

U-Phone - Telephony & Video for Secure Environments

1. Service Summary

U-Phone is a cloud-hosted, secure communications platform providing managed voice and video calling services for custodial settings, including prisons, secure hospitals, detention centres and secure training institutions. The service enables residents to communicate with approved external contacts through tightly controlled telephony services, while providing staff with comprehensive tools for oversight, monitoring and administration.

The service is designed to support the modernisation of custodial communications and reflects the functional expectations set out in recent national procurement activity for replacement telephony services, including secure IP-based calling, mobile applications for friends and family, flexible payment models, monitoring and audit, and integration with custodial systems.

Delivered as a centrally managed cloud service, Telephony for Secure Environments supports scalable deployment across large estates, consistent enforcement of communication rules, and comprehensive compliance with security, safeguarding and regulatory requirements.

2. Service Features

The service provides a secure, managed telephony and video communications platform, including:

- Secure IP-based voice and video communication for residents and staff
- Dedicated iOS and Android mobile applications for friends and family to manage accounts, approved contacts, payments and call history
- Resident access to telephony via in-room devices or controlled access points
- Calling restricted to approved external contacts through configurable approval workflows
- Support for voice and video calls within a single managed platform
- Flexible payment models supporting credit purchase by residents, friends and family, or a combination of both
- Secure payment processing, balance management and usage tracking
- Configurable call rules, schedules, duration limits and restrictions aligned to local policy
- Call monitoring, logging and recording capabilities, configurable in line with regulatory and legal requirements
- Administrative and staff portals providing operational control, monitoring and reporting
- Real-time visibility of call activity, usage patterns and exceptions
- AI-enabled multilingual call transcription and translation, where permitted, to support accessibility and multilingual communication
- Secure API-based integration with custodial, identity, case management and financial systems
- Comprehensive audit logging of call activity, account actions and administrative changes

3. Service Benefits

The service delivers operational, security and communication benefits, including:

- Secure, controlled access to voice and video communication for residents
- Improved experience for friends and family through mobile applications and self-service account management
- Consistent enforcement of approved contact and calling rules across establishments
- Reduced reliance on legacy or unmanaged telephony infrastructure
- Improved oversight of communication activity through monitoring and analytics
- Clear audit trails supporting compliance, investigation and assurance
- Flexible payment options supporting different operating and funding models
- Improved accessibility and inclusion through multilingual support where permitted
- Scalable architecture supporting estate-wide or national deployments
- Supports the modernisation and standardisation of custodial communication services

4. Service Scope

The service covers the end-to-end management and delivery of telephony and video communication services for residents, staff and approved external contacts.

Residents access telephony services through in-room or controlled access points, subject to approved contacts, schedules and available credit. Friends and family use dedicated mobile applications to register, manage accounts, purchase credit and participate in approved communications.

Staff manage telephony configuration, approvals, monitoring, reporting and exception handling through secure administrative interfaces. The service integrates with custodial and case management systems to support identity assurance, entitlement checks and operational oversight.

5. How the Service Works

Telephony services are delivered using secure, IP-based communications managed through the cloud platform. Residents authenticate at telephony endpoints and can place calls only to approved contacts, in line with configured schedules and restrictions.

Friends and family register via mobile applications, submit details for approval, manage payment methods and participate in calls once approved. Payments are processed securely and balances updated in real time.

Voice and video calls operate within the same managed platform, allowing establishments to enable appropriate communication modes while maintaining consistent controls. Where enabled, AI-supported transcription and translation assist communication and accessibility, operating within defined governance and approval settings.

Call metadata, recordings (where permitted), account actions and administrative changes are logged centrally, providing a complete audit trail for operational review, compliance and incident investigation.

6. Onboarding and Offboarding

6.1 Onboarding

Onboarding is delivered as a structured process and includes confirmation of scope, establishments, user groups and telephony configurations. Configuration covers contact approval workflows, calling rules, monitoring and recording settings, payment models and reporting.

Where required, integrations with custodial, identity or case management systems are implemented and tested. Pilot deployments can be used to validate operational fit before wider rollout.

Typical onboarding timescales range from three to nine months, depending on scale, integrations and site readiness.

6.2 Offboarding / exit management

Offboarding is managed in a controlled and auditable manner. This includes withdrawal of access, decommissioning of integrations, and handling of retained call records and audit data in line with contractual, regulatory and data protection requirements.

Offboarding activities are typically completed within **6 to 10 weeks**, subject to agreed exit arrangements.

7. Support and Service Management

Incidents and service requests are managed in accordance with the agreed contractual service levels and the operational requirements of custodial environments.

Initial response times are:

- High and medium priority incidents: within 1 hour
- Low priority incidents and general service requests: within 2 hours

Standard support hours are Monday to Friday, 8:00am–5:00pm (UK time). In recognition of the critical nature of custodial systems, high priority incidents are supported 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Support is delivered using an ITIL-aligned service management framework. All requests are logged through a central service desk and assessed by a triage function, which assigns priority and routes issues to the appropriate resolver group. Resolution is provided through structured 1st, 2nd and 3rd line support, with clear escalation procedures in place.

Customers are provided with a dedicated support email address and an assigned Business Account Manager, who provides ongoing service oversight, technical engagement and escalation support. Service performance and incident trends are reviewed through agreed governance processes.

8. Service Constraints and System Requirements

8.1 Service constraints

- Telephony and monitoring features are subject to local policy, legal and regulatory approval
- Call quality depends on network connectivity, bandwidth and endpoint capability
- Availability of AI-supported features depends on governance and configuration

8.2 System requirements

- Approved telephony endpoints and staff devices capable of accessing the service
- Dedicated iOS and Android applications for friends and family
- Secure network connectivity to the hosting environment
- Role-based access controls aligned to customer security policies
- End-user devices and physical telephony infrastructure provided by the customer or under separate agreement

9. Security and Compliance

The service is designed with privacy and data protection controls built in by design, including role-based access control, audit logging and data minimisation, supporting UK GDPR and relevant information assurance requirements.

Where Unilink provides the managed service, it operates within ISO 27001-certified information security controls, GDPR-compliant data handling practices, and regular external security testing aligned to customer governance.

10. Training

Training for U-Phone is delivered as part of a structured adoption and service enablement approach, recognising the operational sensitivity and scale of custodial telephony services. Training is role-based and tailored to the needs of different user groups, including operational staff, administrative users, finance teams, monitoring teams and system administrators.

Training covers core telephony functionality, including contact approval workflows, call rules and schedules, payment and account management, monitoring and recording controls, reporting and audit. For specialist roles, training also includes configuration of system settings, access controls, integrations and governance rules.

Training delivery is typically aligned to onboarding, pilot and phased rollout activities. Training can be delivered remotely or on-site, depending on operational requirements, and is supported by role-specific guidance materials and user documentation.

Go-live and early life support are provided to reinforce training, support staff during the transition to live service use, and address operational questions arising from real-world usage. This approach supports consistent adoption, minimises disruption and ensures U-Phone is embedded safely and effectively within custodial operations.

11. Ordering and Invoicing

This service is ordered via the Digital Marketplace in line with G-Cloud call-off procedures. Pricing is provided separately in the G-Cloud pricing document.

12. Trial Service

A time-limited pilot or proof-of-concept can be provided to validate telephony workflows, mobile applications, payment models and operational fit prior to wider deployment.