Digital working, learning and information sharing
A workforce development strategy for adult social care
2016 – 2020

in association with:
Information Governance Alliance (IGA)
Executive summary

Digital working, learning and information sharing are a day-to-day part of the lives of the workforce 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 strategy sets out principles for implementing digital working, learning and information sharing, which are:

- Everyone involved in delivering care and support has the confidence and competence to work digitally, and the opportunity to develop their digital skills.
- 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.
- 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.
- Digital technologies are used in the best interests of people needing care and support and at all times to support their choice and independence.
- Digital information is shared appropriately, securely and transparently and workers, people with care and support needs and carers have confidence in the systems used to store information electronically.

The purpose of the strategy is to set out what social care employers need to be considering as they move their workforces to a more digital way of working.

It’s purpose is to challenge, encourage and support employers to engage with the inevitable changes that digital working and learning are bringing. It also sets out the role that Skills for Care will play in supporting these developments with the development and promotion of appropriate support and resources for social care employers.

To take the strategy forward five actions are proposed:

- 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, giving employers real examples of where technology has worked to improve a service.
- The current culture, leadership and management issues that enable or disable digital change will be examined via research and discussion with the sector.
- A guide to overcoming some of the barriers identified will be developed and published.
- The notion and formation of a ‘digital roadmap’ for the independent sector will be explored, using the above work, helping them to identify their current position, potential challenges and where they may find supporting resource to overcome these.
- Specific guidance and resources will be developed to assist social care employers identify and address data protection and information governance issues.
**Introduction**

Digital working, learning and information sharing are increasingly a day-to-day part of the lives of the workforce providing care and support, and of people with care and support needs. As our environment becomes more reliant on technological solutions and enablers, so care and support services will increasingly use these opportunities to provide the best quality care for those they support. Digital working can mean completion of records using technology or keeping friends and family connected to the person they love via technology. Digital learning can be through the use of online learning approaches, which use a variety of media to build knowledge including the connection of social care workers to others to exchange ideas and learning. Digital information sharing can be the collaboration of different partners in order to be able to share data or information safely via technology.

For most people, digital technology is a part of our daily lives. We will shortly have a generation that will not remember a time without the internet. Digital technology has also become a feature of working life. So whether it’s the use of online shopping, banking, social media, home movies, photos, the digital care plan, the telecare alarm system, voice-led technology or the electronic rota, how we use digital technology at work, at home and on the move will continue to change the nature of care and support for years to come.

Technological solutions are being developed that pose ethical and practical questions as to the role of care - therapeutic robotics (e.g. PARO http://www.parorobots.com/) to stimulate and engage older people are being explored as a possible way of meeting some needs. These advances mean that those involved with care and support will need to think through what this means for their services and the roles within them.

Making sure that everyone - employers, workers, people with care and support needs and carers can get the best out of digital technologies is an important part of enabling people to continue to live independently. So too is ensuring that the potential for digital ways of working and independent living are accessible to all. Ensuring that all possible levers and incentives are used to accelerate this change is vital - be it from commissioners, technology providers, government policy or pressure from people that use services. Working digitally has many benefits, including improved communication, access to knowledge and expertise, resource savings and interconnecting people and organisations so that best practice can be more widely shared.

**Going online**

Our whole recruitment process is now online. Our HR system is an oracle system (leave, sickness, and appraisals)... all of this function is now done on the system. You can run reports from this... this is very useful for keeping a track of where people are, especially for leave planning. The supervision processes don’t run through this system but the appraisal does, training plans, personal development plans are all done on line. When workers are out, we have work mobiles... reductions to budgets have meant that we’ve had to find ways of doing things that don’t involve people. All our procurement is done online now - it’s almost like going to the shopping centre online and we buy what we need (like rubber gloves) so this cuts out the need for as much cash as we used to have to use.

**Carol Hackett**, manager, local authority day service for adults with autism, London.
Digital working, learning and information sharing enables diverse and geographically disparate social care organisations and workers to support each other and learn from each other in a timely fashion. Social media, peer-to-peer learning and open digital systems (such as Wikipedia) offer opportunities that traditional top-down digital systems cannot deliver easily. Digital working can encourage debate and learning as well as information exchange between workers and the people they support, and their carers. In recent years, integration of services across social care, health and other sectors, as well as new approaches to partnerships with the private and voluntary sector has made the case for digital ways of working more urgent - it could be argued that without it, successful integration is severely threatened. This is especially true for information sharing, where quality to the individual is improved by safe and agreed information sharing between agencies.

For detailed guidance and resources on information sharing for social care employers, visit www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Documents/Topics/Digital-working/Information-sharing-for-social-care-employers.pdf

In order to maximise the potential value of technology in adult social care, it is vital a strategic approach is taken to digital workforce development. The principles and actions outlined in this strategy will support commissioners and employers to develop the digital capability of their workforces and ensure that digital approaches to delivering care and support are open to everyone. This strategy sets out workforce principles that commissioners and employers can use to develop local workforce decision making in relation to digital working, learning and information sharing. It also sets out national strategic workforce development actions that will guide employers and commissioners with local decision making. It supports broader Department of Health and government digital agendas such as The National Information Board’s ambition to achieve a paperless health and care service by 20201. It also complements existing workforce development tools such as workforce commissioning2 and workforce planning guidance3 and digital learning materials. It acknowledges that there is already much innovation and enthusiasm in digital working, learning and information sharing amongst adult social care commissioners and employers. It aims to accelerate the sharing of existing knowledge and practice within a framework of principles for digital, learning and information sharing. The principles and actions in this strategy have been developed in consultation and partnership with the adult social care sector. This strategy for digital working, learning and information sharing in adult social care gives a context for action, shares existing and emerging practice, and sets broad workforce principles against which employers can measure progress. Digital working, learning and information sharing needs to be done in partnership with health, housing, voluntary and social enterprises, recognising that digital integration will have an important role in future care and support. Leaders need to reach out to ensure that agencies coordinate their approaches to digital transformation so that the sector moves forward together without systems getting in the way of communications and technology around care. Consultation, engagement and leadership from within the sector in the implementation of this strategy is key to its success.

1 www.gov.uk/government/organisations/national-information-board
2 www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Leadership-management/Workforce-Commissioning/Workforce-commissioning.aspx
3 www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Leadership-management/Workforce-planning/Workforce-planning.aspx
A context for action

Digital technology and its role in adult social care work, learning and development are changing rapidly. The government has set out its vision, through the National Information Board, that health and social care will be paperless at the point of delivery by 2020. In order to support this, work has begun at local level to establish the ‘digital maturity’ of systems and processes in local areas. This work has now been extended to local authorities. No work has yet been done with the private and voluntary sector. Meanwhile, Skills for Care’s own research into the digital skills of the social care workforce showed that there are real gaps in the digital skills and confidence in large proportions of the workforce. This shows the real juxtaposition of the ambition and the reality and the work yet to be done.

The workforce in adult social care needs to be able to use digital technology with confidence and to promote its appropriate use for people with care and support needs and their carers. Commissioners, providers and employers have to be able to understand how their workforce currently uses digital technology and to make investment decisions that enable the workforce to:

- Work smarter and more productively
- Ensure that data is accurate and relevant
- Use technology as part of their everyday work
- Use technology as part of their learning and professional development
- Use technology to support and record achievement related to recognised standards and qualifications
- Develop the knowledge and skills that enable them to identify new opportunities for technology to be used as part of someone’s care and support package
- Maintain privacy and confidentiality
- Actively share information safely and securely, within the law and local protocols.

Since 2009, the workforce continued to shift away from local authority jobs (-33% and -60,000 jobs) and towards independent sector jobs (+25% and 245,000 jobs). With this shift towards the independent sector, it is vital that this part of the social care sector embrace the challenge of understanding where their services need to improve in this field. Commissioners need to drive this agenda, by commissioning services and workforces that can meet the challenge of working digitally. The independent sector itself will need support and mentoring to move forwards. Some of these challenges come from the diversity of the sector - it may be easier to enable new ways of working, learning and information sharing when employees are all ‘in one place’ for example in a nursing home than where the service is being delivered in a person’s home, often alone (for example domiciliary care). However, innovation is being embraced by some:
Sharing best practice and information

About two years ago and through my role at UKHCA, a group of providers came together and created something called the ‘Live In Care Information Hub’ and through this work, we have 14 live in care providers working together to promote Live In care as an option. We have also taken the opportunity to share best practice and information. One area we looked at was on recruitment. We’ve done benchmarking on churn stats, recruitment targets and we know that we are out-performing the average…. All of our carers have a Good Care Group email address and we operate at Bring Your Own Device policy. They all have to have access to technology and we can contribute to this cost. We can close access or the device down centrally if we need to. We have created a carer portal and this allows them to complete client weekly reports, expenses management, incident forms. We use it for requests for equipment for clients too. We run a weekly operations update and a monthly newsletter for our team. All of this is critical with a remote workforce.

Dominique Kent, Manager, The Good Care Group, Live-In service, Nationwide Provider.

At all stages, working in partnership with people with care and support needs and their carers is essential - working, learning and co-producing digital solutions are key. The more practical and grounded digital technology is, and the more its application is geared to helping people solve real work-based problems, the more likely people will be to adopt digital technology as a model of learning and working. The way in which digital technology is adopted and adapted to different models of care and support can impact on its effectiveness.

Interactive technology

We have some big (80 inch) touch screens that we use with people and these are on stands so our customers (wheelchair users) can access them quite easily. They are used for different things; programs for people with autism that we download (e.g repetitive tasks, matching tasks), communication (to support people with their communication needs). We do work around Christmas time as we have a Makaton choir; they can use them to find Christmas songs with the Makaton signs included, so really useful for sessional type work

Carol Hackett, Day service for adults with autism, London

Digital technology supports three broad areas:

- Working directly with people with care and support needs and their carers
- Workers’ learning and professional development
- Organisational business support and information management systems.
Resource constraint, continuing demographic pressures and the rising expectations of people with care and support needs all suggest that making best use of digital technology is essential. It is also important to recognise that individual employers are at different stages in adopting digital solutions. Not all workers have easy access to digital technology in the workplace. It is also important to note that having digital skills may not be the same as understanding how to apply them ethically or for the best outcome for the person being supported. Knowing how to enable information to be passed over electronically needs to be supported by the knowledge of how to do this securely and within data protection law. There are also differing levels of expertise and confidence in the use of digital platforms and online media, as made clear in Skills for Care's research. Digital solutions can be experienced as liberating or oppressive for workers, people with care and support needs and carers, depending on how they are introduced and supported. Digital solutions have the ability to impact upon a person’s independence, confidence and isolation among other things. However, this impact could be both negative as well as positive, with the potential for cyber-bullying, online fraud and exclusion from some social groups. Ensuring that the values and objectives of using digital approaches are ethical and coherent is essential.

App based support

HomeCareDirect uses an app which sits on an iPod in people’s homes to help individuals and families manage their personal assistants’ visits, check their personal assistants’ training and automatically notify the on-call service if a personal assistant fails to arrive, or is late for a scheduled visit.

People can view their personal assistants’ visit history through a secure login on HomeCareDirect’s website and use online tools to plan visits. This allows people to plan their rotas electronically via a secure area of HomeCareDirect’s website.

The app also creates an electronic timesheet for each personal assistant, to be used to calculate pay, giving consistent recording of support hours provided.

www.homecaredirect.co.uk

Knowledge about how people who need care support and their carers are using technology as part of their self care is patchy. Anecdotally, it would seem that online peer networks and the ability to share common solutions quickly on-line have made a real difference to those needing care and support and their carers. Any learning and new ways of working for workers and employers is equally applicable to people with care and support needs, and their carers. This strategy assumes that co-produced working and learning solutions are a given and that in many cases, people who need care and support may well have well developed expertise to share. It also emphasises the importance of co-producing information sharing procedures with people who need care and support and the wider population, ensuring that the public know how their information is being used and shared, and have the chance to consent or otherwise. Employers may need to support carers and those who use services to understand how the sort of technology now found in everyday life can bring them benefits to prevent it being seen as a potential threat.
All employers, workers, people with care and support needs and carers should have the confidence and competence to use digital technology as part of day to day living, working and learning. There are four key digital skills areas that the workforce will need to have knowledge and skills in. These are:

- Sharing data
- learning and development
- using digital skills in direct care
- managing information.

Details of these can be found here; www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Documents/Topics/Digital-working/Core-digital-skills-in-social-care.pdf

It is also important not to view these skills for individuals in isolation from the abilities of organisations or vice versa - it is pointless and frustrating for a worker to have digital skills they can’t use as the organisation is yet to catch up and vice versa.

The following workforce principles provide a strategic framework within which commissioners and employers can assess progress and frame local actions to deliver digital working, learning and information sharing. The principles are underpinned by an expectation that workers need to see digital technology as part of an everyday way of learning, as a natural part of someone’s care and support package and that they can share digital information competently.

Commissioners, employers, workers, people with care and support needs, and carers need to act within a framework that supports integrated workforce development. Commissioners and employers need to:

- Take a holistic view of technology, valuing the varying types of technology and systems available that can improve care and support. This includes valuing the ‘older’ types of technology (for example email) as well as the newer systems and technologies, ensuring they each play their part.
- Recognise how people and organisations respond differently to technology - nurture champions, leaders and digital innovators.
- Engage people, both those who use services and those who work in them, in the development and implementation of technology for working, learning and information sharing at all stages.
- Understand how to adapt technology to fit the way in which people live, work and are supported.
The workforce principles in implementing digital working, learning and information sharing are:

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

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.

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.

4. Digital technologies are used in the ethical best interests of people needing care and support and at all times to support their choice and independence, including self-care through digital technologies.

5. Digital information is shared securely and transparently within systems and processes that are fit for purpose and workers, people with care and support needs, and carers have confidence in the systems and protocols used to store and share information electronically.

6. Everyone involved in leading or managing care and support services acknowledges that digital ways of working, learning and information sharing are, or will become, the default way of providing a blended quality service and use their leadership positions to drive this change.
What each workforce principle means

Digital working should be a natural way of working for everyone in adult social care. Each principle has a specific meaning and sets out actions for commissioners and employers. The principles provide a framework for assessing progress with digital workforce development.

1. Everyone involved in delivering care and support has the confidence and competence to work digitally and the opportunity to develop their digital skills.
   - All workers are given the opportunity to enhance their skills and knowledge to enable them to achieve at least the core digital skills needed for social care.
   - All workers understand how to use digital care and support resources and have access to learning that helps them to use digital resources effectively.
   - Access to digital resources to facilitate work are available to all workers and workers have the confidence to use those tools to interact and collaborate in the workplace.

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.
   - Commissioners and employers recognise that digital learning is most effective when used as part of a blended approach to learning and development.
   - Workers have the confidence and competence to use digital learning resources effectively.
   - Workers are able to use technology as a means to store and record achievement of knowledge and competence to maximise the potential of technology to reduce learning repetition and recognise learning.
   - Workers have access to the tools to securely complete digital learning activity both in their place of work and the community.

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.
   - Digital tools and resources are understood and routinely integrated into an individual’s care and support plan.
   - Opportunities for people to learn and use their own digital resources as part of their care and support are recognised and encouraged.

4. Digital technologies are used in the ethical best interests of people needing care and support and at all times to support their choice and independence.
   - The reasons for using a digital approach to working, learning and care and support are fully understood and explained.
   - When people with care and support needs do not want to use digital technology this should be respected, recognising that digital care and support could be seen as intrusive.
5. Digital information is shared securely and transparently within systems and processes that are fit for purpose and workers, people with care and support needs and carers have confidence in the systems and protocols used to store and share information electronically.

- Commissioners and employers have clear workforce development programs and protocols in place on working with and sharing digital information, that have been co-produced by people who use services and people who work in them.
- Workers have completed learning and development programs on working with and sharing digital information.

For detailed resources and guidance on Information Sharing for Social Care Employers please see;  www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Documents/Topics/Digital-working/Information-sharing-for-social-care-employers.pdf

6. Everyone involved in leading or managing care and support services acknowledges that digital ways of working, learning and information sharing are, or will become, the default way of providing a blended quality service and use their leadership positions to drive this change.

- Leaders have the confidence and competence to lead their workforce to embrace a digital way of working where appropriate.
- Leaders have the imagination and vision to explore new options and ways of working with employees and those who use their services and their carers.
- Leaders view learning and development of digital skills as part of the broad skills that employees need to develop to support people well and seek to support people to develop these.

Digital networking

Ideal Care Homes use technology as a support for their experiential face-to-face training. The technology enables innovative approaches to informal workforce development and peer-to-peer learning.

The company provides every member of staff with an iPhone, and uses it to communicate about all aspects of people’s work, from everyday recording of staff hours, rotas and holiday entitlement, to the sharing of good practice.

“It’s about the balance between face-to-face and online methods for encouraging staff learning. We do believe induction has to be face-to-face. But then if, for example, someone in one care home has a really good idea about how we can practically improve the bathing experience, then we can use our video technology, distributed through our company iPhone system, to let everyone know about that.”

www.idealcarehomes.co.uk
Next steps

Digital working, learning and information sharing is rapidly evolving and becoming more integrated into the way in which people are supported. The coming years will see digital solutions to people's care and support becoming an everyday part of adult social care.

This strategy outlines the context and workforce principles for digital working, learning and information sharing in adult social care. It recognises that co-produced ways of digital working, learning and information sharing are vital and that digital products and services meet the needs of their user's integrated care and support should include integrated ways of working.

To take the strategy forward five actions are proposed by Skills for Care, working in partnership with other bodies where appropriate. These are:

- Throughout all of Skills for Care’s varying resources, the six workforce principles of implementing digital working, learning and information sharing will be incorporated and promoted as the core of how social care employers should be view and equip their staff to work in a digitally skilled way.

- 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, giving employers real examples of where technology has worked to improve a service.

- The current culture, leadership and management issues that enable or disable digital change will be examined via research and discussion with the sector.

- A guide to overcoming some of the above barriers identified will be developed and published.

- The notion and formation of a ‘digital roadmap’ for the independent sector will be explored, using the above work, helping them to identify their current position, potential challenges and where they may find supporting resource to overcome these.

Specific guidance and resources will be developed to assist social care employers identify and address data protection and information governance issues.

The knowledge, enthusiasm and innovative approach of everyone contributing to this strategy has been exceptional. The strategy, its principles and actions build on the platform of existing digital innovation in adult social care and reflect a desire to deliver excellent support for all.

Skills for Care acknowledges the help and guidance given in the development of this strategy, particularly from Centre of Excellence in Information Sharing, Information Governance Alliance and Lasa.