The role of technology in addressing health and care needs

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Healthcare inequalities programme

CORE20 PLUS 5

Vision

Exceptional quality healthcare for ***all***, through equitable access, excellent experience and optimal outcomes

Policy context

NHS England

Change	Implication
The pandemic necessitated wider adoption of care at home	Urgent and Emergency Care Plan highlights the opportunity of new and existing technologies to enable people to access care in different ways – as in the Urgent
The Health and Care Act 2022 introduced new duties on health inequalities	Necessity of join up between system leaders working to tackle health inequalities, particularly on issues of access
Integrated care systems have been on a statutory footing since July 2022 with requirements to publish a strategy	Integrated care strategy presents an opportunity to consider ways of better joining-up health, social care and wider services e.g. housing

A new framework for action on digital inclusion

We want to support ongoing learning and action across the health system to a) maximise the contribution of digital solutions to reducing health inequalities and b) mitigate risks that they exacerbate them

The framework will:

- Set the vision for digital inclusion in health, reflecting on both opportunities and risks as the system undergoes major digital transformation

- Identify areas for practical action now at all levels of the NHS, including in partnership with others e.g. in local authorities

- Provide a plan for further strategic work by NHS England to support the wider health system on specific issues, focusing on areas which would not otherwise be addressed

Seizing opportunities and mitigating risks of digital health

Inclusive services that adopt digital health approaches….

At their best ✓	**Support more sophisticated population health management and targeting of capacity where its needed most to help reduce health inequalities**			
	Ease access	Empower people to report characteristics	Enable personalisation, responsiveness and **self-care**	Are multi-modal, e.g. supporting **remote care and monitoring** as well as face-to-face help
At their worst ✗	Exclude people	Conceal needs in key groups	Constrain interactions and are inflexible	Are 'single-mode'
	Risk overlooking needs, poorer quality support, late intervention, inappropriate diversion to urgent and emergency care and exacerbation of health inequalities			

Core domains for action

NHS England, ICBs and Trusts have a role to play in all domains so that digital offers complement other channels or modes, including telephone and face-to-face help
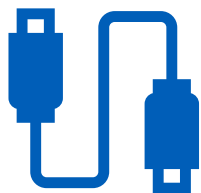
Access to devices and data

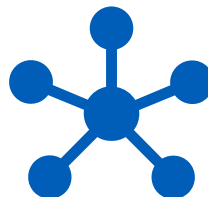Accessibility and ease of using technology

Skills and capability

Beliefs and trust

Among the public and staff

Supported by:

Co-ordination, collaboration and communication

Insights from recent research

Increasing motivation to use digital health and social care services: a behavioural science perspective

For both members of the public and staff the main factors influencing motivation to use digital channels for health and social care were:

Perceived effectiveness: how digital can deliver the expected service (and outcomes) quickly and efficiently.

Feeling understood: how digital can enable people to communicate their needs and to feel heard.

Providing control: how digital can give people more control over the support they access through the NHS and social care system.

Confidence: beliefs in personal capabilities to access and use digital channels to meet health and social care needs.

https://www.basisresearch.com/nhs-england-digital-inclusion

Opportunities for change

The research identified the following opportunities to improve digital inclusion among people who have access and some digital skills, but lack trust or motivation.

Presenting digital services as something that's used by 'people like me' - using trusted voices and peer-to-peer sharing

Using 'lower-risk', transactional services (such as ordering a repeat prescription) to get people to use digital for the first time, building familiarity and starting to establish habits

Making digital services transparent and easy to understand, giving people a clear indication of what they can expect

Increasing, opportunities for people to try digital services and learn how to use them

Continuing to highlight alternative service options if needed

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