Advice and guidance

Information sharing

6 reasons why information and data is important when running a successful social care business

Benchmarking

Cost savings

Data analysis

Safeguarding

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How information and data can help build a successful social care business

Skills for Care is seeing more and more how employers and managers in social care are collecting information and data.

Employers are then using this information to change the ways in which they work, to provide better outcomes for those who receive care and support.

This is the definition of a successful social care business.

Every time data is collected, collated, analysed and processed, presented or shared it must be for the benefit of the people we support and not just for the sake of having lots of data and information.

How information can help:

- Ensures your business is fit for purpose
- Helps you become more cost effective
- Promotes transparency
- Provides better continuity of care
- Gives you a competitive advantage
- Allows you to plan for the future

This leaflet will explain more about each of these areas in more detail.

We need to help those who work in social care realise the huge potential of data and information and how they can use it. We can make our services even better than they already are by investing in an informatics approach.

The term used to describe how we collect data and information in a meaningful way is called **informatics.** It also includes how to share information between services and the IT systems that might support this activity.

6 reasons why information is important

Businesses can only be efficient if people are able to choose the exact support they want and need at the time they need it.

1
Fit for purpose

By gathering information about the services you provide, you can identify and then meet the needs of your customers. This shows that your service is fit for purpose – not only for those who use the service but also for commissioners and decision makers who ultimately, decide how social care is funded.

2
Better continuity of care

By working proactively, you can ensure that information is shared in a safe and efficient way. This is so that when people are moving from one service to another, reliable, accurate and relevant information is shared between those services. This means ultimately, they will receive better care and support.

3
Supports safeguarding

Accurate information shared at the outset of a care package / care plan ensures that people receive exactly the support they need to keep them safe and well. Correct and detailed information can ensure there are fewer mistakes with the care provided and people can receive exactly the care and support they need.

4
Promoting transparency

Having good information ready, i.e. all the types of service provided and costs involved, means there are no hidden surprises or shocks for anyone who might need care and support or their families. The Care Act has a strong focus on making sure the right information is available at the time they need it, and in a way that is helpful to them.

5
Cost savings

Lost information, inefficient handling of information, or constant changing of services or providers can ultimately cost you more money.

6
Stand out from the crowd

By knowing and comparing (benchmarking) your business against others, you can find out what you offer that others don't, and use this to your advantage.

Bringing it all together

Staff will need to know what questions to ask, so the right data can be collected and social care businesses will need to be open minded about what the information is telling them so that they can adapt to what their customers need. This involves many things working together:

Successful social care business

Collecting, collating and analysing data

Making sure the data is meaningful - does it make sense?

Enabling good data storage, analysis and sharing

Sharing that information with the right people

How IT can help

IT systems can help the collection, analysis and presentation of information and data

IT systems may mean investment but the right systems can revolutionise social care businesses and ensure success.

Skilled workers are vital to get the best results from IT systems

Systems are not helpful unless there are experienced and skilled people to operate them.

If you'd like to find out more about improving the IT skills for your workforce contact: informatics@skillsforcare.org.uk.

Using data to benefit your business

This Skills for Care publication for NMDS-SC account holders guides you through easy to use dashboards which can help you measure how your service performs, benchmark it against others and workforce plan for the future.

The dashboards cover six invaluable areas:
1. Staff overview
2. Recruitment and retention
3. Workforce demographics
4. Pay
5. Qualifications and training
6. Local demand and intelligence

www.nmds-sc-online.org.uk
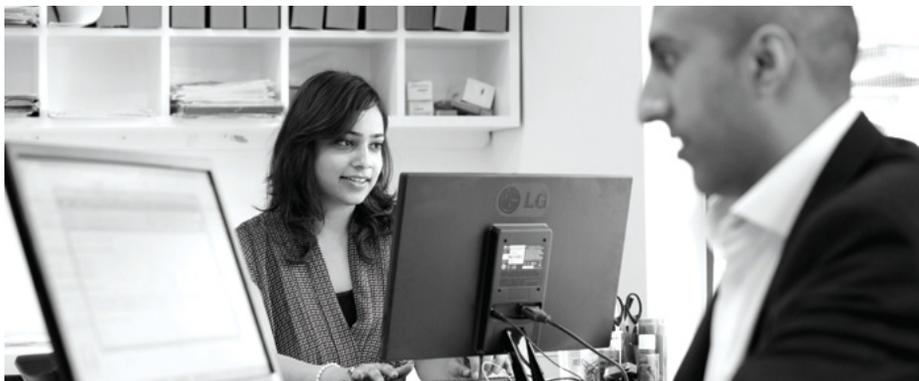
To find out how one leading Home Care provider organisation has benefitted from using an informatics approach download the Home Instead Senior Care case study on our website.

Guide and case studies explaining why data needs to be shared and how to do this safely:
www.skillsforcare.org.uk/infosharing

Become a digital skills champion
www.digitalchampionsnetwork.com

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