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Technology Enabled Care Services (TECS) trends you will see accelerate in 2021

Including insights from over 120 supported housing professionals via research undertaken in partnership with Housing LIN.

Housing LIN

Intro

6 TECS trends you will see accelerate in 2021

This guide is the third in a series from Appello highlighting the changing landscape for the delivery of Technology Enabled Care Services (TECS).

Interviews and independent research undertaken with the Housing Learning and Improvement Network (LIN) of 120 senior executives from providers of supported, sheltered and retirement housing has influenced the series of guides.

As 2020 nears an end, businesses and individuals will be looking towards a brighter new year. For many housing providers, their plans for the last 12 months will have been significantly disrupted. For those involved in the delivery of supported housing, there will have been many challenges in the constant strive towards creating a better living experience for their customers.

As the digital telecoms environment is now upon us, the events of the last year have meant that those organisations that have been slow to act on upgrading their digital Technology Enabled Care Services (TECS), must now accelerate their digital transformation plans.

The first half of this decade was always going to be a time of significant change, progress, and transformation. Looking positively, the learnings from COVID-19 will provide greater insight into where investment will need to be prioritised, and what innovations will make the greatest advancements.

With much anticipation for 2021, we have drawn on our market leading experience to identify 6 significant trends for TECS in the year ahead.

Results: Survey findings on housing providers priorities for technology post COVID-19 (Ranked in vote order)

1	Enabling staff to work from home, whilst maintaining visibility of property and customers
2	Supporting residents to maintain their social networks
3	Reducing residents' risk of infection
4	Enabling staff to remotely communicate with residents
5	Monitoring physical and/or emotional wellbeing of residents
6	Enabling residents to communicate with carers, family and/or friends remotely
7	Enabling visual communication through video between staff and residents
8	Enabling residents to communicate with healthcare professionals remotely
9	Supporting residents to sustain socially distancing
10	Enabling residents to communicate with each other through technology
11	Enabling residents to communicate with housing professionals remotely
12	Monitoring vital health signs of residents
13	Supporting residents in obtaining and managing prescriptions
14	Enabling inspections and maintenance of site assets to be undertaken remotely

01

Digital crowned champion

The obvious starting point is digital, which has been at the forefront of the sector for a few years now. There is no looking back for most, however not everyone is on their digital journey

Digital or internet enabled services have improved almost every aspect of our lives, and Technology Enabled Care Services (TECS) is no different. Digital means faster, safer and more reliable TECS than previous analogue systems.

Adoption will be driven by the ongoing digitalisation of the telecoms networks, but focus on disruption alone is to ignore the huge benefits of digital in delivering supported living solutions customers deserve and expect.

In the early days, we talked about how digital provided better two-way communication, faster call connection times to monitoring centres and the capacity for multiple simultaneous calls from developments. And these advantages remain true and important. But housing providers are now starting to realise a new world of possibilities that transform lives and improve the delivery of services.

Enabling housing staff to work from home, whilst maintaining visibility of property and customers

Even outside of COVID-19, maintaining staff presence onsite all of the time is unrealistic. Especially when staff might oversee a number of properties. In a situation like COVID-19 when housing staff must work remotely, digital services enables them to continue to support residents and monitor activity within developments.

Enabling staff to remotely communicate with residents

Video calling has improved communication within a property, and delivered greater safety for residents through video door entry. The use of video has proven to be a vital tool for housing providers managing the

transition to less physical visits due to the pandemic. They've been able to ensure that residents receive social interaction while reducing residents' risk of infection through face to face interaction.

Supporting residents to maintain their social networks

Video also enables people who are less mobile to see people that they might not otherwise see in person. With mobility presenting a large barrier to socialising for many older people, video offers the best next alternative.

With more older people utilising video to stay connected to family and friends during COVID-19, this expanded tech literacy will drive adoption of technology well after lockdown lifts.

Providing deeper insight into customer requirements, enabling more personalised support

Digital platforms provide the ability for richer integration of devices and services that can be personalised. Deployment of apps promoting lifestyle, alert reminders or messaging services can easily be integrated with the data delivered via dashboards to provide a holistic view of an individual. Service innovation like these can help support a superior customer experience and stronger analysis of a customer's current and future needs.

02

Smart homes will build from digital foundations

From connected personal devices to sensors in the home, the Internet of Things (IoT) has long promised to revolutionise our lives and help older people to live independently for as long as possible.

The widespread adoption of digital TECS lays the path for housing providers to start integrating a host of exciting technology, that ensures older people will be much better placed to manage their own environment, an important consideration during COVID-19.

Automation of the home is a mechanism that has the potential to expand the capabilities of remote working. The ability to open blinds remotely, or turn on lights can create efficiencies, but most importantly can improve the service for customers. As we head in to winter, the ability to monitor the temperature of a customer's home, and then even turn on the heating remotely could be lifesaving.

Furthermore, when shielding took place, the ability for staff to make changes in a property remotely, may not only of protected those providing the care, but also the vulnerable customers whose home they needed to visit.

03

Data will drive decision intelligence

A decade ago, the Internet of Things was a buzzword depicting a futuristic technology to most people. However, recent years have shown that this technology has arrived, and is here to stay.

The IoT has matured enough to have an impact on numerous areas of our lives. It is easy to think that IoT is referring to smart light bulbs, fridges, even robotics, and doesn't directly impact supported housing yet. That is no longer the case, TECS is now also a part of that IoT environment. Digital TECS, is founded on being connected to the internet, and leveraging those benefits.

This new environment is data rich. We have moved from having very little information about our TECS equipment, to having lots of data readily available. For housing organisations to excel it's not enough to simply collect information; it's highly important to analyse collected data and make appropriate data-based decisions.

In 2021, we will see a shift towards housing providers wanting greater access to data, presented in an easily digestible manner. Additionally, we will see organisations look to further understand how they can embed data into their processes, to create insights and make informed decisions that improve the lives of customers.

04 Collaboration will drive innovation

05 Cloud is a given

The common requirement amongst housing and care providers to transition to digital TECS creates the perfect opportunity for collaboration and knowledge sharing.

With the scope of technology expanding and resources in 2021 anticipated to be constrained, collaboration in the housing sector will become common. Where housing providers begin to identify synergy in their transformation projects, they will be presented with a huge opportunity for collaboration and knowledge sharing.

For each interested party in the housing sector to be outlaying the required resources into Artificial Intelligence, Home Automation, Digital Health, Virtual Reality projects is unrealistic, however collaborating with like-minded organisations can create the efficiencies to make some of these projects a reality.

We all have the shared goal of providing a better service to our residents, and we can and should pool our combined knowledge to innovate where possible. As an industry, in 2021 we will see a trend towards breaking down the barriers and the silos we currently operate in.

This will also continue to be the case amongst suppliers, as we strive for interoperability across all suppliers' solutions, open APIs to deliver improved use of data and less reliance on proprietary technology and eco systems.

Cloud hasn't been something that TECS had fully embraced until very recently. While having an on premise or hosted TECS solution in a pre-COVID world might have been common, we will see an acceleration to cloud-based platforms going into 2021. What's driving this adoption?

Remote access for housing providers

When COVID-19 hit, housing organisations were faced with the challenge of moving staff to home working. For those who had already adopted cloud-based solutions, this was challenging, but not impossible. Housing providers whose digital TECS systems were already accessible via a web browser, still had access to the TECS platforms. Therefore, they could continue to communicate with colleagues, residents and maintain operations.

For the TECS and monitoring providers, it was again challenging but not impossible, as monitoring staff who needed to self-isolate could carry on supporting residents at home, securely accessing the systems they need.

Scalable systems

COVID-19 has demonstrated the need for housing organisations to adapt to sudden change. Adopting cloud-based solutions allows them flexibility to scale technology to meet resident and staff needs.

Ensure a robust, secure service

Cloud should figure heavily in business resilience reports as it ensures less downtime and can help responses to service failures.

Beyond COVID-19, cloud-based platforms allow housing managers to remotely manage developments and to update resident information on the go, ensuring that a single best record is maintained for each connection so that if an emergency situation occurs the correct information is given to the emergency services.

06

Flexible payment models will gain traction

Conclusion

There is no denying that as we move into 2021, we are operating in a very challenging environment. There is a growing requirement to invest in TECS, however financial instability creates difficulties in large investment.

Innovation will have to go beyond technology and the means in which TECS is procured will have to be reconsidered. Software as a Service (SaaS) is a model that has been commonplace in other sectors for a long-time, and it's benefits are becoming increasingly applicable to TECS.

There will be a growing trend amongst housing providers who are determined to provide their customers with the technology and service they deserve, however find the initial capital investment a challenge. Procuring TECS through a subscription based delivery model will enable customers to embrace the latest technology.

During financial uncertainty this will support housing providers in budgeting as there is no requirement to factor in big technology refreshes, and it's also of overall benefit to customers as they receive safer systems, that are constantly maintained.

If there are available upgrades that could improve their quality of life, they will be the first to receive them.

As we look to 2021 and beyond, we are in an exciting period for technology and innovation in supported housing. We are in a position to transform the experience for those living and working in these housing and care environments.

When we refer back to the 14 technology priorities identified in our research and highlighted at the beginning of this report, we can see that these are all realistically achievable. The trends outlined in this report for 2021 and beyond will create the foundations for success and be contributing factors in enabling housing providers to achieve these priorities.

If you would like to discuss any of these trends, and take advantage of our extensive experience in TECS digital transformation please get in contact:

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Find out how Appello can support you with your digital telecare requirements.

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