



Social Care Data and Cyber Security Programme Case Study

The Caring Hands

Giving families secure access to support plans and daily notes as part of a comprehensive care planning system

As we use more technology in care services, both to support care delivery and to improve digital connectivity with partner organisations, it is vital that people's information is kept secure, and that the systems we use are reliable. As part of the National Cyber Security Programme, the Local Government Association, Care Provider Alliance and Department of Health and Social Care commissioned the Institute of Public Care (IPC) at Oxford Brookes University to undertake a research programme to support the adult social care provider sector to manage the business risks associated with data and cyber security.

The research took place from October 2018 until March 2019 in three local authority areas: North Yorkshire, Central Bedfordshire and the Royal Borough of Greenwich. A representative sample of seventy care providers operating in these areas took part, including The Caring Hands, which is an owner-managed local, homecare agency providing tailor-made care to clients aged 18-64 and 65 plus, in and around the Flitwick area of Central Bedfordshire.

The company provides a range of personal services to people who prefer to live in their own homes, but who need short-term recovery assistance or longer term care for the best possible quality of life. This might include daily or weekly services to assist with medical or non-medical care, such as visits from registered nurses or physical therapists, or routine personal care and transport to medical appointments, or meal planning. The service is available both to privately-funded and local authority funded clients. Support plans are varied and personalised and The Caring Hands handles diverse personal and sensitive, medical and non-medical data regarding its clients, that needs to be secure, but readily-accessible.

The Caring Hands works with a very small team of local, experienced, professional carers who use their personal mobile phones to communicate as part of their work. In the past, care records have been paper based, but on 1 February 2019, the organisation updated its systems with an accessible, mobile app-based platform, which provides a central point for all client information and covers the whole cycle of care for an individual.

The system The Caring Hands uses is called PASSsystem, a digital care management platform that ensures data remains appropriately secure and confidential at all times, whilst being part of a comprehensive information sharing and care planning system. The system stores support plans and reviews, task changes and Electronic Medication Administration Records (eMARs), for example. Carers log in and out of the system using a bar code in their client's home and an app on their mobile phone. This gives an accurate record of visit timings and access to relevant information. Information can be updated in real-time during the visit, which means records are accurate and consistently up-to-date. Documents needing to be signed off by the client, such as care and support plans, can be viewed on a tablet and signed with an electronic signature by the client.

Family members who download the PASSsystem app can also view the daily log using the barcode in the client's home, or view the information online for an additional charge. Access to this wealth of information gives family members a thorough understanding of the care provided and reassurance that care is of a consistently good quality. In addition, appropriate professionals with the PASSsystem app, such as paramedics or district nurses can similarly access the details by scanning the barcode at the client's home. This means all professionals have the latest information at their fingertips, and the ability to update records.

Commented Owner and Manager of The Caring Hands, Jessica Eastley, *"The new digital system is a more efficient method of recording information about our clients' well-being and support. It reduces administration time and allows staff to focus on our clients. PASSsystem gives us a more secure method of information sharing and helps us deliver excellent person-centred care – along with peace-of-mind for all."*

The PASSsystem provides digital templates for care that comply with Care Quality Commission (CQC) standards, but the system also allows care providers to develop their own bespoke digital templates within the system. This allows for the diverse needs of different commissioning bodies and the specific details needed in individual settings.



Key benefits and outcomes

- **Real-time updating** by all professionals means support records and eMAR are always up-to-date
- **Consistently up-to-date care records** help negate issues and manage risks
- **Readily-accessible information** for all professionals, clients and family ensures a joined up approach

- **Security built in** compared to a paper-based system, which gives issues when transporting and storing information
- **Time efficiencies** in data recording and viewing means there is increased focus on the client
- **Quality of care** further increases as the time spent on updating and accessing information decreases
- **Paper reduction** is better for the environment

Overview of investment

- **Costs of providing the system** were £1,100 up front and £390 per month ongoing
- **Time and resource** to upload existing information and sign off changes to care in new templates, although new clients move directly to an electronic plan
- **Development of bespoke online forms** needs time and input as those in the PASSsystem were insufficiently detailed for The Caring Hands needs
- **Staff training to create a change of culture**, a bedding-in period is needed to allow staff to familiarise and become comfortable using the system

The ongoing journey

The Caring Hands has recently invested time in creating a Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) policy which sets out the policies relating to use of personal devices in the care setting and for example, the importance of using PIN or password protection for mobile phones.

The Caring Hands has also moved to using a workforce scheduling software called Webroster, to handle all the staff rotas. This smartphone app was developed specifically to support care businesses and gives field-based staff secure, on-the-go access to information about bookings, visits and clients.

The company is also looking at the robustness of its IT generally in relation to good anti-virus practice, electronic data storage and destruction of data policy and cyber security. Given the changing nature of data security, The Caring Hands' review of systems and good practice remains ongoing.