

Brief History of the Careline Service

The Careline service started in 1987/88 when the Council created a "control centre" at 49 The Meads to provide a 24/7 monitoring service for hard-wired emergency call alarms in its sheltered and good neighbour grouped housing schemes. At that time the Council began installing individual alarm equipment for customers in the private sector that were then monitored by the control centre.

Private sector residents paid for the service and with contributions from Social services, health and the charitable sector some customers paid a subsidised rate. A service was also offered to local Housing Associations with similar equipment to the Council's own hard wired systems or with individual alarms.

In 1992/93 the Council outsourced the 24/7 monitoring control centre to Guildford Borough Council. The savings allowed the Council to change the roles of staff to Careline Officers who could visit customers on a more regular basis to ensure that their alarm equipment was regularly checked and their data was updated. In addition, the service provided out of hours cover for all the Housing Revenue Account grouped schemes where staff were changing to a day time service.

This resulted in a staffing structure of eight staff working for three weekdays each and being on call with another member of staff out of hours, enabling a 24 hour response for faulty equipment. In the late 1990's the Council began providing a 7 day a week installation service and staff were paid additional sums to be in the office on Saturdays and Sundays when they were also on call. However, a lack of take up of the service led to a withdrawal of weekend office duties from around 2004/05.

During 2006, with the retirement of a number of staff, the staffing levels reduced to four Careline Officers and one Careline team leader. A number of changes were made to enable the reduced staff group to manage the service safely. Out of hours cover reduced from a 24 hour response to a 9.00pm finish. The remuneration package remained the same. In April 2008, after a long period of sick leave, the Careline team leader left the service.

During 2007, the Supporting People service to tenants was reorganised so that two new Careline officers were recruited to work from the Careline office. Both the Careline and Community Supporting People services were managed by the Supporting People Manager. However, the latest reorganisation of the Housing Service has left the Supporting People service within the Housing Revenue Account and accordingly the two new Careline Officers have moved to the Supporting People teams and the Supporting People Manager no longer manages the Careline service. In addition, the Housing Services Manager (who, apart from other things, provided strategic management for the Supporting People and Careline services) has retired and her role has been parcelled out to other managers. The Careline and telecare service is now within the Community Services Department falling within the remit of the Head of Economic Development and Partnerships and part of a range of community-based support services.