



CASE STUDY

Innovative Solutions to Manage Absconding Risks

Background

Siân was being supported with a planned move to supported living accommodation. Siân had been cared for by her mum, who had become very ill before sadly passing away. Both mum and dad wanted to see their daughter settled in her own home whilst they were still able to be involved, so she transitioned to this accommodation whilst mum was still alive. Siân has very complex learning disabilities, mental health and emotional needs, which include a diagnosis of Down's Syndrome and Affective Disorder. These factors contributed to issues with the placement after a settling-in period, with Siân absconding among the most challenging. She wanted to leave to see her mum in their family home, a short distance from the property, who she believed was still alive as she had been before moving into the placement. The property is not a complex-security setting, and it had a standard low-height gate which led to a busy main road, with no pavements to the direction of Siân's family home: a route she would take when she had absconded. As well as the risk of accident and injury to Siân, one of the two female members of staff would also have to support her, meaning both would be vulnerable at night and there would be insufficient staff left at the home to support other residents.

Solution

Several technology options were considered by her local service, and they tried many different solutions including door sensors on the windows, as she would sometimes use this as a means to abscond. They even tried putting sensors on the bathroom door which would alert staff if she was spending a significant period of time in the room, potentially trying to leave through the window, which she had done previously and badly hurt herself. Even where some of these solutions were successful in their application, Siân would soon work out that the equipment was stopping her from absconding and alerting staff; she would find different ways to damage, disconnect or work-around it, so even when a solution worked to begin with, it wouldn't long-term. Traditional bed sensors, used to alert staff when she was out of bed, were also unsuccessful. Siân had recognised the device as she would see the wires connecting the pad to the control unit, could feel the pad beneath her and would hear the noise of the hard plastic as it moved.





Cair worked with the local service to create a proof of concept device that we felt would help Siân and her support workers overcome the challenges they were facing.

We created a wireless bed sensor, made from a soft vinyl pad that was in a removable case made from soft material. This meant that there would be no wires, and it would be a more comfortable solution that Siân would not feel underneath her, nor make noise during the night. The wireless bed sensor would be connected to our Buzzz pager, alerting staff the moment Siân would get out of bed. They timed installing the wireless bed sensor alongside a new bed and mattress topper, and Siân was unaware that a device was in place, and did not attempt to remove or damage the solution.

Outcome

The wireless bed sensor has now been in situ for 6 months. Since the most recent review there have been no further issues and the bed sensor has been a perfect solution for them, and continues to successfully alert staff when Siân gets out of bed. By alerting staff at this stage, it means that Siân can receive the support she needs in a proactive manner without delay; using this time to distract and redirect has significantly reduced the number of incidents.

As a precaution for any further incidents, the fence has been heightened with a gate that can be locked at night, meaning that Siân and other residents can get outside to a safe space in the event of absconding or a fire. With the changes made, they have been able to remove the extra sleep-in staff, staff have felt more confident and most importantly Siân has been given more independence.

Cair's wireless bed and chair sensors will be available to buy later in 2022.



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