Housing Learning & Improvement Network

Care Services Improvement Partnership **CSIP**

Health and Social Care
Change Agent Team

More than just a Home: Changing Expectations

"If I didn't have telecare in my home, I just don't know how I'd manage." Rose, aged 79

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Introduction

The housing we live in has a significant impact on the way we lead our lives and on our functional well-being. It can influence the way we are able to perform everyday tasks at home, and the extent to which we are able to utilise private and public space. For example, our access to and orientation within the home, the way we use domestic facilities for everyday tasks and how we participate physically and/or virtually (through the internet) in the community we live in. For many of us, whatever our age, these are choices we take for granted.

Responding to changing needs

There is growing recognition that one's home is able to provide the setting for the delivery of formal or informal care and support, ensuring that we can maintain independence into old age, whether because of disability or impairment, or a change of personal circumstance due to poor health. Furthermore, the UK has an ageing population - older people are living longer and experiencing healthier lives. This requires policy makers and those involved in the supply change, such as architects, planners, developers, system designers and housing service providers, to reconsider the way we meet older people's range of housing and care needs. It also requires us to determine how we should design our housing and the related building and service infrastructure to meet future needs and the changing expectations of an ageing society.

Taking a person-centred approach

Telecare provides a real opportunity to meet the individual needs and aspirations of an ageing society. Whether purchased "off the shelf" to aid self-care or overcome concerns of safety and security in the home or provided as a result of a formal assessment of care, services that are supported by a telecare package can provide reassurance and the knowledge that help is on hand in the event of an emergency. For example, responding to

or anticipating a crisis intervention at night because of a fall at home, supporting people with dementia with their reminding then of activities of daily living thereby sustaining their tenancies, or the remote monitoring of someone's health status in order to prevent a move to hospital.

All of the above can be accommodated by the installation of the appropriate "smart" sensors and tele-communication equipment in the home provided there is a 24hour, 7 days a week, on-call response service. However, a telecare service is not the equipment alone; it requires a networked response. We therefore need to see our accommodation and supporting infrastructure in a new light; it is *more than just a home*!

Influencing design
The accommodation we live in, personal income levels employment and health status will all shape our housing choices, the extent to which are able to manage our immediate environment, access services and lead fulfilling lives at home or in the wider community. The headings below set out a housing framework for implementing telecare.

A bricks and mortar approach
The physical design of existing and new housing will determine the extent to which we are able to telecare "enable" our current housing stock to support a diverse ageing population. In pure housing terms, this requires us to look afresh at both the build quality of existing stock, the design standards of new homes and related management issues to "future proof" housing for telecare across all tenures. It also requires a better understanding of the health and social care dividend to current and future occupiers. To achieve this at a local level telecare needs to be outcome focussed. For example, it needs to be firmly rooted in:

Description	Outcome
Local housing strategies and stock condition audits	- To meet Decent Homes standards by 2010
Local older people's service plans to improve quality of life	- Reducing health inequalities as part of Supporting People and the National Service Frameworks. - Meeting the priorities set out in the Department of Health's Green Paper, the New Vision for Adult Social Care
Building regulations and design standards on new build housing	- Improved accessibility and liveability in accordance with building regulations and design standards i.e. Part M and Lifetime Homes Standards
Private sector housing renewal and regeneration planning frameworks	- Better integration of housing, health and social care services and wider socio-economic influences

Getting the service infrastructure right

The recent English House Conditions Survey revealed that many older people live in the poorest quality housing, are still lacking basic amenities and experience higher rates of ill health than the general population. We need therefore need to take a fresh look at how we can better support people in their home environment whatever their level of independence, interdependence and dependency. This will not only involve telecare services but a network of housing, care and support solutions. For example, by taking forward the "twin-track" objectives of:

    (i)   enhancing the delivery of personal care and support, whether assessed or self-determined, and

    (ii)   improving stock conditions by way of accessing equipment, undertaking adaptations, renovations or repairs.

Making the right connections

Telecare can meet both of the above objectives. It therefore needs to be part of an integrated solution with housing and other stakeholders to meet the changing needs and lifestyles of an ageing population.

The Department of Health's Telecare Prevention Grant funding from 2006 will provide a much-needed impetus to stimulate the market and take telecare forward into the 21st century. However, housing commissioners and providers need to ensure that they can play an effective role in shaping local service provision. Department of Health funding will be allocated to social services and therefore housing needs to be smarter in the way it can demonstrate its strategic fit and ways in which telecare prevents a move up the care ladder. The evidence base is beginning to grow!

Just as the use of the internet has grown rapidly over the last 10 years, the deployment of telecare in the early part of the 21st century will increasingly be one of the ways we can deliver better personal outcomes for people at home. Housing a key role to play.

This paper represents the views of the author and is not necessarily the view of the Department of Health

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