



Tunstall Emergency Response and eir Mobile: delivering mobile-enabled care solutions for the elderly

Ireland’s aging population, and a growing number of elderly men and women spending all or part of every day alone, has driven demand for innovative solutions to provide care when another person is not present. Tunstall Emergency Response, following an innovative joint venture with eir Mobile, is providing SIM-enabled social monitor alarms for the elderly, giving them 24-7 access by telephone to Tunstall’s care team.

Panic buttons for the elderly are not a new idea, but there have been significant changes in the market that companies like Tunstall must respond to. The spread of mobile devices, and a decrease in government allowance to subsidise landline telephones, means that social alarms which function only over the fixed line telephone network were becoming less attractive to customers.

Working closely with eir Mobile, the mobile phone service from eir Business, Tunstall in 2013 began developing a fully integrated GSM version of its traditional landline product.

Across Ireland Tunstall responds to an incredible 350,000 calls per annum, and that call volume is increasing every year. “Our customers wear pendants which they can press if they want to contact us in an emergency,” explains Managing Director James Doyle. “Traditionally the pendants were connected to the landline, but some customers were looking at eliminating their land lines because of the reduced government

allowance. We needed to explore the whole mobile space, and we’ve worked with eir Mobile to help our pendants go mobile in a way that works for our customers.”

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From a care perspective, a SIM-enabled panic alarm wouldn’t be suitable if it required the wearer to keep the SIM topped up manually with mobile credit. Working with eir Mobile, Tunstall devised the Lifeline Dual system www.tunstallemergencyresponse.ie/lifeline-dual/ a home unit and pendant that works over the mobile or fixed-line network, with no need for mobile top-ups.

Customer reaction following rollout in early 2014 was very positive. “Our customers know that when their family member activates the system in an emergency, it will dial our 24-hour monitoring centre for immediate aid, and they don’t have to worry whether it’s a landline or the mobile – the call will get through,” James said. “We were delighted to work with eir Mobile on this: they’ve helped us create a technical solution to something that was become a major issue because of the decrease in the telephone allowance for the elderly.”

A partnership Tunstall can trust

Tunstall Emergency Response is a long-standing customer of eir Business, which provides all connectivity into the company’s call centre and headquarters in Enniscorthy.

“We’ve been approached many times about transferring to other operators but we’ve never moved. eir Business is the only infrastructure we would trust - as regards service levels, they’ve never let us down – and we’ve always had an excellent relationship with our account manager,” James says, “We are a 24/7 care business, and we cannot afford downtime. When somebody presses a button, we have to respond, and eir Business give us the peace of mind to know that we’ll be able to do exactly that.”

James says he expects more Irish businesses to begin examining how they can offer mobile-based solutions. “The ever-changing dynamic of customers who have grown accustomed to mobile solutions will demand that some traditional businesses review how they offer their services. With the rapid growth of the Internet and apps in particular, businesses who don’t embrace this technological revolution, and combine it with a mobile theme, could be left behind.”