

**Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council  
Customer Services Directorate**



**Lifeline  
“Peace of Mind”  
Service**

**Customer Information Guide and  
Service Standards**

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## Mission Statement

First and foremost Merthyr Tydfil Lifeline 'Peace of Mind' Service will continue to promote a customer-focused approach, building and strengthening relationships based on quality and honesty.

- To respond effectively to all calls within the Telecare Services Association (T.S.A) Code of Practice time frame
- To provide a courteous, prompt and quality service at all times.
- To listen and respond efficiently to customers needs.
- To treat all our customers in a fair and equal way.
- To continually review and improve, where necessary our service according to customer requirement.

## A. General Information

### 1. Who provides the Merthyr Tydfil Lifeline 'Peace of Mind' Service?

Merthyr Tydfil Lifeline (MTL) is a department of Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council with over 17 years experience of providing and managing a Community Alarm Service. The Control Room is based in a secure office in the Civic Centre in the centre of Merthyr Tydfil, which is manned 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by a team of trained Operators who are able to identify who is calling, and from what address immediately a call is received from a customer's Lifeline Unit. A Manager, Supervisor and an Installations Officer also support the team of Operators.

We provide our installation and monitoring service to residents living within our own County Borough, the Bridgend CBC area and to the tenants of a number of Registered Social Landlords across South Wales.

### 2. Our contact details are:

Lifeline 'Peace of Mind' Service  
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council  
Control Room  
Civic Centre  
Castle Street  
Merthyr Tydfil  
CF47 8AN

**Telephone:** 01685 384489 (Voice Recorded)

**Fax:** 01685 387740

**E-mail:** Lifeline@merthyr.gov.uk

### **3. What are our Service Standards:**

We promise:

All staff will be trained to a high standard.

All Customers will be treated fairly in accordance with their need and wishes.

To answer all alarm calls received at the Control Room within the Telecare Services Association (TSA) Code of Practice time frame. We aim to answer 98.5% of all emergency calls with 60 seconds.

All calls will be treated as potential emergencies until proved otherwise.

To address you by name, speak clearly, and identify our self.

To keep you informed of how we are performing by the publication of an Annual Report.

Write all our public documents in plain English and to make them available in other languages where possible on request.

To review and update our customer information details annually.

To record all calls to help us improve our customer service, and to help you with any complaint you may have.

Where possible contact you within two working days of receiving your application for Lifeline.

Keep all your personal information confidential

Arrange to deliver a replacement unit if yours breaks down, or have one ready for you to collect if outside our installers normal working hours.

Contact your next of kin or nominated carer if you need help from them.

Call for medical help if needed.

Arrange an installation date and time to suit you where possible.

To fully investigate any complaints without delay, providing a full response as soon as possible and an interim reply where the resolution has not been possible after five working days advising what action has already been taken and the progress to date, providing further interim replies every 20 days until the investigation is complete.

Conduct an annual survey of service users and note the results in our Annual Report.



#### **4. What is a Lifeline Alarm Unit?**

The Alarm Unit is a small 'stand alone' box, which is connected to your own telephone; this does not stop you from using your telephone in the normal way. The Unit will also have a small personal pendant that can be worn around your neck or on your wrist; the benefit of wearing your pendant is that you can summon help when you are away from the main unit eg. In the garden, bathroom or kitchen. Our Installer can discuss with you which option most suits your lifestyle.

#### **5. What equipment does Merthyr Tydfil Lifeline provide?**

The Control Room provides you with an Alarm Unit (Lifeline) and a small discreet pendant, which can be worn either around your neck or on your wrist.

Both the Unit and the pendant are rented from us and remain the property of MTL.

#### **6. Who would benefit from the Lifeline Service?**

Anyone can apply for a Lifeline Unit, it is not just for the elderly. You can be a tenant, an owner/occupier or living with family, Lifeline is available to anyone who may need to summon help urgently who lives in the Merthyr Tydfil CBC or Bridgend CBC area's for example:

- **Individuals who are housebound or live alone**
- **Vulnerable people**
- **Disabled people**
- **Those who have recently been discharged from hospital and may require additional support**

#### **7. How is an Alarm Call made?**

If help is needed the Customer just needs to press either the red button on the unit or the small red button in the centre of the pendant. You will hear some reassuring tones and the red button on the unit will flash to confirm a call is being connected directly to the Control Room.

#### **8. Who will answer an Alarm Call at the Control Room?**

Your call will be answered by one of our team of fully trained Operators. The Operator will address you by name, as the Operator will have access to your personal details immediately a call is received. The microphone in the Alarm Unit is very sensitive and in most instances the customer can be heard wherever they are in their home. However, the only time a MTL Operator can hear, listen or speak to a customer is when the customer has pressed one of the red emergency buttons to initiate a call.

The Control Room is a secure area and only those staff working there will have access

to your personal details; all Control Room staff have been vetted by Merthyr Tydfil C.B.C using the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check.

## **9. Who will respond to an Alarm Call?**

Once the alarm has been activated, and the call is through to a MTL Operator, the Operator will decide with the customer the best course of action.

This could be by calling one of the customer's named contacts, the emergency services or maybe just by discussing the customer's situation and offering them advice on who to contact directly, if it is not an area that MTL can assist with. Examples of where advice might be offered are; Enquiries regarding Meals on Wheels, Installation of Key Safes.

We will take the customers' wishes into account at all times. However, we reserve the right to act against those wishes in certain circumstances, such as a serious concern for health and safety. When we do this, we will fully explain and document the reasons for our decision.

Our staff will do everything they can to get you the help and assistance you need. However, we do place certain restrictions on how deeply they can get involved with you. Please note they are not medically trained and cannot attend to you personally. Staff have also been advised that they must not offer you services that either they, their friends or their family run independently of the Control Room, and at no time offer you financial advice.

## **10. What happens if you get no response to my Alarm Call?**

Our customers' well being is important to us. If we are unable to make contact with you, we will call one of your named contacts and ask them to ensure that you are all right. If we are unable to speak with one of your contacts we will, if necessary call the Emergency Services and Police, who may have to make a forced entry if a key is not available; MTL cannot be held responsible for meeting the cost of any repairs to damage that may have been caused.

You may wish to consider having a small discreet Key Safe installed by your front door where a spare key could be kept. The code to open the safe would only be passed to those people you have authorised, or the Emergency Services. A key Safe can be installed through Care & Repair. The Control Room will be happy to provide you with their contact details, or refer your name, address and telephone number. A member of staff from the Care & Repair team will then contact you directly to discuss the installation and any charges that may occur.



## **B. How to obtain the Service**

### **1. How do I request a Lifeline Unit?**

To apply for a Lifeline Unit all you need to do is contact the Control Room. This can be done by the customer themselves, their advocate or by a friend/family member on their behalf. The Control Room can be contacted at any time on 01685 384489. An Operator will answer any questions you may have and explain more about the service.

If you are still interested, the Operator will take your name and address and then send you an application form and copy of this 'Information Guide and Standards if you have not already received one. Once the completed application form has been returned to us, the Control Room Supervisor will contact you to check your details and arrange a demonstration/installation visit.

Customers are most welcome and encouraged to invite their advocate, members of their family or a friend to be with them during demonstration/installation.

Applications are normally dealt with in date order. However, we will make a special arrangement if there is an urgent need.

Important: Please note our staff will not call without prior notice, and will always carry identification. If you are in any doubt, you should call the Control Room on 01685 384489 and confirm your visitor is from the Control Room.

### **2. The Application Form**

We have tried to keep the amount of 'form filling' we ask you to do to a minimum, but to ensure we have sufficient information to deal with any type of situation that may arise there are specific personal details we require e.g. Name; Age; Brief Medical Details; Preferred Language; General information regarding your home (Key Safe Number/Location).

However, if a call is received from your address and the Operator is unable to speak with you personally, it may be necessary to telephone one of your nominated contacts. For this reason we ask who your contacts are? When are they available? Do they hold a key to your home? Do you have a nominated advocate? (Someone who officially deals with all aspects of your personal business, we ask that this person be identified as contact number 1).

If you have not nominated any specific contacts this will not exclude you from receiving the Lifeline Service.

### **3. What happens during the Demonstration/Installation visit?**

Our Installations Officer will explain each piece of equipment and give you a full demonstration of how it works. A test call will then be placed through to the Control Room

giving you or your family/friends the opportunity speak to the Operator on duty.

We operate according to strict Health and Safety policies, aimed at protecting both our customers and our staff. We will pay particular attention to any electrical dangers (eg. old wiring, loose points), to making sure that there are no trip hazards, and to the position of the Unit so it is easily accessible.

The Lifeline Unit requires both an electrical power point and a telephone socket. For safety reasons, these must be sited on the same wall and easily accessible to avoid hazardous trailing wires across floors or doorways, please note that our Installer will not be able to move any heavy objects or furniture.

Occasionally there may be technical complications which will hinder the installation of the Unit, the Installation Officer will be able to advise on the type of extension or adaptors that may be necessary; however, we are unable to make purchases on your behalf or supply/recommend products or tradesmen.

If our Installations Officer is unable to proceed with the demonstration/installation due to a health and safety issue he will leave you an 'Advice Slip' that will explain the problem concerned. Once this has been rectified you can contact the Control Room and arrange another visit.

There is no pressure on the customer to make an immediate decision, if they would prefer to think about it further the installation Officer can arrange to call back. However, if the customer is happy to have the equipment fitted our Installer will carry on with the installation.

When the installation is complete the customer will be asked to sign a contract. However, there is a 21 day 'cooling off' period should you change your mind and no minimum length to this contract. Our Installer will also take this opportunity to add any additional information to the application form such as, Key Safe Codes; Location Details; Access Problems, Care Support Information etc. will go through Section C. of this guide and also leave the customer with a Manufacturer's Equipment Guide and Quick Reference Card to keep alongside the Lifeline Unit.

## **C. After Installation of the Lifeline Unit**

### **1. How Do I Look After My Unit?**

It is important that the telephone connection to the Unit is maintained; the use of other auto dialler systems e.g. broadband could have an adverse affect, the Unit should also never be unplugged from the electricity supply as failure to maintain these connections could mean that a potential emergency call would not made. However, in the event of an electric power cut in your area the battery back-up system in the Unit will keep the system working for a short period of time.



The personal pendant is water/splash-proof but not designed for complete immersion over an extended period, we would not recommend it is worn while in the bath, but should be kept close at hand in case of an emergency. However, the Unit is not waterproof and should only be cleaned with a lightly moistened damp cloth if necessary. For further information on caring for your equipment refer to the manufacturers user guide.

## **2. Testing the Equipment**

The Lifeline Unit has a built-in battery back-up to ensure that the Unit will continue to work in the event of a mains power failure.

We strongly recommend that both the alarm button on your Pendant and the Unit be tested regularly. Failure to undertake these tests may mean that when an emergency arises the equipment may not work.

We ask that you test both your buttons at least monthly. You can do this at any time of the day or night to suit you.

When making a test call - Please ensure when your call is answered, you state clearly that it is a test call; otherwise the Operator will assume that you need assistance.

## **3. Reporting a Fault**

Your Alarm Unit is for emergencies and testing only, if you wish to report a fault regarding the equipment please telephone the Control Room on 01685 384489.

Should any part of the equipment we have provided become faulty in any way, we will aim to rectify this as soon as possible. If the fault has occurred outside normal office hours (Monday – Friday 8.30a.m. to 4.30p.m.) or our Installer is unable to get to you, the Operator arrange to programme a replacement Unit that can be collected from the Control Room at any time of the day or night. If the fault cannot be repaired then we will exchange the Unit free of charge.

However, if the equipment failure has been caused by another supplier's equipment e.g. failed telephone line, an extension lead, adaptor, changes to your telephone line supplier/system e.g. installation of broadband, or the Unit has been damaged by yourself, MTL cannot be held responsible and you may be liable to meet the cost of the repair or replacement. Your weekly monitoring/service charge will still apply.

## **4. What happens if I activate an alarm call by accident?**

Don't worry! An Operator will answer the call as normal. They will talk to you and, once it has been agreed that it was a false alarm call, will end the connection. If you do activate the alarm by accident, please do not leave your property until your call has been answered, so that the Operator can establish that it is a mistake. However, if the Operator is unable to confirm that the call was activated accidentally, the call will be treated as a

potential emergency. If accidental alarm calls made on a regular basis our Control Room Supervisor will contact you to discuss the problem and to see whether these calls can be reduced.

## **5. Making and answering a telephone call.**

If your telephone rings then you may answer it in the normal way by picking up the handset.

You may use your phone in the normal way to make an outgoing call. However, please ensure that after you have finished your call replace the handset properly. If the handset is not on the telephone properly, the alarm will not work.

Please refer to the Equipment User Guide for further instructions.

## **6. Confidentiality**

Our customer's privacy is important. All your personal information is kept safe and secure in the Control Room and treated with the utmost confidentiality – and is covered by the Data Protection Act.

Should you wish to see your information, you can request this in writing at anytime. MTL has a close working relationship with the ambulance service and other emergency services and will share appropriate personal information with them on a 'need to know' basis.

However, occasions may arise when requests for information are received from other organisations e.g Social Services, the Operator will endeavour to speak with the customer or their advocate before sharing this information. Although we do reserve the right share certain information if it is in the best interest of the customer e.g. serious concern for health and safety. When we do this we will fully explain our decision and document our action.

## **7. Your Welfare**

Your welfare is important to us at all times and our Installer will leave you with a leaflet titled "Protection of Vulnerable Adults" aimed at helping you to appreciate if you are being taken advantage of, and telling you how to report it.

If you have any health or safety concerns please report them immediately by either pressing the red button on your Lifeline Unit; by telephoning the Control Room or contacting the number on the leaflet.

## **8. Keeping My Information Up-To-Date**

It is very important that the information we keep about you, and your contacts is up-to-date so we are able to respond effectively if an emergency occurs. Please keep this in



mind and tell us if any of your details change e.g. A contact changes their telephone number or address, you have a change in your medical condition. Our Operators will also telephone you or your main contact at least once a year to check the information we hold, this should take no longer than a few minutes of your time.

## **9. Access to My Home**

Our customers' peace of mind as well as their physical wellbeing is important to us. In order to avoid the stress and inconvenience of a forced entry to your home in the event of an emergency if you are not able to open the door yourself. We would strongly suggest that you consider installing a small discreet key-safe or nominate a nearby key-holder who is always be available to be called upon day or night.

You will also need to make sure that where possible there are no hazards at your property, both inside and outside that could hinder you receiving the attention you may require. For example - If your family pet is a large dog, we ask that you include these details on your application form we will then be able to inform the emergency services before they call, and if possible remove the dog to a safe and secure area before any planned visits.

## **10. Cancelling the Lifeline Service**

If you would like to cancel the service all you need to do is contact the Control Room on 01685 384489, explain the reason you wish to cancel your contract and the Operator will arrange with you the return of the equipment. One month's notice of cancellation is required however; under certain circumstances we will accept a shorter notice period, and you will be charged until the equipment has been returned to MTL.

On receipt of the equipment our staff will delete your personal information from our system; check and test the Unit and Pendant and notify our finance department. If you pay by standing order it is your responsibility to contact your bank/building society and cancel the payments.

If the equipment has been damaged or the leads/pendant are missing you may be charged for a replacement.

The Control Room will not normally notify any other person/organisation such as carers and other support agencies of your decision to cancel your contract and return the equipment. However, we reserve the right to do so if we feel that it is a risk to your health and safety.

## **D. Further Information**

### **1. How much does the Service cost?**

Please see the enclosed 'Charges Sheet' or contact the Control Room direct for our current charges.

## **2. What Payment Systems Are Available To Me?**

You will receive an invoice shortly after the installation of your equipment. The invoice will be for the coming 12-month billing period; we ask that payment arrangements be made promptly on receipt of this invoice.

In order to make paying your Lifeline charges as easy as possible payments can be made by:

Cash, Cheque, Postal Order; Credit/Debit card payments at the Civic Centre; All Post Offices; Paypoints and Payzone outlets; Telephone banking by phoning 01685 725115 (This is an automated 24 hour service); Standing Order payments can be arranged by contacting the Income Section on 01685 725114, or by post by sending a cheque or postal order made payable to MTCBC and sent to Finance Department, Civic Centre, Castle Street, Merthyr Tydfil, CF47 8AN.

## **3. Voice Recording**

For your safety and security all calls made to and from the Control Room are voice recorded. These recordings may be used to aid and assist in staff training.

## **4. How do I make a complaint?**

We aim to get things right the first time however; we encourage our customers to let us know immediately they have a problem so we can put it right. We take any complaint very seriously and aim to learn from it to avoid the same situation happening again.

If you do wish to make a complaint regarding the service you have received or a member of our team please telephone the Control Room on 01685 384489 (Voice Recorded); give brief details of your complaint to the Duty Operator along with your contact details (if you are ringing on behalf of the service user), this information will be passed to the Control Room Supervisor the next working day who will contact you by phone for further discussion. If at that time you wish to make your complaint official you will be sent a Complaint Form to complete and return.

Once we have received your completed Complaint Form you can expect to receive a written response within 5 working days. If a conclusion cannot be reached within this timescale the Manager/Supervisor will write to you advising you of the action that has been taken, and the progress to date. We will also provide interim replies every 20 days until the investigation is complete.

For further information regarding the Lifeline Service, please contact the Control Room on 01685 384489

We will aim to provide a copy of this Information Guide in language or format suitable to your requirements.

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