

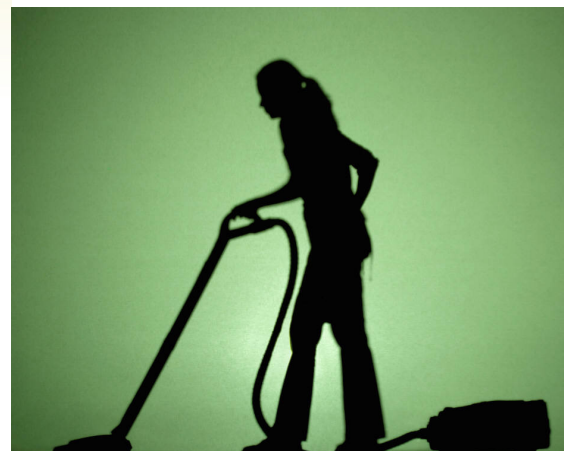
RFID



Who Cares For The Carers?

Improving services in domiciliary care.

As the number of elderly and vulnerable people requiring home care increase, Local Authorities are under pressure to optimise the management and delivery of domiciliary care, identifying efficiency savings whilst retaining the best possible levels of service. Collecting and acting on accurate, detailed, timely key service data is essential if National Minimum Care Standards are to be met. Inevitably some working practices may need to change.



Some Local Authorities still use manual time methods or may only have a limited insight into the time spent by carers on-site. They may lose track of equipment provided or they may face difficulties in managing the services delivered by third parties and not have a clear picture of the care that is being delivered. They also find it difficult to accurately reconcile actual costs against budgets and manage external agency contracts. These issues can all be helped by better information about who is where and when, a capability provided by radio frequency identification (RFID).

The RFID approach to information collection in domiciliary care

Radio frequency identification (RFID) provides a simple way to collect information about people, places and things. Data collected by using RFID can easily be fed in to other systems such as time recording or agency monitoring systems.

The RFID approach places a small tag on each asset or at each location where care is to be delivered. The tag can be activated and read by a small hand held device (most often for domiciliary care integrated with a care worker's mobile phone although other types are possible). By using the device the care worker can:

- Record the time of arrival at a client and the time of departure by scanning a tag held at the client's premises. *So providing automated attendance recording, reducing the manual tasks for the care worker, avoiding costs and errors from data entry of manually recorded timesheets and providing better data for decision making on care delivery.*
- Identify themselves as having provided the care required. *Giving accountability to care workers and providing the Authority with an audit trail of those involved in providing care.*
- Access a schedule of care to be delivered to that individual. *Ensuring consistency of service delivery, even if different care staff have to be rostered for a particular client.*
- Record the presence of (tagged) loan equipment. *Helping to reduce lost equipment and ensure that the council always knows what is being kept where.*
- Access a schedule of checks to be made on loan equipment. *Helping to protect clients from the risk of accidents.*

RFID offers a **secure, automatic, easy to use data collection method** that reduces costs and improves accuracy in attendance recording and other social care applications.

RFID systems are now widely used across many parts of the private and public sector. From tracking goods through manufacture to controlling the administration of drugs, from auditing IT assets to providing self-service library systems; RFID has been deployed in a wide range of workplaces for task linked to tracking, tracing, audit and control. RFID technology is particularly useful in monitoring delivery of domiciliary care because its use can be made a by-product of other tasks already being carried out, avoiding additional effort and reducing the need to change the ways that front-line care workers need to carry out their work. It can also be easily introduced across a number of care service contractors, helping the Authority to build up comparative data on the performance of different providers, an important aid to increasing competition and improving services,

RFID tags can be made available in a wide range of formats for different applications. Loan equipment can be tagged with robust, adhesively mounted tags that can be easily affixed, care workers or clients can be identified with tags embedded in key fobs, credit cards or on bracelets. Even very small items can be tagged with button or rice-grain sized tags. Tags can be used to track laundry or tags can be fixed to the packaging of disposable or returnable items. Tags can be fitted to metal or plastic, can be embedded in wood or even mounted on thin printable tickets. Tags can be used on electrical items (so that the worker's own equipment can be audited, for example).

These systems are also made easy to implement by the fact that RFID reading devices can be integrated with existing mobile systems. For staff with laptop computers RFID readers that plug into a USB port can be provided. Where handheld or palm top computers are in use then a reader that uses an SD slot often available in such devices can be used. Mobile phones can be equipped with RFID readers or, if no other technology is in use a simple, stand-alone reader can collect and store data for onward transmission at the end of the working day.

As a specialist in RFID systems, CoreRFID is able to advise on the best choices of technology for social care solutions. CoreRFID can provide guidance on the type and styles of tags available and on the use of readers and associated portable computing devices. CoreRFID can design and develop, at low cost, the data collection aspects of applications, so simplifying the integration of existing applications with an automated data collection mechanism.

As well as providing solutions for domiciliary care, CoreRFID supports a range of local government applications using RFID technology covering such areas as IT asset management, equipment maintenance, museum and leisure applications, snagging and other housing inspection applications and street furniture asset management.

The Benefits

RFID solutions in social care can provide:

- Automated data collection on time management to save costs and administrative effort.
- Secure identification of people, places and things for annual audits and regular / ad-hoc checks.
- Prompts for staff on the care to be delivered, servicing of equipment or of checks that need to be carried out, linked to the specific item, automatically, improving the flexibility of staff and extending the range of services that can be provided.
- A low cost way of improving the information flow between front-line staff and back office systems.
- Easy to use systems that have minimal impact on the working practices of care staff.

About CoreRFID

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