

# Helping people live more independently with technology enabled care

Annual Report 2020



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# Foreword

Here at Progress Lifeline, our business continues to grow and we have made some significant achievements over the last year, despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. We are now supporting more than 50,000 customers across England and Wales with our Technology Enabled Care services.

At the start of lockdown, we declared it 'business as usual' as our services were frontline and essential. However, the way we did things and the delivery of our services were changed to ensure a safe environment for both staff and customers. We put in place contactless delivery of products and created self-install guides so we could still help those in need, without physically having to enter their property. We also adapted our hospital discharge programmes to make them more efficient as the number of referrals increased.

**“We are now supporting more than 50,000 customers”**

We implemented a welfare calls and visits service for our most vulnerable customers. Our operators made over 3,000 welfare calls during lockdown – whilst still providing our 24/7 alarm response service to all of our 50,000 customers. The aim was to offer a friendly ear and some reassurance that people were not alone – that we were still here to help. We got some amazing feedback and helped people to get food parcels and extra support in times of isolation. The welfare calls were so successful that we are introducing them as a permanent service.



As part of our future-focused growth strategy, we have launched our new website and online shop, along with expanding our product range to include the Reach IP unit in preparation for the 2025 digitalisation of the UK's telephony network.

Over the next two years, we will be investing further in our teams, products, technology and customer care, as well as continuing to provide the highest quality service to our existing customers and new ones alike.

This annual report is a celebration of all the positive things that we, at Progress Lifeline, have achieved to help make a positive difference to people's lives.

**Loraine Simpson, Director of Services**  
**Progress Lifeline**

# About us

Progress Lifeline is an award-winning personal alarm and telecare services provider. We have over 50,000 customers across the UK.

Our technology-enabled care products and services have been making a positive difference to the lives of our customers for over 30 years.

Working closely with our customers, we provide integrated telecare services to help support people to live more independently, both inside and outside of their home.



## Our key services include:

- 24-hr telecare monitoring and response service to individuals at home
- The supply, installation and maintenance of personal alarms and advanced telecare devices including but not limited to; smoke detectors, fall detectors, flood detectors, doorway & home sensors, KeySafes and medical alerts
- Emergency home response
- Assistive lifting with trained staff and specialist lifting equipment
- Out-of-hours contact centre for housing providers and local authorities
- 24-hr response service for emergency calls from building elevators

We work to the highest standards and targets set by the TEC Services Association (TSA), and have been an accredited member since 2006. We are very proud to be a TEC Quality certified organisation, demonstrating customer safety, innovation and quality of our services.

Progress Lifeline is part of Progress Housing Group, a government regulated and not-for-profit social housing provider with an industry reputation for excellence.



# Key Achievements

This year, we faced Covid-19 head-on and hit a milestone of 50,000 customers. We also increased our emergency home response service to support over 22,000 customers. We launched a brand new website and e-commerce shop and began a proactive approach to tackling the analogue-to-digital switch.

## Growth

This year, we hit a significant milestone when we exceeded our aim to support 50,000 customers to live independently both inside and outside of their home, using Technology Enabled Care. As part of this, our emergency home response service supports over 22,000 customers across Lancashire, Calderdale, Merseyside and Manchester.

The growth in our customer base has allowed us to create more jobs, even during such an uncertain period. We have increased our number of installers, operators and expanded the business development team to help enhance Progress Lifeline's digital presence and diversify the service.

Due to a global pandemic, our teams reviewed the service to ensure customers could be supported safely. We adapted some of our services and, as a result, we launched a self-install option to support new customers and their worries. Offering a self-install option enabled our services to be offered locally with minimal contact and to a wider geographic area and is now available through our e-commerce website. The new online shop means our products and services are now more readily available for purchase with helpful guides and information which can be accessed any time, day or night.

During the first lockdown, we implemented a welfare calls service. A dedicated team of operators called over 3,000 of our most vulnerable customers to offer assistance, and to let them know that they were not alone. We recruited more operators to our team throughout 2020 to deliver the welfare calls, alongside the volume of calls received in the alarm response centre.

Progress Lifeline continues to work with North West Ambulance Service (NWAS), the Health and Social Care Commissioners of Lancashire County Council and the NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups to help with non-injured falls.

Our service relieves the pressure on the ambulance service which has, undoubtedly, had one of its most difficult years. Between April 2020 and March 2021, we attended 1,357 uninjured falls, referred to us from the North West Ambulance Service.



Joanne Bushell, Head of Service, Progress Lifeline, said, “I am very proud to be part of Progress Lifeline and what we have achieved throughout Covid. Supporting people is fundamental to our service so being able to enhance those services, during such a difficult time has been a successful way for us to have a positive impact on our customers. The welfare calls have helped to keep our customers feeling safe in a time of need, and that is key to us.”

She continues, “The success of the welfare calls has shown us how valuable the calls are to our customers and we plan to add this as a permanent service. It has enabled people to find external services and contacts, which they may not have known how to find without our help. The weekly calls have allowed our customers, who are alone and vulnerable, to stay positive knowing that they have someone to talk to.”

## Industry

By 2025, the familiar telephone services will be switched off as the UK’s telecoms infrastructure is upgraded from analogue to digital connectivity. This shift has major implications for the technology-enabled care (TEC) sector and the 1.7 million people who rely on telecare in the UK.

In preparation for the digital switchover, Progress Lifeline initiated a proactive approach to identify telephone exchange areas working through 13,000 postcodes to ensure they have the correct exchange identified against each record so we can quickly identify which customers may be affected by the nationwide switchover.

## Awards

### West Yorkshire Wonder Awards

We were delighted when our Calderdale Emergency Home Responder team were crowned winners of the ‘Unsung Wonder’ award, which is determined by public vote.

The Calderdale team of emergency home responders work around the clock to assist customers who are vulnerable or at risk of falls. Every call-out they attend, they check they check to make sure the customer is safe in their home, and provide much-needed comfort and reassurance.

During lockdown, over 800 call-outs were made and over 200 assisted lifts using our specialist lifting equipment, were carried out. The Raizer chair is a priceless piece of lifting equipment which helps customers who have fallen, but are not injured, get back on their feet safely and with dignity.



### TSA QSF

Once again we were delighted to successfully achieve certification of the TSA’s Quality Standards Framework (QSF) making this our 14th successive year of achieving the highest industry standard.



## Charity and community

### Rochdale Dog Rescue

A team from Progress Lifeline completed a gruelling 25-mile hike to raise money for the Rochdale Dog Rescue. The 25-mile hike includes a 5,500 feet of ascent over Pen-y-Ghent, Whernside, and Ingleborough. Our fantastic team did it in just 12 hours and raised a tremendous £3,395 for the deserving charity.



### Derian House

The daughters of two Progress Lifeline employees decided to raise money by doing something they loved...singing! Grace and Emily wanted to help the families staying at Derian House over the Christmas period, by carol singing in their local area. Progress Housing Group added £500 to the girl's efforts bring their total to £2,250, above and beyond their initial target of £300.



### Macmillan

We were determined not to let the pandemic put a stop to our annual coffee morning in aid of Macmillan Cancer Support. A virtual coffee morning was held, via Zoom, with competitions for budding bakers and cake enthusiasts. A total of £216 was raised.



# Our Customers

“Putting customers at the heart of our service, we continue to support people to live safely, confidently and independently at home”

## Customer satisfaction survey results

### Alarm Response Centre

Throughout the year we contacted over 750 of our customers, requesting their feedback on their experience with our alarm response centre.

#### Highlights

- 97.6% said they were satisfied with how long it took us to answer their call
- 98% of customers found our operators helpful
- 97.7% said they were satisfied with the service they had been provided
- 98.4% of customers said they would recommend our service to friends and family

### Installations

Throughout the year we contacted over 500 of our customers to ask about customer satisfaction following an installation.

#### Highlights

- 99.3% said they were satisfied with the overall installation
- 99.8% of customers found our installers helpful

- 99.6% said they were satisfied with the time it took to complete the installation
- 99.5% of customers said they would recommend our service to friends and family

### Emergency Home Response

Throughout the year we contacted over 250 of our customers to ask about customer satisfaction following an emergency home responder visit.

#### Highlights

- 98.5% said they were satisfied with the overall service provided by the responder
- 95.8% said they were satisfied with the time it took to for a responder to arrive
- 97.7% of customers said they would recommend our service to friends and family





## Our customers are the key driving force for our evolving services

### Society & demographics

#### Long-term health conditions and an ageing population

The UK population is projected to continue growing, reaching over 74 million by 2039. We all want to live well, keep our independence and age well.

However, the population in the UK is getting older with 18% aged 65 and over and 2.4% aged 85 and over. Alongside this about 15 million people in England have a long-term health condition which needs to be managed with medicine or other treatments.

Progress Lifeline helps people to remain independent both outside and within their homes for longer. Our knowledge and experience means we have a good position in the market place. We offer a range of packages which can be tailor made to suit individual requirements. We put our customers at the heart of our service and we continue to support people to live safely, confidently and independently.

### Customer case study 1

#### Progress Lifeline customer John, and his partner and care provider Andrew, told us how they have found our service empowering.

John and Andrew were recommended to Progress Lifeline from their NHS support worker at their local Primary Care Centre, due to John's ongoing health conditions.

Before having the Progress Lifeline service,

Andrew would feel guilty if he ever went and left John at home, in case he need assistance. Our service provides enhanced care for John, giving both John and Andrew reassurance and independence.

Andrew now has the freedom to go out, allowing him some 'me time', knowing John is connected to his Progress Lifeline unit. Whilst Andrew has peace of mind, John can feel secure and assured that he is a button press away from valuable assistance, should he need it.

Andrew said, "When I go shopping, I know John has his Lifeline and that you are there and will contact me if anything was to happen, so it's empowerment for us both. I truly appreciate your assistance! Just knowing he has his wristband provides reassurance all around. The KeySafe is there too should your team need to access the property, it's a totally reliable and impeccable service."

Throughout the pandemic, a dedicated team made frequent welfare calls to John and Andrew to check in and see how they both were. This support made John and Andrew feel empowered, reassured and that we are now a friend to them. They looked forward to the calls and speaking to the friendly team at Progress Lifeline.



## Customer case study 2

**Dawn's Dad, Tony, is a Progress Lifeline customer. She tells us how, without the service, she wouldn't be able to live her life as well as caring for her Dad.**

Tony lives with Ménière's disease and poor mobility, making him susceptible to falls. He also uses hearing aids, has a pacemaker fitted and has lung damage from repeated bouts of pneumonia.

He has carers who visit him and two daughters who help look after him. Dawn and Nicola do not live locally to Tony so cannot be there quickly if Tony was to fall at home. They decided to have Progress Lifeline installed following a deterioration in Tony's health and cannot praise the service highly enough. Tony has a falls detector, pendant, door sensor and heat and smoke detectors. Dawn and Nicola now feel assured that their Dad has emergency care on hand, if anything should happen.

Before Progress Lifeline, Dawn and Nicola hadn't had a break in over two years. After finally managing to have a short break, unfortunately Tony fell at home. Our operators contacted Dawn to make her aware but also to reassure her that we were on our way to help, and not to worry.

Dawn said, "I am extremely grateful for the service and it is, in fact, a lifeline for our family and my Dad. It can be very difficult not living on the doorstep, but having the Progress Lifeline service in place means I have a bit of freedom to do my food shopping and other jobs, knowing Dad will be well taken care of if anything should happen. It gives me and my sister such peace of mind, I'd recommend it to the world!"



# Our Performance

We always aim to match or exceed the Telecare Services Association (TSA) key performance requirements.

## Call handling



The target was set to answer 97.5% of calls within 60 seconds and to answer 99% of calls answered within 3 minutes.

We achieved over 99.1% of calls being answered in 60 seconds, as well as over 99.9% being answered within 180 seconds.

## Installations



Our target was to meet TSA standards for responding to installation requests (90% of urgent requests in 2 days and 100% in 5 days, 90% of non-urgent installation requests in 15 days and 100% in 20 days). These targets were all met.

We achieved 100% every month. We increased our installation staff team and developed new processes to improve performance moving forward.

## Emergency Home Response



In the areas where we provide our Emergency Home Response service, we aimed to comply with TSA standards of 90% mobile response call-outs to be achieved within 45 minutes, and 100% in 60 minutes.

We achieved 94.1% in reaching our customers within 45 minutes. In the majority of cases, we managed to get to our customers in under 23 minutes knocking a full 22 minutes of the target time. We also reached 99.3% of all customers within 60 minutes. The remaining 0.7% dip was due to traffic conditions where our responders were driving during rush hour traffic, or through congestion caused by either accidents or road works.

# 2021 and beyond

Our strategy for the future is extremely exciting despite the challenging times 2020 has brought.

## COVID-19 National lockdown March 2020

As our financial year ended, we as a country went into a national lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

We as an organisation knew that the wellbeing of our customers and our staff was our absolute priority. We adhered to all the Public Health England guidance and implemented the working protocols advised by local and international authorities.

We continue to ensure that the highest possible hygiene standards are maintained, throughout every aspect of our service. All our colleagues who are in contact with customers must wear full personal protective equipment (PPE) and follow strict procedures.

## Future strategy

2020 has brought about challenging times but as an organisation we have successfully adapted our services despite the pandemic.

We have had some very successful outcomes so far. So for the rest of 2020 and 2021 we will be focusing on our new or enhanced services including:

- Welfare calls
- Self install service
- New products
- E-commerce
- Hospital discharge packages
- Growing our Emergency Home Response



We will also continue to work on the following initiatives

## UK telephone digitalisation

We continue to work collaboratively with the TSA and equipment providers in preparation for the 2025 digitalisation of the UK's telephony network. Our dedicated project team has been invited to take part in testing with equipment providers and BT.

## New technology to enhance the service we provide

This year we have launched our new Footprint device - a GPS location device, pendant alarm & falls detector all-in-one. Its primary function is to provide security and peace of mind and can take the worry out of leaving the house on your own. Ideal for those who want independence but are: prone to falling, the elderly, dementia patients, people with epilepsy and those with learning disabilities. We will be excited to develop a wider audience that we can help with this versatile new alarm.

## Prevention

As always our customers are at the heart of what we do – so we will be continuing with our customer focus groups and working with them to provide help and support for; falls prevention, hospital discharge and living independently for longer at home.

## Contact us



03333 204 999



[lifeline@progressgroup.org.uk](mailto:lifeline@progressgroup.org.uk)



[www.progresslifeline.org.uk](http://www.progresslifeline.org.uk)



Progress Lifeline, Sumner House,  
21 King Street, Leyland, Lancashire, PR25 2LW