



Major housing association protects lone workers with BlackBerry solution

The Hyde Group (www.hyde-housing.co.uk) is one of the largest housing association groups in England. It owns and manages over 43,000 homes in London and South East England and is a leading provider of affordable housing in the UK. In addition, the Group provides housing, regeneration and related services to more than 120,000 people.

A not-for-profit organisation employing over 1,700 people, the Group works within communities to understand local needs and concerns and to provide a range of services to improve quality of life, such as neighbourhood development, financial advice and guidance, plus jobs and training to young people and families.

The Hyde Group is a member of the G15 group of London housing associations, working together to build strong, diverse and sustainable communities in the capital.

The Challenge

The Hyde Group has around 1000 employees who are classed as lone workers. Such employees typically include Housing Officers, Repair Crews, Sales staff and Arrears Officers, who will work independently in communities and amongst the Group's housing tenants. In addition, some staff are employed in areas such as youth work and the resettlement of offenders. In certain circumstances, such staff can be exposed to threats or physical violence during their working day, and the Group decided it wanted to offer additional support.

The Group was keen to ensure the safety of staff at all times. In addition, it wanted to make sure that it was taking the correct steps to fulfil its responsibilities under the current legislation relating to this type of work. Such legislation includes the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (1999), which, amongst other requirements, outlines the fact that a lone or mobile worker must be able to summon help by means of a portable and reliable panic alarm device.

Benefits

British Standards-compliant solution

Reliable and secure personal alarm

Greater safety for lone workers

Improved staff morale

Reduced costs



Guardian24 screenshot on the BlackBerry® Bold™ 9700 smartphone

The Hyde Group have worked with Guardian24 for over six years; using the service on their standard mobile phones. Hyde decided they wanted their staff to work safer and more effectively in the community.

Hyde Group's Health and Safety Manager Kim Smith-Clarke summarises: "As an employer, we have a duty of care to protect our staff and ensure their safety in the community".

The Solution

Having reviewed the options, The Hyde Group selected the Guardian24 Lone Worker Support application via the BlackBerry® smartphone. To meet the group's specific concerns, Guardian24, a member of the BlackBerry® Alliance Program developed the first ever British Standard Compliant Lone Worker Support Application for the BlackBerry smartphone (British Standard for Lone Working – BS8484). The Guardian24 application was installed onto approximately 1,000 employees' BlackBerry smartphone devices, allowing them to log their whereabouts, daily tasks, send GPS location fixes and raise an alert in a time of need even if the keypad is locked.

Should the Lone Workers Safety be compromised during their working day, they can summon emergency help with the press of a dedicated hot key on the BlackBerry Smartphone, even if the keyboard is locked.

In the event that the user begins to feel at risk the alarm can be covertly activated (even if the BlackBerry is in standby mode). A call will be made to a nominated respondent within the Hyde Group. The respondent then has the ability to 'listen live' to the incident via a two-way communications channel which is automatically opened up, and thereby assess the type of response that is required.

If necessary the Police or other emergency services can also 'listen live' to an incident, this is particularly useful in situations where a user is being held against their will, as the Police will be able to tailor their response depending on the levels of risk faced by the user. All details of such incidents are recorded and stored and, if required, can be transcribed and used as evidence in court. If a GPS enabled BlackBerry is used, this technology can also remotely locate an employee in the event of an incident..

The Benefits

Hyde Group has found Guardian24 lone worker support application via the BlackBerry to be an invaluable personal security tool to help manage the risk of workers being physically attacked or abused, or to get help quickly in the event of an accident or illness.

In addition, the Group has peace of mind that it now has an extremely robust process in place for safeguarding employees' safety and wellbeing at work. Guardian24's deployment to lone workers has significantly contributed to the Group's legal obligations under Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (1999).

One of the key reasons the Hyde Group opted for Guardian24's BlackBerry solution is because they felt that employees would be less likely to carry two devices (a mobile and a specialised panic unit). The concern was that the specialised panic unit would be forgotten, not charged, or simply abandoned in an office drawer.

"Our experience with specialised devices shows that employees are less likely to carry around two devices, and that it's their specialised panic units which tend to be forgotten, not charged, or simply abandoned in an office drawer," says Geoff Hayter, Director of Channel Partners, Guardian24. "Integration was key – we needed to develop an application which meant lone workers only needed to carry a single device around with them," he explained.

www.blackberry.co.uk/casestudies

"The Guardian24 application on BlackBerry is much more user-friendly. The locking system can be overridden and we feel it offers better protection for emergency use. In addition, team leaders can monitor usage and identify any very vulnerable members of staff."

Kim Smith-Clarke
Health and Safety Manager
The Hyde Group

Guardian24 is the leading UK supplier of Lone Worker Personal Security services. Since its introduction, Guardian24's client base has grown to almost 30,000 users and 340 organisations. Customer satisfaction is very high with an unrivalled annual client renewal rate in excess of 90%.

Guardian24 aims to achieve compliance with new standards – e.g. BS8484, at the earliest stage with solutions which exceed those standards.