

Video communication pilot project improves quality of life for the elderly in Älvsborg, Sweden.

MyJoice, the company behind the TV-Phone Joice is conducting a trial of its solution with the elderly care unit in Älvsborg, Sweden. With the Joice TV phone, elderly or disabled users can in a simple way make video calls from their own TV set. The user at the other end of the call uses the same set-up on their TV, or alternatively a PC based application. The Municipality of Älvsborg equipped 40 users with the Joice TV-Phone. These users were also users of safety alarms in order to compare any change of alarm use among users of the Joice TV- Phone.

Anette Hansson, CIO of Älvsborg's Elderly Care states that the goal for the project is to increase the safety of the caretakers and to increase social interaction and communication.

Because more and more people chose to live at home longer you can increase quality of life with the help of the TV-Phone. This goal is supported by enabling caretakers to more easily stay in contact with their relatives.

The safety alarm service, home service, community meeting places and family support groups have also started to use the TV-Phone in their daily work. "New meeting places and personal networks are essential for meaningful social interaction even when your health and abilities deteriorate" says Anette Hansson.

"Yesterday my great-great grandchild made a drawing for me " says Erik, 94 years old and one of the test pilots in the Älvsborg project. "Totally unbelievable, it's amazing! Think about the fact that you can see and speak with your great grandchildren that I've never been able to meet in Canada"

The 40 test pilots are between 60-95 years old and the majority of them have safety alarms. One of the participants is almost blind but can handle the TV-telephone that only has five buttons.

If a caretaker is very worried and uses the alarm frequently, it makes him/her calmer by seeing the care service staff on the TV. With visual contact, the care service staff can immediately determine how the caretaker is feeling. Is the person breathing normally? Does the color of the face look OK?

"You can reduce the number of unnecessary alarms and make the home service and safety response service more effective" says project leader Therese Hallgren.

"The caretakers learn quickly and are motivated to test the solution, says Hallgren. There are those that do not have many people they can call. Therefore we have created a contact network between the caretakers. For example, one woman is very excited about the opportunity make a new friend". Also, a joint initiative among the churches in Älvsborg is

being established. “One woman follows the church service from her local church via the TV-Phone. She is extremely happy and can watch it as often as she wants to” says Therese.

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