggers

	trigger 1	trigger 2
Ease of using alarm button	✓✓	✓✓
Stated outdoor trigger range	250 m	250 m
Low battery warning to user	yes	yes
Low battery warning to centre	yes	yes

Setting off alarm with:

	unit	trigger 1	trigger 2
poor grip	X	✓	✓✓
poor sight	X	✓✓	✓
poor hearing	✓	✓✓	✓✓



Lifeline 4000 £330
with TalkBack trigger

Tunstall Telecom are re-launching the TalkBack trigger (above) as we go to press (September 2003).

It is a portable trigger with a speech link and is supplied with a version of the Lifeline 4000 (far left) along with one ordinary trigger.

You can carry the TalkBack around with you on a belt clip and press the button to call for help. It is bigger than an ordinary trigger, but when the call centre (or your helper) receives the call, you can talk with them even if you are too far from the alarm unit to use its speech system. Tunstall say that it will work anywhere around a home or garden. If you try to use it outside its range, the TalkBack warns you with a tone and its small light.

You can also use the TalkBack to pick up ordinary telephone calls, by pressing the button when the phone rings, like a cordless phone. You have to recharge it regularly. Put it on the recharger, as in the photograph, at least every night and more often if you use it a lot for ordinary telephone calls

RNID are going to test the TalkBack for people with a hearing loss. The results will be in their *One in Seven* magazine - free to RNID members. Contact RNID (see page 23) for further information.



S11 Carephone £130
available in UK late 2003

- Distributor: TeleAlarm
- Unit 5x25x26cm (height x width x depth)
- Can send alarm calls to friends direct
- Full 2-way speech or switched
- Built-in habit cycle
- Can answer telephone calls with portable trigger
- **Portable trigger:** pendant, wristband, clip-on
- **Fixed trigger – radio and/or wired:** pull cords, wall buttons, room temperature, smoke, gas, carbon monoxide, intruder, movement, health monitor, extra microphone, extra speaker, home controls

Alarm unit

Ease of using alarm button	✓
Alarm speech quality	unavailable for testing
normal volume	unavailable for testing
maximum volume	unavailable for testing
Stated back-up battery duration	12 hours

Signals and warnings

Unit has received signal	light + sound + text message
Centre has received call	voice of operator
Power failure warning	light + text message
Loss of phone line warning	light + text message
Plugged in phone ringing	none

Portable trigger

Ease of using alarm button	✓
Stated outdoor trigger range	300 metres
Low battery warning to user	yes
Low battery warning to centre	yes

Setting off alarm with:

	unit	trigger
poor grip	✗	✗
poor sight	✓	✓
poor hearing	✓	✓

alarm only



Sayphone

£136

- Manufacturer: Tynetec
- Unit 5x19x27cm (height x width x depth)
- Can send alarm calls to friends direct
- Full 2-way speech or switched
- Built-in habit cycle
- Can answer telephone calls with portable trigger
- **Portable trigger:** pendant, wristband, key fob
- **Fixed trigger – radio and/or wired:** pull cords, wall buttons, room temperature, smoke, flood, gas, carbon monoxide, intruder, movement, enuresis, pill dispenser, extra microphone & speaker, home controls, fall detector

Alarm unit

Ease of using alarm button	X
Alarm speech quality	✓✓
normal volume	✓✓
maximum volume	✓✓✓
Stated back-up battery duration	60 hours

Signals and warnings

Unit has received signal	light + audio message
Centre has received call	voice of operator
Power failure warning	light + audio message
Loss of phone line warning	light + audio message
Plugged in phone ringing	light

Portable trigger

Ease of using alarm button	✓
Stated outdoor trigger range	70 metres +
Low battery warning to user	yes
Low battery warning to centre	only when trigger used

Setting off alarm with:

	unit	trigger
poor grip	X	✓
poor sight	XX	✓
poor hearing	XX	✓



In Touch 1000

£123

- Manufacturer: BT
- Unit 10x20x23cm (height x width x depth)
- Switchable 2-way speech
- Can answer telephone calls with portable trigger
- **Portable trigger:** pendant, wristband, clip-on

Alarm unit

Ease of using alarm button	✓✓
Alarm speech quality	✓
normal volume	✓✓
maximum volume	✓✓
Stated back-up battery duration	12 hours

Signals and warnings

Unit has received signal	light + sound + audio message
Centre has received call	voice of operator
Power failure warning	sound + audio message
Loss of phone line warning	sound + audio message
Plugged in phone ringing	light

Portable trigger

Ease of using alarm button	✓✓✓
Stated outdoor trigger range	50 metres
Low battery warning to user	only when trigger used
Low battery warning to centre	only when trigger used

Setting off alarm with:

	unit	trigger
poor grip	✓	✓✓
poor sight	✓✓	✓✓✓
poor hearing	✓✓	✓✓✓

Use as telephone

Ease of use	✓✓
Speech: quality	✓
minimum volume	✓
amplification	X

alarm with telephone



In Touch 2000 £128
for calling carers direct

- Manufacturer: BT
- Unit 10x20x23cm (height x width x depth)
- Full 2-way speech
- Can answer telephone calls with portable trigger
- **Portable trigger:** pendant, wristband, clip-on

Alarm unit

Ease of using alarm button	✓✓
Alarm speech quality	✓
normal volume	✓✓
maximum volume	✓✓
Stated back-up battery duration	8 hours

Signals and warnings

Unit has received signal	light + sound + audio + text
Caller has received call	voice of carer
Power failure warning	sound + audio + text message
Loss of phone line warning	sound + audio + text message
Plugged in phone ringing	light

Portable trigger

Ease of using alarm button	✓✓✓
Stated outdoor trigger range	50 metres
Low battery warning to user	only when trigger used
Low battery warning to centre	only when trigger used

Setting off alarm with:

	unit	trigger
poor grip	✓	✓✓
poor sight	✓✓	✓✓✓
poor hearing	✓✓	✓✓✓

Use as telephone

Ease of use	✓✓
Speech: quality	✓
minimum volume	✓
amplification	X



In Touch 2000 Package £196

The package has both an In Touch 2000 (left above) for an alarm user and a carer's unit – the In Touch 2000c (right above). It is sold in BT shops.

The carer needs to subscribe to special services, such as caller display. If your carer uses a network provider other than BT, they must check that they can get these services.

When an alarm call is made, the In Touch 2000c carer's phone rings normally but also beeps, a light flashes and a message appears in the digital display screen. The carer can speak with the alarm user. Three carers can be called in turn – in case one of them is out. They can have either the 2000c carer's phone or an ordinary phone.

Alarm test results

	Alarm only					
	Antenna Princess AP1000	Antenna AP2000	CareSec	Homelink Extra II	Horizon II	IntelliLink
Manufacturer/Distributor	TeleAlarm	TeleAlarm	Hybrid Integrated Systems	Cooper Security	Attendo Systems	Initial Community Care
Features						
Dimensions: hwxwd (cm)	4x21x23	5x21x23	8x12x29	5x21x27	4x20x24	6x19x21
Can call friends direct	no	no	yes	yes	yes	yes
Full 2-way speech or switched	both	both	both	switched	both	both
Built-in habit cycle	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	no
Can answer calls with trigger	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	yes
Portable triggers	clip-on pendant wristband					
Using the alarm						
Ease of using alarm button	X	X	✓✓	✓	✓	✓✓✓
Alarm speech: quality	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	X	✓✓	✓
normal volume	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
maximum volume	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Stated back-up battery duration (hrs)	120	120	48	30	72	24-36
Signals and warnings						
Unit has received signal	light/sound	light/audio	light/sound	light/sound	light	light/sound
Centre/carer has received call	voice	voice	voice	voice	voice	sound/voice
Power failure warning	light/sound	light	light/sound	light	light/sound	light/sound
Loss of phone line warning	light/sound	none	light/sound	light	light/sound	light/sound
Plugged in phone ringing	none	none	light/sound	none	none	light/sound
Portable trigger			1 2	1 2	*	*
Ease of using alarm button	✓	✓	X ✓	✓ ✓✓	✓	✓
Stated outdoor trigger range (m)	300	300	300 300	70 70	50+	200
Low battery warning to user	yes	when used	when used	none none	yes	yes
Low battery warning to centre	yes	yes	yes yes	when used	yes	yes
Setting off alarm with:	unit/trigger	unit/trigger	unit/triggers	unit/triggers	unit/trigger	unit/trigger
poor grip	X/X	X/X	✓✓✓/X/X	✓/X/✓✓	X/XX	✓✓✓/X
poor sight	X/✓	X/✓	✓/X/✓	✓/X/✓✓	✓/X	✓✓✓/X
poor hearing	X/✓	XX/✓	✓/XX/✓	✓/X/✓✓	✓/✓✓	✓✓✓/✓

Key to ratings ✓✓✓ very good ✓✓ good ✓ average X poor XX very poor

					Alarms with telephone	
Lifeline 400	Lifeline 4000 **	Lifeline 4000+D ***	S11 Carephone ****	Sayphone	In Touch 1000	call to carer In Touch 2000
Tunstall Telecom	Tunstall Telecom	Tunstall Telecom	TeleAlarm	Tynetec	BT	BT
6x12x20	6x17x23	6x17x23	5x25x26	5x19x27	10x20x23	10x20x23
yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	yes
both	both	both	both	both	switched	full
yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	no
yes						
clip-on pendant wristband	clip-on pendant wristband	clip-on pendant wristband	clip-on pendant wristband	key fob pendant wristband	clip-on pendant wristband	clip-on pendant wristband
✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓✓	✓✓
✓	✓✓	✓✓	****	✓✓	✓	✓
✗	✗	✗	****	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	****	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
30	20	20	12	60	12	8
light/sound voice	light/audio voice	light/audio/text voice	light/sound/text voice	light/audio voice	light/sound/audio voice	light/sound/audio/text voice
light/sound	light/audio	light/audio	light/text	light/audio	sound/audio	sound/audio/text
light/sound	light/audio	light/audio	light/text	light/audio	sound/audio	sound/audio/text
light/sound	sound	sound	none	light	light	light
1 2	1 2	1 2				
✓✓ ✓✓	✓ ✓✓	✓✓ ✓✓	✓	✓	✓✓✓	✓✓✓
250 250	250 250	250 250	300	70+	50	50
yes yes	when used	yes yes	yes	yes	when used	when used
yes yes	when used	yes yes	yes	when used	when used	when used
unit/triggers	unit/triggers	unit/triggers	unit/trigger	unit/trigger	unit/trigger	unit/trigger
✓/✓/✓✓	✗/✗/✓✓	✗/✓/✓✓	✗/✗	✗/✓	✓/✓✓	✓/✓✓
✓/✓✓/✓	✗/✓/✓	✗/✓✓/✓	✓/✓	✗✗/✓	✓✓/✓✓✓	✓✓/✓✓✓
✗/✓✓/✓✓	✗/✓/✓✓	✓/✓✓/✓✓	✓/✓	✗✗/✓	✓✓/✓✓✓	✓✓/✓✓✓

* new trigger from November 2003
 ** also sold with display screen

*** also sold without display screen
 **** available in UK from late 2003

Looking to the future...

Community alarms are offering more services - at home and away from home

Our work on alarm units and portable triggers should help you to choose products you can use easily to call for help when you have a problem. Technologies are now developing to extend community alarm systems to provide more support.

At home

With people generally living longer and the majority wanting to stay at home for as long as possible, care providers are looking to technology for assistance. A survey carried out for us by ASAP of its member alarm providers showed over 80% of users are aged over 70, with 18% of these 90 or older.

Telecare systems are an extension of community alarms. They can monitor how well you are - through community alarm sensors - and call for help if you cannot set off the alarm. The fixed trigger options on the results pages (12 to 19) list the types of sensors available with the alarm units. These include simple inactivity monitors, such as pressure mats to trigger an alarm call if you are not moving around for too long, and bed alerts if you are up and

You can get on with jobs confident that you can call for help if necessary



The FreeWalker device is already in use in Hong Kong

down all night. Fall detectors are already available, and health monitors - to measure sugar levels for people with diabetes, for example - are being developed. Community alarm schemes are starting to use the equipment that can provide these smart services. You should be fully consulted before being asked to use them.

Away from home

Mobile phones are now carried by many older people - sometimes for emergency use only. However our work on mobile phones has shown they are not easy to use if you are older or disabled. There are interference problems with hearing aids and the small keys and large number of functions can cause difficulty. See our *Stay in Touch* guide for help on choosing phones and telephone services.

Mobile communications technology is starting to be used to give people who are out and about a simple way to get help in an emergency. The FreeWalker safety device is being introduced in the UK in 2003 (see page 23 to get more information). You carry the wallet-like device and press its single button to speak to a call centre. The centre will be able to locate where you are within about 50 metres in cities, a bit further elsewhere. They will then contact your relatives or local volunteers, or the emergency services if necessary. Costs are expected to be around £200 to buy and about £2 for the service; rental options are not yet finalised.

In time there are likely to be other location-tracking devices designed for older people who might need to call for help wherever they are.

Contact details

ASAP

Association of Social Alarms Providers

4 Beaufort House
Beaufort Court
Sir Thomas Longley Rd
Rochester, Kent
ME2 4FB
01634 304200
www.asap-uk.org

Age Concern Aid-Call

Linhay House
Ashburton, Devon
TQ13 7UP
0800 772266
www.ageconcern.org.uk

Antenna Princess AP1000 Antenna AP2000 S11 Carephone

TeleAlarm

2 Crossness House
Grove Close
Epsom, Surrey
KT19 7NN
01372 720224
www.telealarm.com

CareSec

Hybrid Integrated Systems Ltd

Network House,
8 Cooke Street
Bentley
Doncaster, S Yorks
DN5 0BH
01302 873333

FreeWalker

FreeWalker (International) Ltd

Suite 10, 169 New
Greenham Park
Newbury, Berks
RG19 6HN
01635 524637
www.freewalker.com.hk

Help the Aged

SeniorLink

Unit 4
Crusader Business Park
Stephenson Road
Clacton-on-Sea, Essex
CO15 4TN
01255 473999
www.helptheaged.org.uk

Homelink Extra II

Cooper Security Ltd

Security House
Vantage Point Business
Village
Mitcheldean, Glos
GL17 0SZ
01594 545400
www.scantronic.co.uk

Horizon II

Attendo Systems Ltd

1 Centurion Business
Park
Bessemer Way
Rotherham, S Yorks
S60 1FB
01709 389300
www.attendo.co.uk

In Touch 1000 In Touch 2000

BT Communication Products

BT Westside
London Road, Apsley
Hemel Hempstead,
Herts
HP3 9YF
0800 800150
[www.btplc.com/
age_disability](http://www.btplc.com/age_disability)

IntelliLink

Initial Community Care

Shadsworth Road
Blackburn, Lancs
BB1 2PR
01254 688688
www.iess.co.uk

Lifeline 400 Lifeline 4000 Lifeline 4000+

Tunstall Telecom Ltd

Whitley Lodge
Whitley Bridge
Yorkshire
DN14 0HR
01977 661234
www.tunstallgroup.com

RNID

Royal National Institute for Deaf People

19-23 Featherstone St
London
EC1Y 8SL
0808 8080123
www.rnid.org.uk

SayPhone

Tynetec Ltd

Cowley Rd
Blyth Industrial Estate
Blyth
Northumberland
NE24 5TF
01670 352371
www.tynetec.co.uk

DIEL

RNID ● |||
for deaf and hard of hearing people



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