

# Cambridge Community Alarm Service

## Service Charter



**Telephone:**

**01223 457648**



**CAMBRIDGE  
CITY COUNCIL**

## INTRODUCTION

Thank you very much for choosing Cambridge City Council to provide your alarms service. Our service charter aims to provide you with information about our service and how it works, so that you are clear on what you can expect from us and what to do if you have any questions or concerns.

## HOW THE ALARM SERVICE WORKS

You will be provided with an alarm unit, which plugs into an electric socket and into a phone line within your property. We will also give you a pendant to wear either round your neck or wrist. We will talk to you when we install the alarm about where it is best situated and give you a demonstration as to how it works.

If you need assistance, press your pendant or the red button on your alarm unit once. When you activate your alarm, the alarm unit will call through to our response centre via your phone line. Your unit will make a series of dial tones to indicate it is dialling out. The response centre will aim to answer your call within 90 seconds of you pressing the button. The response centre will be able to speak to you to check you are ok, as long as you are within range of your alarm unit, they will be trained to ask you questions about what is wrong and will then arrange the necessary help. This could include contacting emergency services, your relatives, neighbours or key holders or other health professionals such as your GP and District Nurses. If you do not answer they will follow our silent call process which is outlined below.

Always let the operator speak first and let the operator finish speaking before you reply. If you talk at the same time the operator may not be able to hear you.

## WHAT SORT OF RANGE DOES MY ALARM HAVE?

We expect our alarms to work throughout most of our customers properties. However, the range that your alarm has, and therefore where it works within your house, will depend on several factors such as:

- where your phone line and alarm are located,
- the size of your property and grounds,
- the walls that the signal must travel through and what they are made of.

For this reason, we recommend that when your alarm is installed you spend time testing in various locations to make sure it works throughout your property. When you press your pendant, a red light will flash on it to confirm that it has sent a signal to the alarm unit and the square red light on the alarm unit will flash. If the red light does not come on, this means the pendant is not within range. We do not guarantee that the alarm will work outside of your property, such as in your garden.

We recommend that you always wear your pendant in your home. Your pendant is designed to be 'splash proof'. Please remove it when bathing or showering as it is not fully waterproof but try to keep it within reach if you do need it.

We advise that you remove the pendant when going to bed to avoid accidentally pressing it during the night while you sleep, but again ensure it is within easy reach should you need it and remember to put it back on if you do get up in the night for any reason.

### WHAT SORT OF HELP CAN THE RESPONSE CENTRE ORGANISE FOR ME?

Our response centre is run by a third-party organisation who we have a contract with. The current response centre is run by Tunstall. We provide them with procedures that they follow in the event of you activating your alarm. These procedures include the following:

- If you activate your alarm because you have had a fall and are injured, or you report a medical emergency such as chest pains, they will contact an ambulance to come and assist you urgently.
- If you activate your alarm because you have fallen and are uninjured, they will contact the key holders you have given us, or the Enhanced Response Service if the key holders are not available and you have a key safe.
- If you activate your alarm for a medical issue that is not urgent, they can call your GP or care provider, or will offer to call your key holders for you.
- If you need some help with an unplanned care need, such as personal care or a medication issue, they will call your key holders. If they are unavailable, and you have a key safe, they will call the Enhanced Response Service.

We also have procedures that cover calls such as reports of domestic abuse, fires, or intruders into your property. In these events the relevant emergency service would be called.

### WHAT HAPPENS IF THE RESPONSE CENTRE CANNOT HEAR ME?

Your alarm unit has a built-in speaker and microphone than enables you to have a 2-way conversation with the response centre when you activate your alarm. It will depend on where you are in your property when you press the alarm as to whether you are able to hear the alarm centre, and they are able to hear you. If they cannot hear you, the response centre will follow our 'silent call' procedure. This means they will:

- Call your landline phone to try and contact you and check you are ok.
- Call the key holders that you have provided us with to make them aware your alarm has been activated and see if they can attend.
- If they are unable to contact them, and you have a key safe, they will call the Enhanced Response Service (ERS). **Please see section below on the ERS service and how they operate.**
- If any of the above are not able to attend they will call an ambulance to attend. Please be aware that the ambulance response times will depend on how busy they are at the time and the other calls they must prioritise, and so it may be several hours before they respond.

## HOW DO I UPDATE MY KEYHOLDERS AND ANY OTHER INFORMATION HELD ABOUT ME?

When we meet with you to install your alarm, we will ask you who you would like us to contact when you activate your alarm, we usually refer to these people as your 'key holders', although they don't necessarily have to hold a key if you have a key safe that they can access. You could choose people such as trusted neighbours, or friends and family that live locally. You can have as many key holders as you would like added to your record. We will take their details and provide them to our contact centre so that they can be contacted if you activate your alarm.

It is your responsibility to keep your details updated. To do this, you can **activate your alarm 24/7** and the response centre will update them for you immediately. Alternatively, you can call our office **Monday – Thursday 0830-1630 and Friday 0830-1600**. We will update your details by the next working day.

Please make sure you speak to your key holders to make them aware you have nominated them as responders, and what it involves, so that they know what to do if contacted.

If you or your key holders go away, please let the Response Centre know so we can note this on your record. **Do this by pressing your pendant so that changes can be noted immediately.**

## DO I NEED A KEY SAFE?

A key safe is a small key storage system that is mounted on the outside of a property to securely hold keys.

If you have a key safe, we will ask you for the access details and will record these on your record to pass onto the response centre. This means that if you activate your alarm, the details can be passed onto your key holders, ERS and the emergency services to enable them to access your property. It is a good idea for your key holders to hold keys themselves, in the event that your key safe fails, or the key is not in the key safe.

We recommend that all our customers have a key safe installed if they do not have one already. You are welcome to arrange for your own key safe to be installed, but we are also able to offer this service to you for a small weekly charge that you pay for alongside your alarm charge. The key safes that we install are approved by the police and more information can be provided to you if you would like to explore this option.

If you chose not to have a key safe, you should be aware that if we need to access your property in an emergency, we are likely to have to request the police to come and gain entry if your key holders are not available. This may result in damage to your property which you may be liable for. You should be aware that professionals such as ERS and the ambulance service will not be able to break into your property to gain access to you, even in an emergency.

It is your responsibility to make sure that you check your key safe regularly to make sure that it is in good working order, and that the keys within it work properly in the lock. If you have an issue with a key safe that we have provided you with, please activate your alarm and inform the response centre who will make us aware so that we can come and resolve this for you.

## WHO ARE THE ENHANCED RESPONSE SERVICE AND WHAT DO THEY DO?

The Enhanced Response Service (ERS) is provided by Cambridgeshire County Council. It is provided free of charge to people living in Cambridgeshire who have an alarm and a key safe. They operate 7 days a week, 24 hours a day and have a target response time of 60 minutes from the point they are called by the response centre.

The ERS is not an emergency service, nor are they clinical or medical responders. The ERS is registered with the Care Quality Commission to provide social care activities and offers a response similar to a good neighbour or family member.

### The ERS can:

- provide assistance to get a person up from the floor following a fall if they are not injured.
- provide personal care that is needed in an urgent and unplanned circumstance, i.e., not part of a regular care package
- provide reassurance following an incident at home

If you have a key safe, you may choose to list ERS as one of the key holders for your community alarm, for example if you do not have friends and family living locally. If you activate your alarm for a non-medical emergency our response centre will call ERS to respond to you. They will aim to respond to any calls within 60 minutes, however you should be aware that during periods where they are very busy it may take longer. If the ERS advise us that they expect a delay of more than an hour, the response centre will be able to call an ambulance for you, however, please be aware that there may also be a delay in the ambulance reaching you if the call is not an emergency.

Even if you do not opt to have the ERS service as nominated key holders, they will also respond in the event of a silent call, or if none of your key holders are available. A silent call occurs when you activate your alarm but are not in range for the response centre to be able to hear you. In these cases, the response centre will call your nominated key holders until they reach someone who can respond. If they cannot reach anyone, they will call the ERS team. If the ERS team advise that they may not be able to attend within 60 minutes, the contact centre will call an ambulance to attend to you.

## WHAT DO I DO IF MY ALARM ISNT WORKING PROPERLY?

We recommend that you test your alarm at least once a month to ensure that it is working and to keep the battery in the pendant charged. You can do this by simply pressing your pendant. When the response centre answer, just tell them you are testing. Please do not worry if you press your pendant by accident, it is a good test that things are working! Just make sure that you tell the operator it is a mistake, and they won't take any further action.

Your alarm will not work if there is an issue with your phone line. If your alarm does not work, please check your phone line by calling your telephone provider directly. It is your responsibility to resolve any issues with your phone line.

If your phone line is working, but there is still an issue with your alarm, please call the response centre on **08450 530 866**. They are open 24/7, 365 days a year.

In the event of a power cut, your alarm will still work for up to 6 hours to enable you time to resolve the issue.

We would recommend that you contact both your electricity and phone provider to make them aware that you have an alarm and are therefore a high priority customer.

If there is a fault with the alarm, we will aim to replace/repair the equipment within 5 working days from being informed of the problem.

If the batteries in your pendant are getting low then your alarm unit puts an automatic call through to the response centre to make them aware, and they will report it to us. A member of our team will contact you to arrange to come and issue you with a new pendant. If you have not been testing your pendant monthly and this is the reason for the 'low battery' then you will be charged for a replacement pendant.

### **HOW MUCH DOES AN ALARM COST?**

The cost of the alarm service depends on any medical conditions you may have. If you have a disability or a debilitating illness, then this automatically makes you VAT exempt. Current charges will be given out on application for the service. You are charged for the service quarterly in advance and can make payments by Direct Debit which we will set up with you on the day the alarm is installed. Alternatively, you can pay by cheque to our finance department.

We do not charge a fee for installing or removing your alarm or responding to any faults that may occur. We do however reserve the right to make a charge for lost or damaged equipment, at the rate that it costs us to replace it.

Our charges are reviewed annually in April, and you will be written to notifying you of any changes ahead of this date.

### **HOW DO I CANCEL MY ALARM SERVICE?**

If you decide that you no longer need the alarm, you are required to give us 30 days' notice. You can do this by e-mail, phone or in writing using the details at the bottom of this document. We will notify our finance team who will contact you if any refund is due.

At the end of the 30 days, you are required to return all your equipment to our office. Failure to return the equipment may result in a charge being made to you. If you are unable to return it, please contact us and we will arrange a suitable time to collect it.

### **HOW DO YOU SHARE MY PERSONAL INFORMATION?**

When we visit you to install your alarm, we will collect information from you (such as your GP, Next of Kin details and any relevant medical details). We will pass this information on to the Response Centre on the day we install your alarm, so that they are able to respond to you accordingly. The information is sent via a secure e-mail system and is kept by the response centre on their secure system. The response centre will share your details with your key holders, ERS and the emergency services so that they can respond to you appropriately and effectively. We will not share your information with anyone else.



Our privacy notice provides you with information about what we do with your personal data (information that is about you and identifies you). You can find it here: [www.cambridge.gov.uk/privacy-notice](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/privacy-notice) or please contact use directly and we can provide you with a copy.

Under the **Freedom of Information Act**, you are entitled to request copies of all information the City Council holds about you. You can do this by filling in the online form on this link – [www.cambridge.gov.uk/freedom-of-information](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/freedom-of-information) or by e-mailing [foi@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:foi@cambridge.gov.uk). If you don't have access to the internet, please contact our office using the details at the end of this charter and we will assist you.

## WHAT DO I DO IF I HAVE A COMPLAINT OR COMMENT ABOUT THE SERVICE?

It's always nice to know when we get things right, but we also want to know when we get things wrong. We always welcome your comments and suggestions, and we want to know if we do not meet the standards set out in this charter. You can do this in several ways:

In the first instance, please contact us so that we can record your concerns and try and put things right for you. Service requests and complaints are slightly different. A service request is a contact from a customer that brings a matter to the council's attention for the first time, and requests a service offered by the council.

A complaint is a where the customer expresses dissatisfaction about the standard of a service, actions, or lack of actions by the council and its staff. If you think your concern might be a service request, please contact us using the details below.

if you need to complain about one of our services, we will do our best to put things right and make sure that the same thing doesn't happen again to you or to someone else. When you first make a complaint, we need to know your name, how we can contact you, the details of your complaint, what you want us to do to put things right and whether you have raised this issue with us before and who was dealing with it.

We aim to reply to all complaints within 10 working days. If we need longer, we will tell you why. We will also let you know who is dealing with your complaint.

Please try to resolve problems by raising them with the person you have been dealing with in the first instance.

You can find more information on our complaints policy here: [www.cambridge.gov.uk/compliments-complaints-and-suggestions](http://www.cambridge.gov.uk/compliments-complaints-and-suggestions) or contact us to request a full copy.

## HOW TO CONTACT THE COMMUNITY ALARMS SERVICE

You can contact the response centre on **08450 530 866**. This is a 24-hour telephone number.

**Our office ours are:** Monday – Thursday 0830-1630, and Friday 0830-1600.

### **Our address is:**

Ditchburn Place Reception

Mill Road  
Cambridge  
CB1 2DR

**Tel:** 01223 457648 or 01223 457199

**E-mail:** [independent.living@cambridge.gov.uk](mailto:independent.living@cambridge.gov.uk)

## STAFFING STRUCTURE

