

How dementia-friendly technology can improve lives

Technology can offer huge potential benefits for people living with dementia, their families and care home providers. Whilst not a solution for everyone, technology such as telecare or apps, can work in a variety of ways to empower and support independence, manage risks, improve health, be enjoyable and aid loved ones.

Care home providers tell us that the main service issues they face include:

- **Funding**, the pressures of the business model and difficulty in securing investment.
- **Staff recruitment**, retention, training and wages.
- The **negative public perceptions** of care homes.
- **Wider pressures** of demographic change which is seeing an increased prevalence of complex and multi-morbidities in the very old, and people living with dementia and disabilities.
- **Increased expectations** of the sector from the NHS, and less support from primary and other health services.

Technological solutions are not about replacing human contact or restricting independence and can only be effective when combined with good care.

How can technology help care home providers?

Advantages to residents, family and staff:

- Improved monitoring of physical health, so that changes can be swiftly alerted to GPs and help avoid hospital admissions
- Technology can improve contact with family and carers, which can benefit relationships and help manage anxiety. Apps can also improve social interactions and communications between staff and residents
- Promotes independence and improves dignity by reducing the need for regular checks, such as if the person has enuresis or is repeatedly trying to get up from a chair

Improved care outcomes:

- Better management of co-morbidities with support for medication adherence.
- Prevention of emergencies through alerts about condition deterioration.
- Better management of risks, such as falls or leaving water running.
- Increased stimulation and a decrease in boredom which can result in improved human relationships and quality of life.

Effective and efficient use of resources in the system:

- Improves the relationship between the commissioner and the care home – shows innovation, efficiency and productivity improvements.
- Improved staff productivity targeting care and support where it is most needed.
- Better management of co-morbidities through monitoring of health and prevention of emergencies.

What does my organisation need to do next?

Consider signing up to the dementia-friendly technology charter, which recommends:

- **Assessment** – Discuss with your local commissioners the statutory right to a social care assessment, which should always include a consideration for dementia friendly technology.
- **Awareness** – Ensure care home staff who come into contact with people living with dementia know about the latest technology solutions and are able to explain the benefits and drawbacks for that individual.
- **Integrated, staged approach** – Discuss with your commissioners how the technology will fit into part of an integrated approach. An exemplar service also works closely with GPs, local CPNs, geriatricians, and pharmacies amongst others.
- **Person at the centre** – The person living with dementia should always be kept at the centre of your decision making. Their views and consent should always be sought. If they can't offer these, an assessment of their views must be made involving those who know them best, and any decisions taken in the person's best interests (as laid out in Mental Capacity Act).

Technology that could help if...

You are worried living in a care home and worried about falling and other safety issues

Bed and chair occupancy sensor

This specially designed pressure pad fits under the mattress or chair cushion and provides an early warning by alerting that the user has left their bed or chair and not returned within a pre-set time period.



Movement sensor and fall detector

The movement sensor detects if movement or inactivity has occurred. The fall detector will automatically generate a call for assistance if it detects a fall.



Enuresis sensor

Placed between the mattress and sheet, this sensor provides immediate warning on detection of moisture, allowing effective action to be taken, promoting dignity and independence.



There are ten times more hip fractures in care homes than in other environments.

Approximately 40% of hospital admissions from care homes follow a fall.

Many falls occur when getting up from or into a chair or bed unaided.

Should any of the sensors detect a possible problem, a member of staff would be notified of the nature and location of the incident on a portable handset, enabling them to respond swiftly. These can also help at home.

Sign up to the charter at alzheimers.org.uk/technologycharter

or for further information, email programmepartnerships@alzheimers.org.uk