

24-HOURS in the life of Vitaline



When it comes to serving some of the older or more vulnerable members of our communities, the Council service, Vitaline, can literally be a lifeline.

From installing community alarms in residents' homes to acting as the hub for emergency services during a major incident, the team of dedicated staff provides a vital service in keeping local residents safe and reassured. As well as Blackpool Council, they also provide out-of-hours cover for Blackpool Coastal Housing sheltered accommodation tenants, the emergency duty social workers and Lancashire County Council. They even deal with calls about stray dogs.

In addition, they work closely with NHS Blackpool to provide a Telehealth service, a Weather Alert Service for people with chest problems, a Telecare Service and a Falls Lifting and Referral service.

It's no wonder that Vitaline's round-the-clock operation -based at Walter Robinson Court, Layton - is constantly kept on its toes, 365 days a year.

Blackpool Brief is given an exclusive insight into 24 hours in the control centre to find out more about the situations typically dealt with by the team.

NEIL BRENNAND – NIGHT SHIFT

12:17 AM

Around this time of night, we usually get alerts from bed sensors where people, who have Vitaline equipment fitted in their home, have got out of bed for some reason and then not got back in. There's a range of devices we can fit – such as smoke alarms, flood detectors, chair and bed sensors. When they are activated, a direct phone line is opened up between their home and our call centre. We have a spare front door key to all our customers so we can gain entry if need be.

03:45 AM

A lady has just alerted us, she's fallen in her bathroom. She's not hurt but can't get up. What we do in a situation like this is use a special lifting device that inflates to help us bring the client back to the sitting position. Obviously, if she wasn't with Vitaline, she could be lying on the floor for hours until someone called for paramedics. I am on my way...

05:05 AM

It's a bit quieter now so I've got time to programme equipment that will be installed for new customers in their homes today.



JUNE HIGHAM – EARLY SHIFT

08:00 AM

The beginning of a shift is usually very busy. All the services that we provide out-of-hours cover for need briefing if we have dealt with anything overnight.

There were no major incidents last night but when there's a serious fire, a big accident on the motorway or an event, such as the night Riverdance ran aground off the coast, it gets very busy. We usually get the initial reports from the police and then we call out the various departments that are needed to attend. We have tried-and-tested systems in place for dealing with the unexpected, but



there's always going to be incidents that we have never come across before. We work as a team and use our experience to deal with the given problem.

09:25 AM

I'm just calling a lady in Bispham who needs to take tablets around this time of day. It's what we call a Mediprompt call and I'll stay on the phone until she's taken them.

10:00 AM

The first readings are coming through on the Telehealth monitor so I need to check if there is anything there that needs sorting out. Telehealth is a project between Vitaline and NHS Blackpool, where a patient's "vital signs" like heart rate and blood pressure are monitored in their own home. The information is transmitted to the control centre and if any of the readings are a cause for concern, we make the Community Matrons aware of it.

MANDY WILSDON – PART-TIME

12:11 PM

Another alert has come through, a man has fallen in his front room. I'm talking to him on the phone and he's laughing so he doesn't seem in any distress so we can pop round and lift him back up.

However, our system shows me that he's fallen a few times recently and always in the same room. That suggests to me that he is either unsteady on his feet or he's tripping over something.



I will ask him when I get there and can either let his GP know to see if he needs a medication check, or I can arrange for the Care and Repair team to sort out whatever he might be tripping over.

2:59 PM

A fall monitor has activated, it's worn by a young woman who is diabetic. She's not responding when I speak to her so I'm letting the paramedics know. It's not just older people that use the Vitaline system, anyone can have it installed. Some of our customers have conditions like epilepsy or mental health problems or are victims of Domestic Abuse. Others just live alone and like the reassurance that if something goes wrong, we are there to help.

4:13 PM

I've just received an alert call from our lone worker system telling me that a carer, who was due to leave a property at 4:10pm, hasn't logged into the system to say that she's left. I'm concerned for her safety so I'm going to try to contact her. If I don't get a response I'll escalate the emergency procedures for Lone Workers because she may be in trouble.

4:15 PM

I've managed to contact the carer; she's fine and had just forgotten to let the system know that she's left the property. At just £1 a week I'm amazed more people don't use the lone worker system, all our staff do.

DEE RIPLEY – LATE SHIFT

5:36 PM

I've just got back from a lady's house because the kettle had overheated and tripped a fuse. She was in the dark and very confused but was better when the lights came back on. I've moved the kettle and told her not to use it again until it has been fixed or she gets a new one.

8:45 PM

Just time for coffee and we're laughing about one time I got alerted to an alarm activated in a customer's home. When I tried to talk to the man to make sure he was okay, there was just a strange moaning noise. I knew the customer, and was pretty sure it wasn't him but couldn't tell what it was. I was thinking all sorts, such as burglars. Then I heard a bark! I realised his dog must have jumped up and pressed the red button on the telephone system and called us. Nothing surprises us at Vitaline.



FACT-FILE:

- › Vitaline deal with an average of 300,000 calls a year.
- › 100% of all emergency calls are actioned within one minute
- › A consistent 90% of all emergency calls are responded to within 30 seconds of them being received
- › A Mobile Warden responds to every emergency call

For further information on the range of services offered by Vitaline, please call 01253 477678 or visit the website www.vitaline.org.uk