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2018 has seen two major events that will impact our lives in the UK, including housing providers and community alarm services. Karen Senior, UK Sales Director at Tunstall Healthcare tells us more.

GDPR

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is an EU regulation that came into force on 25th May 2018, and is a legal requirement which will continue to apply whether or not the UK is a member of the EU. The Regulation was established to acknowledge the increasingly digital nature of all of our lives, and gives individuals greater control over the data organisations hold about them. There are similarities to the Data Protection Act (DPA), with Controllers and Processors defined, however there is a significant difference in Accountability – organisations must demonstrate how they comply with principles of the regulation:

- Must identify and document lawful basis for processing personal data
- Explicit consent may be required from the individuals for each use type

Penalties for non-compliance are significantly higher than the DPA's maximum UK fine of £500k, with fines of €20m or 4% of turnover, whichever is higher.

Digital transition

The second event was BT's announcement that they intend to begin moving customers from analogue to IP telephony services by the end of 2018, with the traditional telephone network completely replaced with internet-based calls via a fibre network by 2025.

Both events present significant challenges and opportunities. With GDPR in force, organisations should already have processes in place to ensure compliance. However, as the legislation remains in place it will continue to affect the way customer data is collected, stored and used and must therefore be taken account of in ongoing day-to-day business and future strategies. Likewise, the switch to digital telephony needs to be considered in both short and long-term plans.

Navigating the digital age

For housing providers and community alarm services in particular, Tunstall has long been working to help its customers navigate the digital age. The latest generation of our response centre software PNC, for example, has been specifically developed to enable compliance with GDPR. PNC8.2's portal will provide web-based access to PNC data for any authorised user, and the unique data redaction tool enables them to anonymise records in line with the principles of the Regulation (Right to Access, Right to Rectification, Right to Erasure, Right to Restrict Processing and Right to Data Portability). PNC can be installed in an encrypted environment, and PNC8.2 provides a platform for end-to-end IP service delivery and the associated advantages, such as super fast transmission, concurrent alarm calls and high definition speech. More broadly, the advent of IP and mobile technology means that for the first time service users, the devices that protect and monitor them, and the carers and health professionals who look after them, can all be connected to one another in real time all the time. The connected home is now a reality, presenting housing, health and social care providers with a tangible opportunity to maximise the potential of technology to enable independence and foster social inclusion in a discreet and cost-effective way.

Working together for the future

Tunstall's digital journey has been underway for a decade, within our global footprint we have already helped customers to manage the transition in countries quicker to move to a digital network such as Australia and Sweden. We are transforming our home units and our latest device, the Smart Hub, is designed for the new All IP environment, offers cellular and ethernet connectivity and is supported by our cloud-based Device Management Platform to enable over the air real-time updates. Existing home units can continue to use DTMF and STMF signalling protocols to operate throughout the digital transition, so enabling providers to plan an orderly transition to IP.

In grouped living environments, older wired systems can be upgraded to operate on the digital network, however, the full range of benefits, such as concurrent calls and video door entry, will only be fully realised by investment in latest generation IP systems.

The digital and data opportunity is huge, and as the pace of technological innovation continues to accelerate it will only increase. Today's plans must take account of tomorrow's possibilities; decisions we make as professionals today may well be ones we live with in our own retirement.

Tunstall has a range of resources to help housing providers plan for the IP revolution. To find out more, talk to your account manager, email marketing@tunstall.com or visit uk.tunstall.com/digital-journey, where you can also sign up to receive our digital updates.