

Digital working strategy update

July 2016



The Digital working, learning and information sharing strategy, published in 2014, set out principles for implementing digital working, learning and information sharing. It describes a vision of the use of technology as a day-to-day part of the lives of the adult social care workers providing care and support, and of people with care and support needs. Digital ways of working, learning and information sharing are about all the different ways that we use technology to support people to live independently and have meaningful lives.

This document explores how the principles and actions set out in the strategy are being embedded into practice. Since the strategy was launched, we have been working to deliver the proposed actions. Other drivers have emerged, including the National Information Board's (NIB) work, with its ambition for health and social care to be paperless at the point of delivery by 2020. This gives Skills for Care further impetus to push the strategy forwards.

Digital leadership summits

The principles set out in the strategy formed the basis of discussions at the recent Skills for Care digital leadership summits. Commissioned by the National Information Board as part of its work stream to address the digital needs of the workforce in social care and health, the summits drew 67 leaders from the private and voluntary sector together to discuss the challenges and existing good practice in digital working, learning and information sharing. Delegates heard from a wide range of speakers including:

- Mandy Thorn, Marches Care
- Ian Turner, Chair of Registered Nursing Home Association
- Suzanne Lea, Information Governance Alliance
- Alex and Lucy, who use the services of New Key.

Based on the strategy's principles, and the NIB's ambitions, the following examples and comments were discussed by delegates and have been brought together here to demonstrate some of the emerging solutions and remaining challenges to the strategy.

Principle 1. Everyone involved in delivering care and support has the confidence and competence to work digitally and the opportunity to develop their digital skills.

Discussions included how to improve the digital skills of staff and the need for increased confidence and competence within social care to articulate their needs to technologists.

- Ian Turner, President of the RNHA urged delegates to invest in intuitive systems for recording and communication – he had done this with minimal training for employees.
- The role of leadership was emphasised - social care leaders need to be able to talk to technologists in a confident way, so technologists can understand the needs of the care sector. Leaders need to be able to articulate what would help solve a problem, rather than

be 'sold' the solution.

- Christine Asbury from WCS Care Group described working with lift manufacturers and designers to create an 'intuitive lift' (which opens a door on approach and goes up/down without pressing buttons), thus making it easier to use for individuals with dementia.
- A question from the floor challenged panel members to consider 'is embracing change about leadership or technology?' Panelists concluded that it is about its culture and leadership. Ian Turner noted that 'leadership is needed to identify what your 'mess' is in the first place or you just end up with a computerized mess!'

Principle 2. Digital learning is recognised as a crucial part of workforce development, and part of a blended approach to learning and development including the achievement of standards and qualifications.

Discussion focused on how delivery of learning via technology is now an essential component to learning. How can we continue to make it more accessible and flexible?

- The use of employees own devices was noted as one way of a blended approach to learning.
- There was discussion of so called BYOD (bring your own device) and how this had proved challenging for some that had used it. The consensus was that this was tricky and no one seemed to have a fail proof system/protocol.

Principle 3. The potential of digital technology to enhance the lives of people with care and support needs, and that some people need help to engage with the digital technology is understood.

- Christine Asbury felt that the driver should be 'user experience' not efficiencies.
- Delegates felt that the Care Quality Commission have yet to fully understand the importance or significance of the role/power of technology.
- Paul Webster from LASA pointed out that only 25% of care homes have full access to WiFi in all rooms and this is a real barrier to further engagement.
- Many delegates felt that influencing senior management or boards was vital; convincing them investment in digital ways of working will bring savings and better quality.
- Users of the services of New Key gave powerful examples of how the use of applications has made a great difference to their lives. Learning to use maps on an application has enabled one of them to walk to the swimming pool on his own, thus increasing his confidence and cutting down on the staff hours needed for this aspect of his support.

Principle 4. Digital technologies are used in the best interests of people needing care and support and at all times to support their choice and independence.

- Steve Manning from HFT described the use of LINCUS – a digital, online self-reporting tool. This allows service users to enter their own information, regarding their wishes and their mood, using visual prompts. The use of this appears to have been successful as emotional well-being and mental health rose by 20% in those people using it.
- Marches Care explained how medication errors have decreased since the introduction of digital recording systems.
- Christine Asbury explained how the use of acoustic monitoring (sensors set up to detect unusual sounds) have added greater privacy to residents, preventing the need for hourly checks.

- New Key gave examples of how their assistive technology group, made up of people who use the service and staff meets monthly to discuss and review new technology.

Principle 5. Digital information is shared securely and transparently and workers, people with care and support needs and carers have confidence in the systems used to store information electronically.

- Marches Care have a shared information system with health (an NHS address) and this was seen as crucial to better integration and outcomes for those using services but has been hard to achieve.

The summits gave an opportunity to discuss the strategy, alongside the real challenges to the implementation of digital ways of working. 82% of delegates felt that they had a greater grasp of the barriers in this area and how to overcome them, with 92% feeling that they had a better understanding of how their organisation could contribute to improving the social care system using technology. Delegates would like to have heard more on how technology care can help in domiciliary care.

From these summits, Skills for Care will continue furthering this work, taking on board feedback from employers. There is much to do, however progress has been made. Below is a summary of the actions that have been completed as a result of the strategy and our continuing work.

Actions from the strategy - progress and challenges

Within the strategy, a number of actions were proposed. The following is a discussion of how these have been met so far.

1. Examples of how technology is being used to enable workers, employers, people with care and support needs and carers to work and learn differently, and an exploration of the evidence of the impact of using digital technology will be collated and shared.

- Examples were given at the leadership summits of technology suppliers and care providing organisations coming together to meet challenges and be able to evidence impact.
- Examples have been gathered and shared on the Learn from Others, a Skills for Care website to share good practice. These include:
 - the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames have developed three films to support training of care workers, GPs and the police engaging with people with differing autism spectrum conditions.
 - The Orchard Trust have produced free e-learning aimed at helped care workers better understand activity provision, effective engagement with the people they provide care to.
 - Lincolnshire County Council and Lincolnshire Safeguarding Adults Board have produced an online safeguarding adults website portal.

2. The current capability of the workforce to work and learn digitally will be reviewed and any skills gaps and key issues identified.

- The current capability of the workforce to work and learn digitally has been reviewed with skills gaps and key issues identified.
- Key gaps were identified in basic digital skills within the workforce. The preferred method

of learning to increase skills was peer to peer learning. In 2015, we joined forces with Digital Unite to run a pilot programme of digital champions. Digital champions are people within an organisation who receive training on digital skills then offer mentoring and skills development in digital skills to those peers who may need it. This programme is now being tested more broadly with employers.

- A key gap identified by research was definition and clear guidance for employers about what core digital skills are. In 2016, Skills for Care published 'Let's Get Digital - core skills for those working in social care'.

3. A guide to commissioning and providing workforce development for digital learning, working and information sharing will be produced.

- Everyone working in social care and health should see the use and safe sharing of information as part of their responsibility. This is why we produced Information sharing for social care employers guide, to help social care employers consider these issues and begin to skill their staff to meet these new challenges. This was developed with the Information Governance Alliance.
- Three short films have been produced to show how employers have started to meet some of the challenges of information sharing:
 - Lessons in integrated working - the Living Well project, Cornwall
 - New systems for information sharing - the Heathland project, Cumbria
 - Advice from data sharing experts - The Centre for Excellence for Information Sharing and the Information Governance Alliance.

Conclusions

It is clear that the use of technology and the associated skills challenges, means that there is much work to do to support social care employers to take up this challenge.

As part of our ongoing work, we will undertake a refresh of the Digital working, learning and information sharing strategy with partners later this year, drawing on the changing landscape of technology and care, as well as the messages and challenges spelt out at the digital leadership summits.

It will aim to provide a forward looking, strategic vision of the needs of the social care workforce as well as a practical view of how change can be achieved.

All resources can be downloaded from www.skillsforcare.org.uk/digitalskills.

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