

Managing the Transition to Digital Telecare: A Guide to Engaging Your Staff with the Technology





Digital telecare is fast becoming the industry standard, offering significant benefits over traditional telecare technology for both housing providers and the people you support. This guide looks at how you can engage your staff to generate excitement and buy-in as you make the switch to digital.

Harnessing the power of digital in supported housing

Digital solutions are transforming the way that Technology Enabled Care Services (TECS) are delivered. Housing providers are looking at how they can use this to offer better, more joined-up services that enable and support people in how they want to live their lives.

This has put digital telecare firmly on the agenda for many organisations.

The process of digital transformation is about more than just upgrading your infrastructure, however. Your staff have a crucial role to play and engaging them with this is vital for a smooth transition. It also ensures that both your teams and your customers see the benefits of the new digital telecare systems – and that you can realise the full potential of your investment.

In this guide, we look at how you can engage your staff with digital technology, covering:

- ✓ Why your staff need to be part of the drive to go digital
- ✓ The importance of engaging your staff early in the process
- ✓ Overcoming barriers to engagement
- ✓ What's in it for your staff? Generating their buy-in for digital tech
- ✓ Planning a programme to engage staff
- ✓ How to keep your staff engaging with digital telecare

Why your staff need to be part of the drive to go digital

The rollout of digital telecare involves all aspects of your organisation. Your staff are key stakeholders and therefore need to be considered throughout the project.

For those managing your properties, replacing the systems they are used to working with will have a significant impact on their day-to-day roles. They will also need to be able to assist your customers with these changes.

It's therefore necessary to proactively engage your staff with digital technology from the outset so you can:

- Raise awareness of how the technology can benefit both them and your customers
- Give them the necessary knowledge to support your customers
- Answer any queries and tackle any potential issues

Moving to digital telecare is an investment in time and budget. Involving your staff at all stages will help this go as smoothly as possible. It also ensures that you can get the most out of this investment, as your staff will be in a much better position to make full use of the technology.

The importance of engaging your staff early in the process

The [Digital Telecare Roadmap](#), part of the Scottish resource Technology Enabled Care in Housing, sets out five steps for implementing digital telecare within your organisation. 'Engage' is at step two, along with planning.

It's beneficial for your staff to engage and be a part of the project from this early stage for a number of reasons:

- Your staff are key end users, so it's vital to get their input as you research and plan a new digital system. What are their requirements and what challenges do they have with your current systems?
- Their experience and insight into your customers can also help shape the digital telecare solutions you offer.
- You can discover any potential barriers to your staff adopting the new technology, giving you more time to deal with this.

Including 'engagement' as a priority brings your staff on the digital transformation journey with you. This will help the project to progress smoothly from concept through to implementation, and establishes an open and transparent process.

Overcoming barriers to engagement

The drive for digital telecare generally comes from the top of your organisation. While your senior management can see the business case for investing in digital technology, your colleagues may have different views on this.

Introducing new technology is a big change for any organisation, whatever sector they operate in. Yet the success of new systems very much depends on the people who will be using them.

In its 2019 ['State of Care' report](#), the Care Quality Commission highlighted how the attitudes of staff can be a barrier to adopting new technology, including the “perceived complexity” of implementing systems and learning how to use these.

By understanding potential barriers to engagement, you can address these proactively. These could include:

- A lack of awareness of the new technology and the benefits of this
- A lack of confidence in learning new technology
- A lack of buy-in to introducing new technology

A lack of awareness and/or knowledge

Staff may not know how digital telecare differs from your existing telecare services. This makes it a lot harder to get excited about going digital. Providing information and education about what this actually means in practice is a fundamental factor in boosting engagement.

A lack of confidence

We're living in a digital age so it's easy to assume that your staff have a certain level of assurance with new technology. However, the pace of change can be disruptive. A recent study from [Microsoft, Goldsmiths, University of London and YouGov](#) found that 61% of staff were anxious about new technologies. Traditional telecare has remained largely unchanged within the supported housing sector over the years, so it's not surprising that some staff may feel unsure about the switch to digital. This can be overcome by letting your staff see how digital telecare works, giving them hands-on demos, and providing reassurance that they will receive full training and support.

A lack of buy-in

Staff may be suspicious about the promises of digital telecare, have concerns that it will mean less personal contact, or not see the relevance of undertaking such a large project to change the way they work. Being open about the reasons behind the move to digital, and what this will look like in practice, helps them to see the value of the new technology. For example, while there are many advantages to digital telecare, it's also important to highlight the necessity of making these changes: with our telecoms network switching from analogue to digital, you need to ensure the continuity of your telecare services. Explaining that this is a safety issue helps your staff to understand why this is being prioritised now.

Translating the tech-talk!

Technology often comes with its own language. Terms that are understood and used frequently within the industry can mean nothing to the lay-person. This jargon can be a huge barrier to engagement.

There are also a number of different terms used to describe telecare. You may see these being used interchangeably, which adds to any confusion!

Your staff may have heard of some, all, or none of the terminology. It's useful to consider how you refer to telecare within your organisation. For example, your telecare services may be known as warden call, community alarm, alarm calls, or an independently living system.

The language you use to talk about digital telecare is an important part of engaging your staff. Use plain English to demystify any jargon and ensure terms are used consistently.

- **Technology Enabled Care Services (TECS)**

An umbrella term, encompassing a range of health and care technologies that are designed to support individuals to live safely and independently. This includes telecare. These services can be delivered using different types of technology, but digital technology offers significant advantages and is fast becoming the industry standard.

- **Telecare**

A 24/7 monitoring service that activates an alarm in certain situations, which then alerts a monitoring call centre. Traditional telecare works over the analogue telecoms network. Equipment and devices used as part of telecare services includes personal alarms (which can be worn as a pendant or a bracelet), personal sensors (such as fall detectors or bed occupancy sensors), as well as environmental sensors (such as smoke detectors and door sensors). This is sometimes referred to as 'assistive technology'.

- **Digital telecare**

This refers to telecare services delivered using digital technology, both in the monitoring centres that receive the alarm calls and within the equipment and devices that are used to trigger the alarms. Digital solutions are compatible with the upgraded digital telecoms network and offer additional advantages, such as speed of connection, reliability, improved communication options, and the ability to integrate with other services.

For more help deciphering the language of digital telecare, take a look at our [Glossary of Telecare Terms](#).

What's in it for your staff? Generating their buy-in for digital technology

Getting your staff excited about the possibilities of a new digital telecare system is a fundamental element for creating engagement.

This [insight piece from Deloitte](#) recommends a "people first" approach for encouraging the adoption of new technology within an organisation. Finding what motivates your staff in their job and relating to that is a powerful way to get them on board, as is being transparent with them as "people want to understand the 'why' behind the action".

How will this technology make their jobs easier and improve life for their residents? What does it mean for your organisation in the future?

Take the time to understand their current challenges and their requirements, then demonstrate how your plans for a new digital telecare system can help them to do their job better.

*"We need to create a system where people and professionals use, trust and love technology so it becomes a key part of a preventative health and social care system."*¹

Alyson Scurfield, Chief Executive, TEC Services Association

1 <https://www.housinglin.org.uk/blogs/Why-we-all-need-to-tap-into-TAPPI>

Tapping into the benefits of digital telecare for your staff

Your staff may well be wondering what all the fuss is about digital. They want to know the tangible, positive differences this is going to make for them. To engage them with digital telecare, make sure that you highlight:

How digital telecare will help your staff in in their day-to-day jobs

There are a number of features within a good digital telecare system that will make tasks easier and more efficient for your staff. For example, issues can be picked up quickly with alerts for things like device downtime or low battery levels, and faults can often be dealt with remotely. It is straightforward to add new users to the system, and they are able to access the systems off-site, giving them the flexibility to manage multiple properties.

How digital telecare will help them to support their residents

Digital technology provides a much faster call connection speed to access support and an "I'm OK" facility, which can help staff to prioritise who needs their help. Video calling improves communication options, while access to management data means they can see exactly what's going on within the system. They can then use this insight on response times, call history and queries from residents to improve customer service.

How digital telecare will help their residents to live more independently

Digital telecare systems can do a lot more than their analogue counterparts. Integrated features such as video door entry, video calling and Wi-Fi mean that individuals are better connected and feel safer and more in control. This offers a hugely positive experience for the residents in your care, increasing the support provided to enable them to live as independently as possible. Digital also offers a much better service when needed, connecting within seconds.

Planning a programme to engage staff

Educating staff should be an active part of your project to implement digital telecare. This needs to:

- Raise awareness and inform
- Reassure and instil confidence
- Ensure that the process is open and transparent
- Prep your teams for the installation and launch of the new digital telecare systems

All of this together will involve staff in the process. You also need to make sure your staff will be able to support your customers once the new technology is in place.

Use your internal communications channels, such as your staff newsletter or intranet, to publish resources and project updates. Resources could include:

- Case studies, to make technology tangible by showing how other organisations are using this
- FAQs, such as, 'Why are we switching to digital?' and 'How will this affect me?'
- Video explainers

A programme of events can address different elements of moving to digital telecare, such as:

- Forums or lunchtime sessions that give your staff the opportunity to ask questions and raise any concerns
- Demos so your staff can get to grips with the technology before it is in use
- Training sessions on different aspects of the systems

Developing a specific engagement strategy allows you to focus on different aspects at different points in the project timeline. For example, start with general information to raise awareness about digital technology while you are in the research phase, progressing to hands-on training as you get nearer to rolling out your new systems.

Once you reach the implementation phase, you need to make sure your staff are fully briefed on the practicalities of the installation process. Understand the impact that this will have for them and the residents at the property, and how you can mitigate this. Providing reassurance, support and information will ensure this part of the project goes as smoothly as possible.

The Appello approach – how we support your staff as you transition to digital telecare

At Appello, we've found that good communication is key to smoothing the transition, particularly so that your staff are ready for the installation works.

Our 'tried and tested' framework helps you to prepare:

- Our installation team visits the property to talk through the practicalities of installation so your staff knows exactly what will be happening.
- We provide a clear timeline and discuss how to minimise disruption on-site.
- We also host a coffee morning with all residents so that they can ask questions and know what to expect while we are carrying out the work.

Our aim is to make the process transparent, deal with any potential issues and get everybody excited about the new technology and what it will mean for them!

We make sure that our installation team is available to answer any questions once the work is underway and also provide contact to our digital support team via phone or email.

In addition, we have created a Welcome Pack and online KnowledgeBase, which contains lots of useful information and guidance for your staff, such as simple guides and how-to videos.

We understand that a successful rollout includes making sure your staff are confident using the systems. We provide the reassurance of ongoing support:

- Staff can book refresher training sessions, and these are also available for new members of staff
- Queries can be logged at any time via our support desk
- Staff have access to our KnowledgeBase, which includes a host of support materials

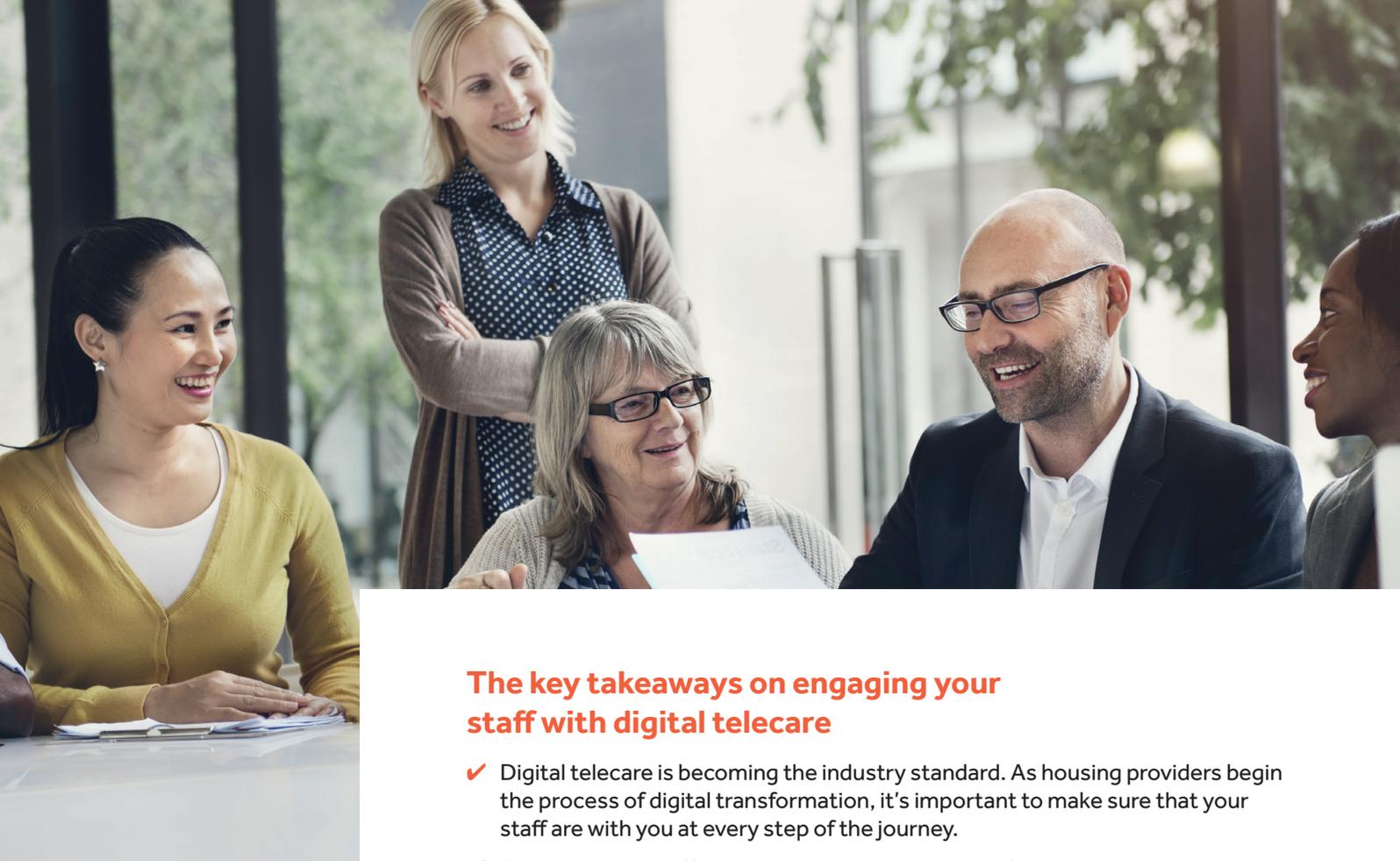
How to keep your staff engaging with digital telecare

Of course, the need to cultivate staff engagement doesn't end once your digital telecare systems are in place.

You will have been planning and talking about the move to digital for a while, but there will be an adjustment period.

Make sure that staff have access to additional training and comprehensive support, both for their own use of the 'back end' systems and so that they can deal with questions from residents.

Keep staff up-to-date with any future developments with the technology and encourage them to explore additional ways that this can be used in their roles. This can then feed into a culture of innovation within your organisation, as you continue to seek to improve your customers' experience.



The key takeaways on engaging your staff with digital telecare

- ✓ Digital telecare is becoming the industry standard. As housing providers begin the process of digital transformation, it's important to make sure that your staff are with you at every step of the journey.
- ✓ Engaging your staff is vital to ensure the success of your transition to digital telecare.
- ✓ It's important to engage them early in the process, as you research and plan your digital telecare project. Among other things, this helps you to overcome any barriers which could affect how quickly they adopt the new technology.
- ✓ Showing your staff what's in it for them will generate excitement and buy-in. Make sure they understand how the technology will help them to do their job and support their residents.
- ✓ Educating your staff needs to be an active part of your digital project plan. Use a combination of internal communications and training to raise awareness and prepare your staff for implementation.
- ✓ Continue to support your staff once digital telecare is in place and create a culture that encourages innovation so you can make the most of future developments in the technology.

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

www.appello.co.uk

Tel. 0333 321 6470

About Appello

Appello are market leaders in digital Technology Enabled Care (TEC). We have taken more digital Telecare calls, and deployed more fully digital Telecare devices, for our housing, health and care customers than any other TEC provider.

Over 30 years we have grown into the UK's largest analogue and digital monitoring centre and created a range of SmartTEC products to enrich the lives of individuals.

One of our innovative digital products is our Smart Living Solutions suite, which is designed for the UK's digital infrastructure and is already deployed in c.520 developments, and 25,000 individual homes, enhancing the safety and wellbeing in those customers.