Digital and technology

This section outlines how St Monica Trust embedded digital tools to support its apprenticeship programme, focusing on inclusive access, user-led design and technology-enabled working.

Digital systems were adapted to streamline recruitment and onboarding, with mobile-friendly applications, tailored eligibility screening and real-time tracking of where applicants were in the process.

Staff helped select and test systems to ensure tools were intuitive and suited to frontline roles. Apprentices were supported through flexible e-learning and regular supervision, with feedback on colleague interactions shared instantly with managers and used in reviews.

Communication was adapted for younger apprentices, shifting to mobile-first platforms including WhatsApp to improve engagement and reduce digital overload.

This section is split into the following topics:

- strategic use of digital systems for recruitment and onboarding
- infrastructure investment and accessibility for a modern workforce
- building technology around user needs
- technology-driven efficiencies
- tailored learning and performance management through technology
- communication and engagement: meeting people where they are
- digital inclusion and intergenerational support
- key decisions and key learning.

Strategic use of digital systems for recruitment and onboarding

- **Adapting corporate systems** – The Trust used Workday, originally designed for HR and payroll, and adapted it for apprenticeships to meet the needs of younger applicants and those facing employment barriers.
- **Eligibility screening and data tracking** – Custom eligibility questions were added to screen candidates effectively. Real-time application tracking enabled managers to monitor volumes, conversion rates and reasons for unsuccessful applications, which informed recruitment improvements.
- **Accessible application formats** – Traditional methods like lengthy forms and formal CVs were replaced with mobile-friendly, simplified formats to engage younger audiences and reduce barriers to entry.

Infrastructure investment and accessibility for a modern workforce

- **Creating an enabling ecosystem** – Investments focused on building a flexible, inclusive and modern environment to help staff and apprentices thrive, positioning infrastructure as a strategic enabler for workforce development and retention.
- **Enhanced connectivity and collaboration tools** – Improvements included extending Wi-Fi coverage and adopting Microsoft 365 for flexible working, shared document access and effective communication – especially valuable for apprentices with limited tech access.
- **Supporting digital inclusion** – Apprentices were provided with laptops, tablets and training. In some cases, local authority funding (e.g., Bristol City Council) helped supply devices to care leavers.

Building technology around user needs

> "We've learned that systems only succeed when they're shaped by the people who use them."
>
> **Max Gilbert,** IT Director, St Monica Trust

- **Rooted in collaboration and practical relevance** – The Trust avoids top-down tech adoption, involving staff from all departments when selecting systems. Hands-on demos and structured evaluation criteria ensure decisions reflect real-world needs and diverse perspectives.
- **Prioritising intuitive, mobile-friendly tools** – Tools are chosen for ease of use, especially for apprentices and care workers who are not desk-based. Recent investments include care planning software that reduces admin burden and supports neurodiverse or dyslexic staff with features like word-for-word input and simplified note capture.
- **Embedding innovation in culture** – St Monica Trust's Centre of Innovation works in partnership with staff, residents, and external experts to co-design new models of care, test and embed useful technologies across its villages and care homes. This includes fostering a 'community of innovators', hosting collaborative forums, and developing evidence-based approaches that make digital transformation part of everyday practice.
- **Actively seeking staff feedback** – Regular colleague forums and 'explore' meetings allow senior leaders to hear directly from employees, including apprentices, surfacing issues early and keeping solutions responsive to real needs.
- **Creating a supportive technology landscape** – Users contribute into decision-making, and this ensures that systems feel enabling rather than burdensome.
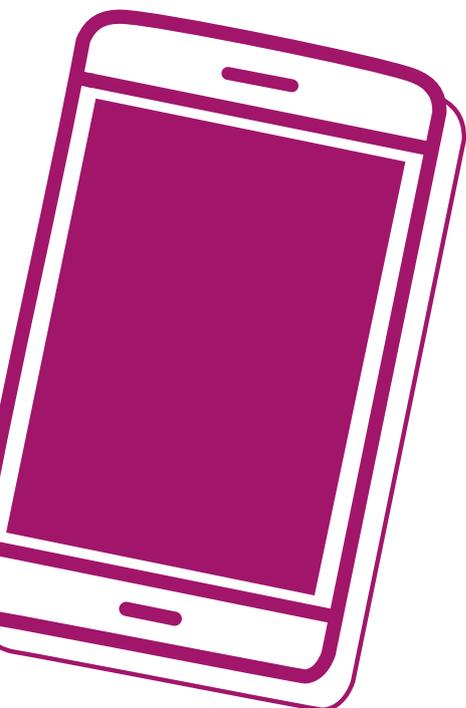
Technology-driven efficiencies

- **Focusing on practical impact** – The Trust uses technology to streamline processes that directly affect workforce productivity and resident care, rather than adopting tech for its own sake.
- **Automating reporting** – Workday's automated reporting replaces manual data manipulation with scheduled, accurate reports. This reduces administrative burden and frees managers to focus on staff development and service delivery.
- **Simplifying routine tasks** – Mobile-enabled systems make clocking in/out, managing rotas, and accessing performance reviews easier, eliminating the need for physical terminals and reducing delays during shift changes.
- **Improving communication** – Messaging features within care platforms replace inefficient email chains, ensuring timely updates without added complexity.
- **Creating an agile environment** – By aligning technology with operational needs, the Trust saves time, improves staff experience and supports retention – offering a model for other providers to reduce friction and enhance workflows.

Tailored learning and performance management through technology

> **"We've designed our eLearning to be engaging, especially for younger apprentices. Bite-sized modules, visual content, and the ability to learn at your own pace have made a real difference in how people interact with training."**
>
> **Lucy Kirikmaa,** Learning Management System Lead, St Monica Trust

- **Using digital tools to support diverse needs** – The Trust's learning management system (Learn) delivers mandatory and optional training in accessible, engaging and flexible formats.
- **Blended learning approach** – This combines internally-developed content –such as videos from senior leaders, policy guidance and quizzes – with off-the-shelf modules for compliance. Content is available in over 170 languages, to support staff with English as an additional language.
- **Designing for flexibility** – E-learning is bite-sized and self-paced, allowing learners to pause and resume modules. This supports apprentices who may struggle with concentration or have had disrupted educational experiences.
- **Celebrating success and tracking progress** – Managers use dashboards to monitor completion rates and overdue modules, enabling recognition and timely support. Positive reinforcement motivates apprentices and builds confidence.

- **Embedding real-time feedback and recognition** – Staff can submit feedback after positive interactions, triggering notifications to line managers. Digital badges and appreciation notes are integrated into reviews, reinforcing positive behaviours and fostering a culture of appreciation.
- **Creating an empowering system** – By tailoring learning and performance tools to workforce needs, the Trust ensures technology is not just functional but empowering and strengthening morale and engagement.

> "Some apprentices have tried to pass a module three times, and when they finally do, they're over the moon. Celebrating those small wins really motivates people and helps build their confidence."
>
> **Clare Reeve,** Training and Development Manager, St Monica Trust

Communication and engagement: meeting people where they are

- **Understanding preferences** – The Trust recognises that effective communication depends on how different groups prefer to engage. Younger apprentices favour instant messaging and mobile-first platforms over email or phone calls.
- **Using accessible tools** – Tools including WhatsApp and voice notes are used to reach apprentices more effectively, leading to higher engagement during onboarding and training.
- **Respecting comfort levels** – Guidance was developed for virtual meetings 'as some younger staff were reluctant to turn cameras on, helping to ensure they participated, while respecting individual preferences.
- **Reducing digital clutter** – Instead of assigning unused email accounts, the Trust explores role-specific solutions like in-app messaging within care platforms, ensuring staff only receive tools they need.
- **Gathering feedback and data** – Decisions on technology are informed by usage analytics, workshops and employee voice sessions with senior leaders, ensuring systems enable staff rather than overwhelm them.
- **Promoting two-way communication** – Staff are encouraged to share feedback and ideas, creating an inclusive approach where digital tools support real-world needs and foster connection across the organisation.

Digital inclusion and intergenerational support

> "We've invested significantly in technology. It's all about enabling a better colleague experience. For example, external Wi-Fi means staff can work outside on a sunny day if they want to."
>
> **Max Gilbert,** IT Director, St Monica Trust

- **Building connections through digital skills** – Younger apprentices bring strong tech confidence and naturally support older colleagues and residents, creating meaningful intergenerational relationships and a more digitally literate organisation.
- **Supporting residents with everyday digital tasks** – Apprentices help residents with email, video calls and online safety. These interactions provide practical assistance and social engagement, enhancing wellbeing and trust.
- **Helping staff adopt new systems** – Apprentices assist some older colleagues with eLearning platforms and digital processes, bridging generational gaps and fostering collaboration.
- **Accelerating digital adoption** – The presence of digitally confident apprentices has sped up technology uptake across the organisation, reducing feelings of exclusion and overwhelm among staff.

> "We're actually on a bit of a journey in terms of investing in new tools… looking at how do we automate a lot of the work within care… so that staff can focus on the human connection."
>
> **Paul Tisdale,** Director of Innovation, St Monica Trust

Key decisions

Here is a summary of the key decisions that made a difference on the Trust's digital journey:

- Adapted the Workday system to include apprenticeship-specific eligibility questions, enabling real-time tracking and data-driven recruitment decisions tailored to younger applicants.
- Invested in infrastructure such as outdoor Wi-Fi and mobile-accessible systems to support flexible working and improve digital access for apprentices and frontline staff.
- Involved staff from across departments in hands-on demonstrations and scoring new systems, ensuring technology choices are user-led and practically suited to daily roles.
- Replaced manual reporting with automated scheduling in Workday, reducing administrative burden and allowing managers to focus more on staff development and resident care.
- Shifted communication tools from email to mobile-first platforms including WhatsApp, improving engagement with younger apprentices in line with how they prefer to communicate.

Key learning

"At St Monica Trust, we've learned that innovation isn't about rushing to adopt the latest technology – it's about understanding what people need and why. Sometimes, the most effective solution is a simple tweak to an existing process, not a new system. By focusing on outcomes and involving people in the journey, we've built digital approaches that truly work for our organisation."

Elizabeth O'Driscoll, Trustee, St Monica Trust

St Monica Trust's experience shows that successful digital transformation depends on inclusive planning, practical collaboration and empathy for real-world needs.

- **Engage staff early** – Rather than imposing systems, involve teams across departments to test and shape technology around frontline realities.
- **Adapt platforms for purpose** – Data and continuous feedback helped to shape apprenticeship-specific features in systems including Workday.
- **Invest in equitable infrastructure** – Design solutions that address digital inequality and work in care environments, not just office settings.
- **Tailor learning for diversity** – Use bite-sized, multilingual content and flexible pacing to meet varied educational backgrounds.
- **Communicate in ways that connect** – Embrace generational preferences –WhatsApp and voice notes boosted engagement far more than traditional channels.
- **Leverage intergenerational strengths** – Apprentices supported digital inclusion by helping colleagues and residents navigate technology, building confidence and cohesion.
- **Keep planning user-led** – Digital strategies must be empathetic and grounded in the lived experience of those delivering care.

Recommendations

Access a checklist of practical recommendations inspired by St Monica Trust's approach via Skills for Care's website.