

TAPPI Personal Stories

From our testbed partner:

Wiltshire Council

Elisabeth's Story

Elisabeth Hart is an Occupational Therapist (OT) working as part of the TAPPI project, at Dairy View, an extra care living scheme managed by Housing 21. Elisabeth works with residents to explore how technology can help them feel safer and more independent, improving their wellbeing and confidence.



“ Most residents have a combination of needs, meaning each individual requires a personalised treatment plan.

Tell us about your role within TAPPI

As an OT I always start by meeting an individual and completing a comprehensive, holistic assessment with them. This includes understanding their daily lives and how their physical, mental, sensory and learning needs impact them.

In the past I have prescribed technology enabled care (TEC) to individuals to promote their independence and safety, for example falls detectors and exit sensors. However, the TAPPI project has been different in the sense that I am solely focusing on TEC and have a wide range to choose from and trial with residents that would not usually be available to prescribe.

The residents I support at Dairy View are all over 55 but they vary widely in functional ability, age, goals and interests, and level of digital literacy. Most residents have a combination of multiple health needs, for example sensory loss, physical disability, and mental health needs, meaning each individual requires a personalised treatment plan.

“ Some residents fear their privacy will be invaded.



What are the barriers?

There was big excitement with TAPPI initially, but then the technology itself was delayed and some residents lost enthusiasm. That's a learning point– it's important to get everything lined up (including potential pitfalls) before engaging with residents.

There have been some technical issues, too. Some residents have never had an internet connection or a mobile phone and it's extremely daunting for them. They are particularly worried that technology means their carers will be taken away and they enjoy their company and support.

They also fear their privacy will be invaded – that having Wi-Fi will mean 'Big Brother' can overhear them. Some people talked about their concerns around 5G and health. Others just didn't have the energy to learn how to use an app or device.

I've tried to unpick those fears with people individually, but it takes time. There is an ingrained feeling that the internet and apps are for the younger generation. They say, 'I'm too old', or 'Don't worry about me, I'm too far gone'.

“ The key has been not overwhelming or frightening people and going at the right pace for each person individually.

How have you overcome these barriers?

The key has been not overwhelming or frightening people and going at the right pace for each person individually.

We've gone back to basics, showing some residents that using a device or app is just like using a walking stick, it's just a bit cleverer, but in the long run it will do the same job, making things easier and potentially making them happier.

We're also offering residents training sessions with AbilityNet, a UK charity who believe that digital technology should be available for everyone, regardless of ability or age. During these sessions, residents can ask questions about their tablets and get expert support and assistance to use their technology.

We've also taken a united approach so care staff and any professionals coming into the building are enthusiastic about the project.

It's not just about helping residents, it's also engaging with staff across the organisation – we all need to be educated about the potential of technology. There should be training for any new starter and existing staff – about the technology available and where it's going in the future. Ultimately, we are the voice of influence, and we have an important role in promoting technology and keeping the enthusiasm up.

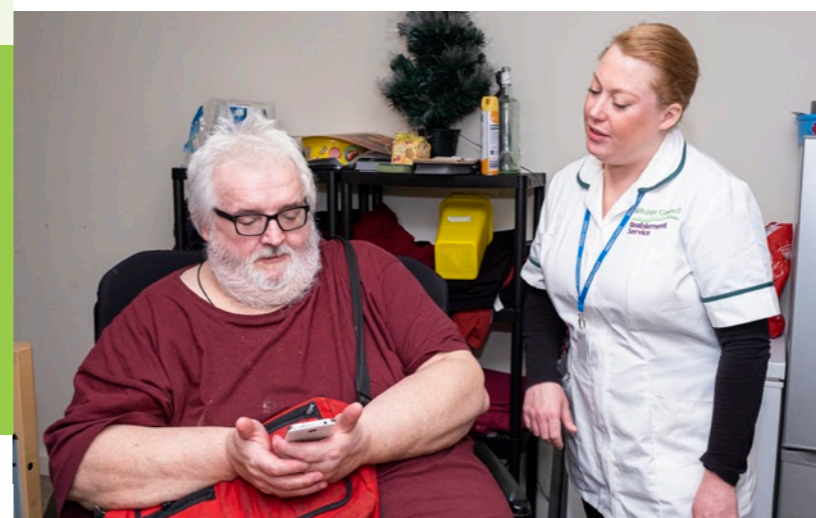
What are the opportunities?

Some people have lost touch with family and friends as they're not able to visit them, so FaceTime or WhatsApp video calls on the iPad are ideal. Even doing that once a day can increase someone's wellbeing enormously. It's an instant connection, that feeling of belonging, of comfort.

On the TAPPI project we're trying to think outside the box and resolve challenges that lots of residents have by using technology. Video calling is a simple solution as so many residents have family miles away.

One lady I'm working with, she is unable to put her lights on or turn on her devices due to her disability. With Alexa smart technology she will be able to do this independently.

Another resident can't open the door himself as he's in a wheelchair. He needs autonomy – to be able to open his front door himself so we're looking at different tech options. He also wants to listen to audiobooks and music, and we're setting up Alexa so he can interact more with family and friends.



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Acknowledgements

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Find out more about this project at:

www.housinglin.org.uk/TAPPI2

