



Homecare Community of Experience: Digital Innovation

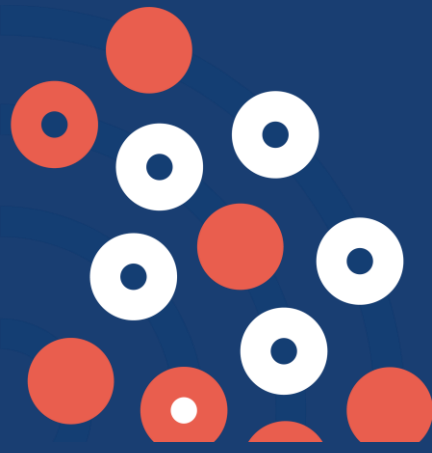
Wednesday 12th October 2022

Hosted by

Kent Surrey Sussex Academic Health Science
Network (KSS AHSN)

and

Applied Research Collaboration Kent Surrey
Sussex (ARC KSS)



On 12th October, **Kent Surrey Academic Health Science Network (KSS AHSN)** and the **Applied Research Collaboration Kent Surrey Sussex (ARC KSS)** co-hosted a Community of Experience for the Homecare sector.



The event brought together over **60** delegates interested in supporting and improving the provision of homecare services through research and evidence-based practice.

The event was chaired by Becky Sharp, KSS AHSN and Implementation Manager for the ARC KSS Social Care theme (rebecca.sharp4@nhs.net).

Specifically, we heard about and discussed digital innovations relating to **workforce optimisation**. The recent Skills for Care report released in mid October highlighted the significant workforce



deficits currently experienced by the Social Care sector, and of course we are seeing the impact every day in the news, particularly around discharge from hospital.

The other key area presented and discussed was how digital innovation and technology might support the **social well-being** of those receiving homecare. Delegates had the opportunity to discuss both of these topics during a ‘**Homecare - Even Better If...**’ needs articulation session where we focussed not on solutions but actually on the challenges or problems that need to be solved.



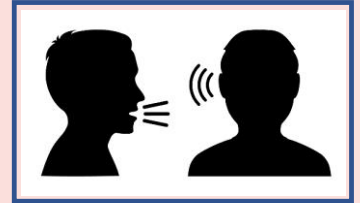
Agenda

Welcome & Introduction	
Welcome and Introductions	Rebecca Sharp, Senior Programme Manager (KSS AHSN) Implementation Lead – Social Care (ARC KSS)
Even better if...	
What are the challenges we are trying to solve?	Cat Young, Programme Manager Industry & Technology Navigation (KSS AHSN)
Workforce Optimisation Pilot	
Procomp pilot - AI technology to support workforce optimisation	Roger McDermott , Senior Programme Manager (West of England AHSN)
Provider Experience	
Provider experience of using and implementing technology	Matthew Kalupka, Co-founder / Director, Home Counties Carers Tim Wilson, Managing Director, Assist Care Group
Supporting Social Well-being	
Research Project - Digital technologies to support social well-being	Dr Alison Tingle, University of Hertfordshire



Even Better If...

**Cat Young, Programme Manager,
Industry & Technology Navigation (KSS AHSN)**



‘**Needs Articulation**’ is the first of four stages to the Academic Health Science Networks Innovation Exchange framework. This initial stage works to identify **unmet needs** or areas which could benefit from **innovative change**.

We all recognise the excellent care already provided by our Homecare providers and their staff, and this interactive ‘**Needs Articulation**’ session was all about understanding the main challenges that the homecare sector continue to face in relation to our two key topic areas:

- 1) **Workforce optimisation**
- 2) **Social wellbeing**

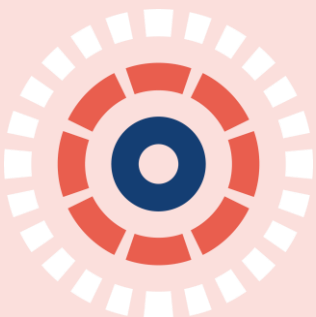
Breaking into 4 groups, we specifically asked the question “**What are the problems we are trying to solve?**” and discussed how we might find existing and new technology solutions to make things ‘even better’ for those being cared for and those providing care. We also identified and discussed challenges and barriers in relation to digital innovation supporting the homecare workforce.



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We are currently reviewing all of the discussions and themes from the breakout sessions in order to inform next steps.

For more information, please contact Cat Young
catherine.young17@nhs.net



Workforce Optimisation Group Discussion – Key Messages

Group 1:

This discussion centred around workforce retention, with delegates agreeing that retention is not solely dependant on pay, but also a workplace emphasis on achievement, purpose and the opportunity for career development. These were all suggested as important motivating factors for staff.



Empowering staff and having clear career progression opportunities both contribute to better workforce retention and drive staff to deliver person-centred, relational care over transactional care. This allows care staff to feel that they are making a positive difference to those they care for.

Group 2:

The discussion in this group focused on the possibility for digital innovation to improve rostering challenges. This included the potential to flatten the demand curve, rather than trying to accommodate large fluctuations in demand at certain times of the day. This has the potential to increase capacity for the provider, enable carers to spread visits more evenly throughout the day, increase contact time and also help fulfil short notice care needs.



Further, it was suggested that commissioning on a 'place basis' could aid allocation in tandem with changeable demand.



Social Wellbeing Group Discussion – Key Messages

Group 3:

The key take-away from this group discussion was the consensus that technology could not replace human interaction. The positive impact of person to person contact could not be underestimated.

However, technology could be used to facilitate and support access to this crucial need for human contact, to help reduce the loneliness and social isolation of those living alone at home and improve health and well-being outcomes.



Group 4:

This group discussed the power of technology to connect people and ease social isolation and loneliness, particularly if personalised and tailored to individual need.

However, digital exclusion is a significant barrier which needs to be considered. Technology, whether devices or apps etc., needs to be developed and tailored to ensure they are accessible and user-friendly.

Access, funding, and also implementation of technology within the Social Care sector was also considered a challenge which needs to be explored.



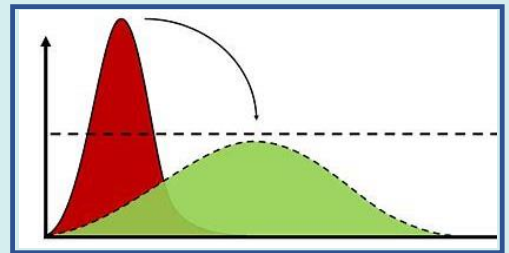
Procomp - AI Technology to Support Workforce Optimisation

Roger McDermott,

Senior Programme Manager, West of England AHSN



Roger introduced a project currently underway in the West and South West of England, piloting and evaluating AI technology that can optimise and support the planning and scheduling of domiciliary care staff visits. Following a similar Needs Articulation process described above, and a “call to industry” for technologies to support the homecare workforce, Procomp was chosen as an innovation partner.



Developed in Finland, the technology has been shown to increase the capacity of the workforce and help meet fluctuating care demands over the course of a day, helping to **‘flatten’ the demand curve**. It has also demonstrated an improvement in the working lives of care workers by using AI logistics technology to optimise the allocation and route-taking of care staff, minimising travel time, increasing capacity for carer visits and increasing contact time with those needing care.



Roger and a team from Unity Insights are currently undertaking a **real-world evaluation** of its effectiveness which is due to complete at the end of 2023. For more information about the Procomp pilot project and updates, [please click here](#). If you are interested in exploring this and similar technologies in Kent, Surrey or Sussex, please contact **Becky Sharp**, rebecca.sharp4@nhs.net or **Cat Young**, catherine.young17@nhs.net

Provider experience of using and implementing technology

Matthew Kalupka,

Co-founder / Director of Home Counties Carers

Matthew discussed how digital innovation can provide solutions to loneliness and social isolation for some receivers of homecare. However, was keen to point out that, in his experience, homecare clients often needed support from others in order to access and use this technology.



Thinking about well-being and recognising the importance and need for human contact, Matthew suggested that, rather than relying on technology, one new direction for care providers is in the provision of companionship services that are integrated with regular homecare services. This

could include care staff helping to support increased social connectedness and well-being; but also dealing with paperwork and administrative tasks. This kind of care cannot be replaced by technology.

However, he spoke about how technology has some simple yet effective uses. For example, allowing remote monitoring by the GP, facilitating quicker treatment for conditions like urinary tract infections (UTIs) without the need for a home visit or in-person visit to the GP. This is beneficial for both service-users and the health service in terms of time saving in primary care but also in preventing hospital admission.



Provider experience of using and implementing technology



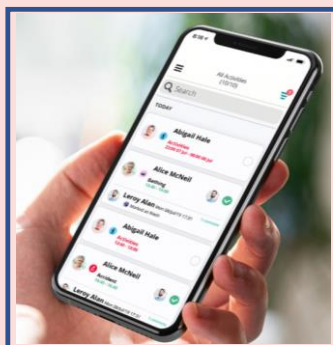
Tim Wilson,
Managing Director of Assist Care Group

Tim spoke about the benefits of implementing technology to streamline and optimise care. For example, in his organisation they replaced disorganised, rarely looked at paper records that were filed away in filing cabinets with electronic records and care plans.

This change was simple, yet very effective. Tim explained how electronic records are easily accessible to care staff and clients, making them quick and easy to view and update. Storing information in one place electronically ensures a service-user's individual care preferences and needs are communicated, recorded and routinely updated and instantly available, allowing them to receive high quality, personalised care at home.

Furthermore, Tim highlighted another benefit of having 100% electronic records, in that families of service-users are also able to access digital care plans and see the day to day care provided. He explained that technologies also facilitate family engagement,

even from abroad. This ensures that relatives are able to be involved in their loved one's care and can feedback any preferences or advocate for their needs on their behalf.



Research Project: Digital technologies to support social well-being (DitSoW)

Dr Alison Tingle, University of Hertfordshire

Alison outlined the DiTSoW research project, funded by the National Institute for Health and Care Research as part of the National Priorities Programme for Social Care and Social Work. The study aims to map, explore and test implementation of digital technologies that contribute to social wellbeing for community dwelling older adults in receipt of social care, and their carers.



The research team have been examining the current evidence base for digital technologies and their link to social well-being, as well as horizon scanning of available technologies. Focus groups and interviews with professionals and older adults are currently underway in order to explore perceptions about the value and adoption of digital technologies.

Alison spoke about how during the COVID-19 pandemic, technology helped connect families and ensure social well-being needs were met as far as possible for older adults living independently through, for example, the use of face-timing technology.

However, interviews also indicated that dispelling some digital solutions developed in response to the pandemic may be necessary so that post-pandemic, they do not reduce valuable human contact necessary for optimum social wellbeing.



Alison also indicated that digital exclusion is an existing barrier. For example, to be able to use technology, it is often necessary for service-users to possess the skills and/or ability to download apps, be able to use a smartphone, have access to WiFi and remember passwords. The next stage will assess implementation challenges.

If you would like to hear more about this study, please contact a.tingle@herts.ac.uk

Final Thoughts

Becky Sharp, KSS AHSN

ARC KSS Implementation Lead - Social Care

“The homecare sector play a significant and valuable role within our communities, and we are all too familiar with the pressures currently experienced in relation to workforce and how the sector has consistently been under-valued. At the same time, we are seeing a rising demand for homecare, and more complex care needs being managed within people’s own homes.

“Many of these people are also at increased risk of loneliness and social isolation, and the associated impact on wellbeing, and both physical and mental health.

“This event has been specifically designed to bring people together to explore how technology can play a part in supporting organisations, care workers and those drawing on care, and ultimately help improve health, wellbeing and overall quality of life.”



Contact

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[Social Care Theme](#)

[ARC Kent, Surrey & Sussex](#)



Resources

- [Skills for Care full report](#)
- [Skills for Care domiciliary care report](#)
- [Digital Technology in Social Care guide](#)
- [Procomp project info](#)

