

Transforming social care through the use of information and technology

Executive summary

Introduction

The imperative for local care services to transform has never been greater. There is rising citizen demand, rising need and rising expectations alongside continued and sustained pressure on resources.

Councils are facing growing numbers of older people, often with increasingly complex needs requiring care and support, and there are significant and sustained reductions in funding. These challenges are no less pressing for services for children and families where increasing demands on services are being felt across the country.

In response to these pressures, and to deliver better outcomes, many councils are transforming the way services are delivered and information and technology is already playing an enabling role in that transformation. The opportunities are significant and the innovation and commitment to

change in many local areas is making a real difference to people's lives.

The Local Government Association's (LGA) Care and Health Improvement Programme commissioned the Institute of Public Care at Oxford Brookes University to help explore current innovations and to set out a future vision for care that is enabled by the use of information and technology. The full report can be downloaded from the [LGA website](#) and is structured around five key themes. Findings were informed by a [digital maturity self-assessment](#) that LGA carried out with councils in early 2016.

This executive summary is for local leaders, both officers and elected members, to enable you to consider the role that information and technology can play in improving outcomes for adults, children and families in your local area.

Current innovations

Integrating services and information for children, families and adults



There is already a strong national and local commitment to integrating services to improve the way that care is delivered for individuals.

Integration of systems both within and across organisations can in part help support such integration.

To deliver personalised care, information needs to be joined-up around an individual, so that the professionals involved in the care of that person can see relevant information from the 'whole' person's record not just the aspects relating to their particular organisation. A lack of information sharing is one of the frustrations to those delivering care to individuals.

A single view of an individual is essential and many local areas are sharing critical information to support integrated ways of working through a shared care record. This means that interventions are better coordinated and citizens need only tell their story once. Leeds is one example where, through the Leeds Care Record, local organisations are sharing the health and care information that they hold about an individual to those providing care. It is providing critical information at the point of care, saving time and helping deliver better outcomes. Similarly, Cumbria has implemented electronic referrals to support effective transfers of care: an approach that has delivered annual efficiency savings of £400,000 to date.

Enabling people to interact with care services through digital channels



Councils are adopting new ways of providing information and advice to people to assist them in making choices about their care. This includes connecting people with community-based services through digital channels.

A number of local areas are working with citizens to develop online self-assessment and self-service solutions that support people to transact online for goods and services whilst at the same time reducing back office costs. Harrow is one example where the council has developed an approach called 'community e-purchase' that is enabling citizens to choose their services through an online e-marketplace. Harrow has delivered £4 million savings so far through reduced back office and purchasing costs.

Looking to the future, we also expect to see organisations offering citizens greater access to their own information and being able to grant relevant access to those providing a caring role. Councils and their partners are already exploring care diaries – enabling citizens or their carers to manage appointments across multiple organisations. Such approaches can help people feel more in control of their own care, provides more accurate and up-to-date information, and shifts ownership and control from organisations to individuals.

Promoting independence and wellbeing through the use of digital services and technology



For both services for adults and for children and families, there is a shift towards preventative approaches to care. In adult social care, technology can help to enable this and can also help to drive down costs by, for instance, reducing the need for home care or helping to monitor and limit instances of carer burnout. For children and young people, such technology can help to provide reassurance and reduce absence from school. Importantly for both children and adults it can also help reduce feelings of social isolation and loneliness.

Traditionally, councils have commissioned or provided telecare equipment supported by services that respond to personal alarms and alerts. This method of service delivery is changing with a greater emphasis on how technology can support people through proactive alert monitoring rather than reactive response calls. Such initiatives can reduce the requirement to provide 'sleep-in' support to people in supported accommodation, affording the individual an increased sense of independence as well as reassurance for family members and other carers via wellbeing electronic notices. Hampshire is one example where the use of assistive technology has made net savings of £1.9 million in 2015/16 and has received positive feedback from citizens and carers using services.

Integrating commissioning through the improved use of information and analysis



Commissioners need to understand the complex journeys that citizens take as they access health and care services. It is not enough to just to look at what services have been used, commissioners need to predict patterns of activity and the cost of future service use.

To support this a number of local areas are using linked (but anonymised) health and care information at client level, which is helping them to understand how citizens access services. This information is being used to support enhanced joint strategic needs assessment activity and to take a more proactive and predictive approach to the commissioning of services. Areas such as Kent and Leicestershire, Leicester City and Rutland councils are already using anonymised, person level information to support the commissioning of prevention and early intervention services as well as broader health and wellbeing objectives.

These localities are using such information to take forward integrated and strategic planning, support delivery of the Better Care Fund, and assist with broader sustainability and transformation plans by better understanding activity and costs across all aspects of health and social care.

Enabling care professionals to work from any base at any time



Councils and their partners are working to enable new ways of working for multi-disciplinary or multi-agency teams. Technology can enable care professionals to work seamlessly from multiple bases or locations without the need for multiple logins, multiple devices or separate networks across health and social care.

Simple collaboration tools such as shared email directories, calendars, service directories or

instant messaging platforms also allow professionals to interact securely with other care professionals when needed. Areas such as Leeds, Kent and London are developing new approaches that enable free movement across sectors and geographies in a way that is secure.

Providing frontline staff with mobile remote working solutions, encompassing appropriate software and client information, should allow professionals to spend more time with their clients, speed up data capture and decision-making processes, and reduce transcribing errors.

Key enablers

Strategy and leadership engagement:

Leaders from across the social care system have a crucial role to play. The importance of elected members and senior executives in leading the transformation of social care through information and technology cannot be overstated. Leaders can use their influence to ensure the development and delivery of successful, coordinated digital solutions across the local and regional health and care landscape.

Collaboration with citizens and professionals:

Collaboration with citizens and care professionals is also crucial. Client and / or practitioner-facing technology solutions will only be truly effective when they are designed, built and implemented with the input of those who are going to use them.

What does this mean for you?

As system wide health and care leaders we would encourage you to do four things:

1. Use the [10 key questions](#) provided in the full report to consider how you are using information and technology locally to transform the delivery of care.
2. Use the [digital maturity self-assessment](#) to help you understand your priorities and learn from others.
3. Consider whether your [Local Digital Roadmap](#) – which should have been shared through the health and wellbeing board – represents your ambitions for the commissioning and delivery of care in your local area.
4. Tell us what you are doing locally so that we can support the sharing and adoption of good practice across the sector.



Local Government Association

Local Government House
Smith Square
London
SW1P 3HZ

Telephone 020 7664 3000
Email info@local.gov.uk
Web www.local.gov.uk

© Local Government Association, January 2017

For a copy in Braille, larger print or audio,
please contact us on 020 7664 3000.
We consider requests on an individual basis.