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ACHIEVING A SMARTER DIGITAL FUTURE

SOCIAL CARE

Less than a quarter of local authority chief executives and social care directors regard their relationship with the NHS as good with data sharing being a particular problem, according to a survey by The MJ and BT.

A special supplement produced by **MJ** and **BT**

Care chiefs raise concerns over poor data sharing with NHS

The relationship with the NHS is key to both the health and care sectors. Yet asked how important closer working is with the NHS on a scale of one to five (with five being the most important) 43% of the respondents gave a score of five and 30% four, a pretty clear 73% between them. The poll of council chief executives and social care directors however did not reveal any great enthusiasm for this working relationship. Only 22% regard their joint working with the NHS as good, 10% see it as poor while an overwhelming majority (68%) regard it as just 'satisfactory'. One particular weakness is over data sharing with the NHS over social care with 19% regarding this sharing as poor, none as good and 80% as an underwhelming 'satisfactory.'

The percentage of council budgets allocated to social care is substantial with a third of respondents spending over half their income on social care of whom 10% say their allocation is over 60%. Nearly a quarter of respondents (22.6%) are spending between 50%-60% of their council budget on social care, just over a third (35.5%) are spending between 40-50% while another third (32%) are spending 40%. The rest of the respondents (10%) are devoting over 60% of their budget on care.

It has already been well flagged up that there will be extra funding for social care coming down the line on top of the extra cash injection and council tax precept already announced. This helps to explain why the consensus from the survey is that the percentage of respondents' budget on care is unlikely to change with 52% expecting little movement over the next three years while just over a quarter (26%) anticipate the costs increasing and 22%, unusually, expect them to reduce. The increase in some councils is partly a result of a reduction in the overall budget meaning adult care becomes a larger share although in some cases care could also be cut.

Of the 26% expecting their share of the council budget devoted to social care to increase, a third estimate the rise at 20% and above while half estimate a more modest 5%. Respondents were asked where this extra money would come from. The consensus was from higher council tax, savings elsewhere and income generation as well as closer integration with health though one answer was 'we will very much struggle to fund.' A typical answer was: 'The only feasible way to fund the increased demand is to generate income from other parts of the council and by integrating health and social care as a system across the NHS, CCGs and all partners.'

Respondents were also asked to prioritise a list of areas

which they felt could best deliver savings. Unsurprisingly promoting independence and wellbeing through the use of digital services and technology was a top priority by reducing the cost of hospital stays and supporting earlier intervention.

Next areas with the potential for savings were enabling users to interact with care services through

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digital channels and integrating commissioning through improved use of information. Enabling care professionals to work remotely was also cited along with more integration of services.

A key question is what technologies and innovation the respondents believe will best drive further savings. A clear majority cited sharing data with partners as a prime way of reducing costs. Other priorities named in the survey were automating processes, predictive analytics, business intelligence, the cloud, channel shift and remote working.

The survey drilled down to find out how respondents prioritised the above areas on a scale of one to five with five being the highest priority. These percentages give an idea of how important they regard the technology in helping them cut costs. On sharing data with partners 50% gave a four and 33% a five, a combined 83%, showing respondents

regard this as a vital means of making further savings. When it came to the question on automating processes, 45% gave it a score of four and another 26% a resounding five. On the respondents' other priority, predictive analytics, which means being smarter about using data to predict demand, 22% gave a five, 38% gave a four and 35% a three, again an overall high score. For business

intelligence, 26% gave a five, 35% a four (making a high 61% when both are added together), and 26% a three while on the cloud almost half gave a four score and 35% a three. Mobile and remote working are also clearly a priority with almost 60% regarding it as very important or critical. Channel shift, or offering different channels through which citizens can contact councils, is well established which explains the opportunity for more savings is less; 42% gave it a three, with 35% giving a four and 19% a five.

Respondents were asked to name other technologies that can help deliver savings and these included broadband and mobile coverage, digital inclusion and skills, Internet of Things, assistive technology for self-funders to promote independence, robotics and artificial intelligence.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Almost a third of respondents said that their council spends 50% or more of their budget on social care
- 75% think that closer working with the NHS is important or critical to meeting the social care challenge
- But only 25% rate their working with NHS colleagues as good, with particular concerns around data sharing.
- Using technology to give users greater independence has the most scope for making savings
- Sharing data with partners is also named as a top priority area for cutting costs
- Enabling care professionals to work from anywhere scored lower on the priorities than other areas, ranked as 5th by 45% of respondents
- But nearly 60% of respondents said that mobile/remote working is very important or critical to deliver further savings.

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Boost for use of digital technology in social care promises brighter future for users

Councils across the country are already using digital technology in a variety of ways to improve and support services for elderly and vulnerable groups, and the Government wants to see an even wider take-up of the range of technology available.
Paul Dinsdale reports

After years of austerity in the public sector, the Government is giving the sector a cash boost to encourage councils to roll out the use of digital technology.

In June, it was announced that 12 councils across England will each receive funding to run pilot programmes to explore the use of digital technologies and platforms in the delivery of social care.

The grants form part of the Social Care Digital Innovation Programme being run by NHS Digital and the Local Government Association. Each council will receive £20,000 to run a discovery phase investigating how technology could be used to address a specific local social-care challenge. Half of these projects will then be approved to receive further backing of up to £80,000 to create and implement their proposed solutions.

James Palmer, programme lead for the Social Care Programme at NHS Digital, said: 'The successful projects span a wide range of areas, from assistive technologies to predictive analytics. This funding will give the local authorities a chance to identify and investigate a local problem before testing out a potential solution. They will be sharing their experiences from the pilot projects, adding to our collective knowledge of how digital can effectively be used to support the delivery of social care.'

Proposals which are in the discovery phase include a project run by Wirral MBC to explore the use of biometrics in supporting people with autism and learning disabilities. In another project, the London Borough of Havering is to investigate the possible introduction of a digital 'skills passport' to help simplify employment checks and the provision of staff training.

The other ten council areas that will receive discovery-phase funding are Sunderland City Council, South Tyneside MBC, Stockport MBC, Lincolnshire CC, Nottingham City Council, Shropshire CC, Bracknell Forest Council, Cambridgeshire CC, Haringey LBC, and the Isle of Wight CC

The authorities were picked from a total of 133 across England which were eligible for the programme, 80 of which applied to receive funding.

Kate Allsop, executive mayor of Mansfield and digital lead on the LGA's Community and Wellbeing Board, said: 'The councils selected have chosen some important areas to address, ranging from exploring new methods of linking residents with community resources, to addressing social care provider workforce shortages. In the next three months, they will be engaging with users to explore whether there are digital solutions to improve the lives and experiences of people needing social care. Projects will be designed around the needs of service users and complement the work of health and social care professionals. We will ensure that learning is shared across the sector.'

In Sunderland, the data from Smart technology will be used to help staff work together to support people's individual and specific care needs. During the first phase of the project Sunderland City Council will be working in partnership with Sunderland Software City, Digital Catapult North East and Tees Valley and Urban Foresight.

The partnership will explore how the adult care sector can use Smart digital technology to meet future challenges such as the increasing demand on services from an ageing population.

Sunderland City Council cabinet member for health and social care, Dr Geoffrey Walker said: 'The council is at the cutting edge of using assistive and digital technology to support residents with their individual care needs. Working with our clients we have tested a range of devices to help people with a variety of conditions.

'Feedback from those taking part, staff and residents alike, has been extremely positive showing that assistive technology can be used very effectively to help support people to remain independent for longer, improve the quality of life for residents and their families/carers, and also save money from an increasingly limited budget.'

Fiona Brown, executive director of the people services directorate at the council, said: 'Based on the Office for National Statistics 2014 population projections, the percentage of over 65s in Sunderland will increase from 53,000 in 2017 to 68,800 in 2030 (a 27% increase).

'Across Sunderland, people are using technology in their everyday lives, such as mobile devices, apps, wearables and home automation. Indeed the scheduling and delivery of home care in the city has been one of the first services to begin to benefit from this technology.'

Case study: UNICORN

It's also crucial to have a secure communications network in place to underpin any digital transformation. BT has developed a network for public sector organisations in South East England, called Unicorn (Unified Communications over Regional Networks), in partnership with Surrey CC and others. The network has been in place since 2012 and has helped participating partners to save money, as well as increase collaboration in areas such as libraries.

The Unicorn contract is a managed voice and data network for the public sector and covers a vast range of services from hundreds of global brands including broadband, WAN, Wi-Fi, cloud and many others. More than 25 local government organisations can now buy communication products and services without going to tender, cutting months off standard delivery timescales. Their combined buying power allows significant savings over what they would achieve by buying as individual organisations.

The current Unicorn partners include Surrey CC, East Sussex CC, the 11 boroughs and districts within Surrey, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Services, Bracknell Forest Council, Central Surrey Health, and Surrey schools.

The Unicorn partnership brings benefits in economies of scale, no tendering process, faster procurement and more expert support for developing IT and communication solutions.

Mike Brett, enterprise infrastructure manager at East Sussex CC, said: 'By using the Unicorn partnership, we made sure that we got the best value-for-money out of a restricted procurement. Because Unicorn ordered the kit, prioritised it, tracked progress and delivered it, we were able to roll out a significant programme of all-new equipment – and get it up and running – in record time.'

Case study: LANCASHIRE

Lancashire Care NHS Foundation Trust provides care for around 1.7m people in the county. As many of its 7,500 staff work in the community, visiting families and individual clients, being able to stay in touch and work 'on the go' is crucial, but mobile signals inside the Trust's buildings made things difficult, and many staff spent their days travelling between sites. The solution involved the adoption of EE's new Wi-Fi Calling Technology.

The Trust knew staff needed mobile devices and had experimented with things like nanocells to boost mobile signals indoors, but this was only small-scale so they needed something bigger. Managers were interested in using Wi-Fi which carries mobile calls over a building's Wi-Fi network, but few suppliers were offering it on a commercial basis.

'We had other mobile suppliers, but none of them were that keen to offer Wi-Fi calling but EE opened it up straight away', says Mohammed-Iqbal Adam, health informatics. Telecoms and IPT manager at the Trust.

With EE already supplying a data VPN and looking after many of the Trust's mobiles, it made sense to use its Wi-Fi Calling solution. EE IT managers helped the Trust to get their corporate Wi-Fi network set up to support Wi-Fi Calling and the whole Trust was soon making and receiving calls indoors without any glitches.

Not only did the system meet the Trust's demands for connecting thousands of staff across hundreds of sites, it also saved it a lot of money. As a free service as part of EE's tariffs, it meant huge potential savings compared to indoor coverage solutions.

The true value of digital

T he ever-increasing pressures and demands on social care were succinctly summarised in a recent article in Health MJ.
- Social care spending is up in real terms.
- Reduced spending on social care has led to more deaths.
- Care home charges are rising at a record rate.

So it's no surprise that the survey found many local councils are spending over 50% of their budget on meeting the social care needs in their region.

Digital technology can make a huge impact on social care – from reducing delivery costs to improving the quality of the care experience for citizens and care workers. In the words of Dr Ben Maruthappu of UCL: 'More must be done to better modernise care services. The potential benefits of greater use of digital technology in the social care sector are enormous.'

Enabling care professionals to work from any base at any time

With the emphasis on place-based working and multi-disciplinary teams, care professionals need to be able to work seamlessly across boundaries. An integrated, secure, wired & mobile network is the digital foundation for better orchestrated care across local health and social care providers, allowing workers to access and share information, irrespective of where they are or who they work for.

With the right mobile and remote working solutions in place, care professionals can spend more time with people in need. Being able to access and share data easily outside of the office speeds up data capture, decision-making processes, and reduces errors. Video conferencing and unified communication tools such as instant messaging, can be used to enable secure online communications between the many organisations involved in safeguarding vulnerable children and young people. The right technology can help staff be more productive, spending more time on the frontline and less time on administration – and creating better citizen outcomes.

Helping people to stay in their homes for longer

The Internet of Things (IoT) makes it much easier to support people living at home, and provide safe, remotely-monitored care for vulnerable people. Physical sensors in people's homes, combined with intelligent and consumer-centric use of passive devices such as personal smartphones and apps, can help people stay at home longer. Connected IoT devices can give care commissioners better insight into the needs of individuals and populations, allowing them to target scarce resources where they will have the greatest impact. In the future, IoT and 5G mobile should allow individuals and their families to take more control over their care plans, easing the demand for reactive care services.

New digital channels to access care services

Enabling people to interact with care services through digital channels was highlighted as one of the top priorities by half of the survey respondents. Allowing citizens and their carers to interact through channels that work for them encourages them to take more ownership and responsibility. Easier access to advice and guidance for their needs, better access to care plans, and different ways of sharing these between everyone concerned can lower the cost of service provision and provide better control and assurance.

How is BT supporting this smarter digital future?

Connectivity is at the heart of the technologies needed to achieve better care outcomes – and connectivity is BT's core business, bringing together fixed, mobile & wi-fi technologies to seamlessly connect people, places and machines.

Our unified workplace, mobility, and collaboration solutions unlock the potential, and create the reality, for care staff to work from anywhere and deliver an online personal care experience for their clients. Our customer contact solutions help create personalised care experiences, using innovative artificial intelligent machine learning technologies to streamline the contact experience quality. We are working on developing an IoT platform to support the eco-system of services needed to realise the transformative potential of IoT for care services.

But success needs more than the right technology

The design and delivery of effective digital technology for improved social care needs the input and engagement of care professionals. Engaging social care workers in any digital change, and ensuring they have the right digital skills, are critical for success. Citizens too need to be equipped to embrace new technologies.

Connectivity and collaboration technology requires organisational connectivity and collaboration. Integrated health and social care is a team-based activity, requiring team-based digital tools for success. A team-based approach is crucial to identifying solutions and future innovation to meet the growing challenge of delivering cost-effective, high quality care. Local partners should continue to co-design based on citizen needs in their region, but also look to partner with digital technology providers - exploring and experimenting with those on the frontline to develop the right solutions for now and the future.
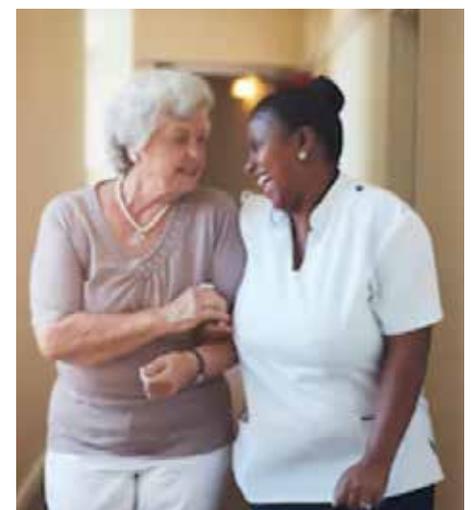
> Digital technology can make a huge impact in both reducing social care costs and improving the quality of care says Phil Brunkard, chief information officer, local government and health, BT

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