



Digital working, learning and information sharing

A workforce development strategy for adult social care

Executive summary

Digital working, learning and information sharing are a day-to-day part of the lives of the workforce providing care and support, and of people with care and support needs.

Digital ways of working, learning and information sharing are about all the different ways that we use technology to support people to live independently and have meaningful lives.

This strategy sets out principles for implementing digital working, learning and information sharing, which are:

- Everyone involved in delivering care and support has the confidence and competence to work digitally and the opportunity to develop their digital skills.
- Digital learning is recognised as a crucial part of workforce development, and part of a blended approach¹ to learning and development including the achievement of standards and qualifications.
- The potential of digital technology to enhance the lives of people with care and support needs, and that some people need help to engage with the digital technology is understood.
- Digital technologies are used in the best interests of people needing care and support and at all times to support their choice and independence.
- Digital information is shared securely and transparently and workers, people with care and support needs and carers have confidence in the systems used to store information electronically.

To take the strategy forward four actions are proposed:

- Examples of how technology is being used to enable workers, employers, people with care and support needs and carers to work and learn differently, and an exploration of the evidence of the impact of using digital technology will be collated and shared.
- The current capability of the workforce to work and learn digitally will be reviewed and any skills gaps and key issues identified.
- A guide to commissioning and providing workforce development for digital learning, working and information sharing will be produced.
- A workforce development support resource for digital working, learning and information sharing will be developed from the guide. The resource will aim to address how digital working and learning can support integrated workforce development and examples of how digital products and services can be co-produced.

1. Blended learning means using a range of different methods of training and education to develop people's knowledge and skills. It recognises that people have different preferred ways of learning.



Introduction

Digital working, learning and information sharing are increasingly a day-to-day part of the lives of the workforce providing care and support, and of people with care and support needs.

Digital ways of working, learning and information sharing are about all the different ways that we use technology to support people to live independently.

At home and at work digital technology is a part of our daily lives. Whether it's the use of online shopping, banking, social media, home movies, photos, the digital care plan², the telecare alarm system, voice-led technology or the electronic rota.

How we use digital technology at work, at home and on the move will continue to change the nature of care and support for years to come.

Making sure that everyone - employers, workers, people with care and support needs and carers can get the best out of digital technologies is an important part of enabling people to continue to live independently. So too is ensuring that the potential for digital ways of working and independent living are accessible to all.

Working digitally has many benefits, including improved communication, access to knowledge and expertise, resource savings and interconnecting people and organisations so that best practice can be more widely shared.

Bespoke e-learning

Addaction is a charity providing drug and alcohol treatment and support services in England and Scotland. Addaction's 1200 staff work mostly in community-based settings providing a range of services including psychosocial treatments, substitute prescribing and family work.

Addaction's in-house team produces eight to ten bespoke e-learning modules a year, each offering two to three hours of learning time. Development is supported by expert panels convened from the organisation's staff. Thus an infection control module was overseen by Addaction's lead nurse, and the content of an information safety module was authored by the organisation's information and data team.

"Staff like the recognition of their knowledge as subject matter experts. What we have found is that this also starts the process of engagement in the learning itself and you already have champions within the workforce. We ask staff to review the drafts as well. It all builds engagement."

www.addaction.org.uk

2. A digital care plan can be any electronic method of recording information about someone's care and support requirements and the outcomes of any intervention.

Digital working, learning and information sharing enables diverse and geographically disparate social care organisations and workers to support each other and learn from each other in a timely fashion. Social media, peer-to-peer learning and open digital systems (such as Wikipedia) offer opportunities that traditional top-down digital systems cannot deliver easily. Digital working can encourage debate and learning as well as information exchange between workers and the people they support, and their carers.

In order to maximise the potential value of technology in adult social care, it is vital a strategic approach is taken to digital workforce development.

The principles and actions outlined in this strategy will support commissioners and employers to develop the digital capability of their workforces and ensure that digital approaches to delivering care and support are open to everyone.

This strategy sets out workforce principles that commissioners and employers can use to develop local workforce decision making in relation to digital working, learning and information sharing. It also sets out national strategic workforce development actions that will guide employers and commissioners with local decision making.

It supports the implementation of *Capable, Confident, Skilled: A workforce development strategy for people working, supporting and caring in adult social care*³ and broader Department of Health and government digital agendas, complementing existing workforce development tools such as workforce commissioning and workforce planning guidance and digital learning materials. It acknowledges that there is already much innovation and enthusiasm in digital working, learning and information sharing amongst adult social care commissioners and employers. It aims to accelerate the sharing of existing knowledge and practice within a framework of principles for digital, learning and information sharing.

The principles and actions in this strategy have been developed in consultation and partnership with the adult social care sector.

This strategy for digital working, learning and information sharing in adult social care gives a context for action, shares existing and emerging practice, and sets broad workforce principles against which employers can measure progress.

Digital working, learning and information sharing needs to be done in partnership with health, housing, voluntary and social enterprise, recognising that digital integration will have an important role in future care and support.

Consultation and engagement with the sector in the implementation of this strategy is key to its success. The level of enthusiasm and innovation in digital working, learning and information sharing has been notable in this strategy's creation.

3. Skills for Care (2011) *Capable, Confident, Skilled: A workforce development strategy for people working, supporting and caring in adult social care* - <http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/NMDS-SC-intelligence-research-and-innovation/Workforce-development-strategy/Workforce-development-strategy.aspx>

A context for action

Digital technology and its role in adult social care work, learning and development are changing rapidly.

The workforce in adult social care needs to be able to use digital technology with confidence and to promote its appropriate use for people with care and support needs and carers. Commissioners, providers and employers have to be able to understand how their workforce currently uses digital technology and to make investment decisions that enable the workforce to:

- Work smarter and more productively.
- Ensure that data is accurate and relevant.
- Use technology as part of their everyday work.
- Use technology as part of their learning and professional development.
- Use technology to support and record achievement related to recognised standards and qualifications.
- Develop the knowledge and skills that enable them to identify new opportunities for technology to be used as part of someone's care and support package.
- Maintain privacy and confidentiality.
- Actively share information safely and securely.

At all stages, working in partnership with people with care and support needs and their carers is essential - working, learning and co-producing digital solutions are key. The more practical and grounded digital technology is, and the more its application is geared to helping people solve real work-based problems, the more likely people will be to adopt digital technology as a model of learning and working. The way in which digital technology is adopted and adapted to different models of care and support can impact on its effectiveness.

Digital technology supports three broad areas:

- Working directly with people with care and support needs and their carers.
- Workers' learning and professional development.
- Organisational business support and information management systems.

Resource constraint, continuing demographic pressures and the rising expectations of people with care and support needs all suggest that making best use of digital technology is essential.

It is also important to recognise that individual employers are at different stages in adopting digital solutions. Not all workers have easy access to digital technology in the workplace. There are also differing levels of expertise and confidence in the use of digital platforms and online media.

Digital solutions can be experienced as liberating or oppressive for workers, people with care and support needs and carers, depending on how they are introduced and supported.

Digital solutions have the ability to impact upon a person's independence, confidence and isolation among other things. However, this impact could be both negative as well as positive, with the potential for cyber-bullying, online fraud and exclusion from some social groups. Ensuring that the values and objectives of using digital approaches are ethical and coherent is essential.

App based support

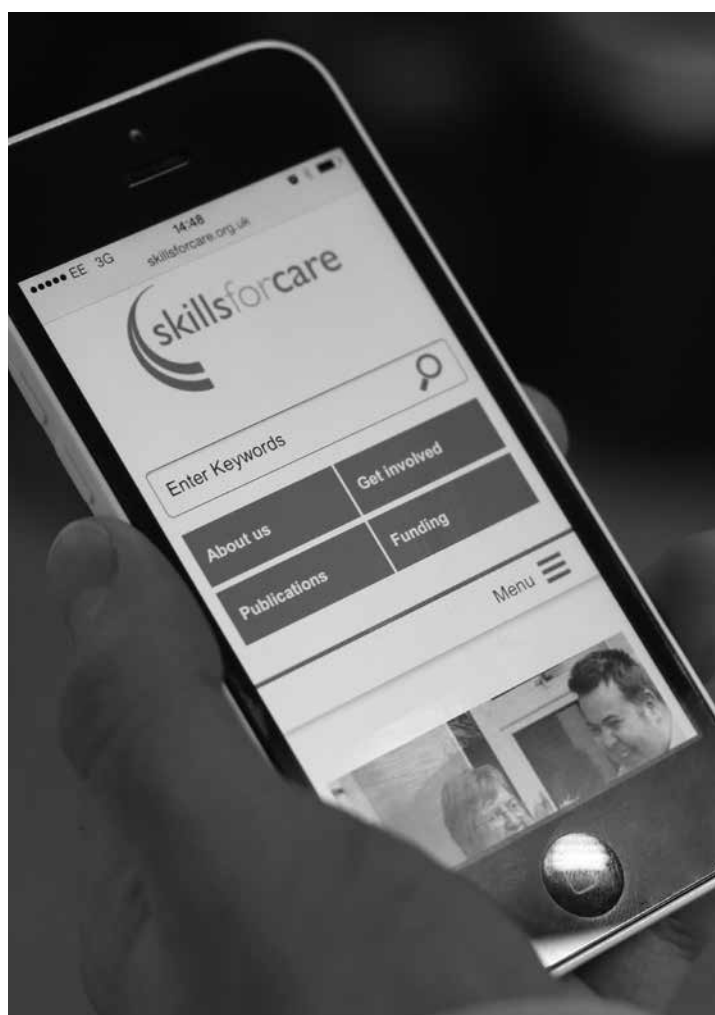
HomeCareDirect uses an app which sits on an iPod in people's homes to help individuals and families manage their personal assistants' visits, check their personal assistants' training and automatically notify the on-call service if a personal assistant fails to arrive, or is late for a scheduled visit.

People can view their personal assistants' visit history through a secure login on HomeCareDirects website and use online tools to plan visits. This allows people to plan their rotas electronically via a secure area of HomeCareDirects website.

The app also creates an electronic timesheet for each personal assistant, to be used to calculate pay, giving consistent recording of support hours provided.

www.homecaredirect.co.uk

Knowledge about how people who need care support and their carers are using technology as part of their care and support plan is patchy. Any learning and new ways of working for workers and employers is equally applicable to people with care and support needs, and their carers. This strategy assumes that co-produced working and learning solutions are a given.



Workforce principles

All employers, workers, people with care and support needs and carers should have the confidence and competence to use digital technology as part of day to day living, working and learning.

Workforce principles provide a strategic framework within which commissioners and employers can assess progress and frame local actions to deliver digital working, learning and information sharing.

The principles are underpinned by an expectation that workers need to see digital technology as part of an everyday way of learning, as a natural part of someone's care and support package and that they can share digital information with confidence.

Three broad groupings of skills can be identified:

- Basic - generic digital skills using mainstream technologies.
- Intermediate - digital champion skills being able to help others acquire generic digital and specialist social care digital skills.
- Specialist - understanding the role and benefits of specific care and support focused digital technologies.

Commissioners, employers, workers, people with care and support needs, and carers need to act within a framework that supports integrated workforce development.

Commissioners and employers need to:

- Take a holistic view of technology.
- Recognise how people, organisations respond differently to technology; nurture champions, leaders and digital innovators.
- Engage people in the development and implementation of technology for working and learning at all stages.
- Understand how to adapt technology to fit the way in which people live, work and are supported.

The principles in implementing digital working, learning and information sharing are:

- Everyone involved in delivering care and support has the confidence and competence to work digitally and the opportunity to develop their digital skills.
- Digital learning is recognised as a crucial part of workforce development, and part of a blended approach to learning and development including the achievement of standards and qualifications.
- The potential of digital technology to enhance the lives of people with care and support needs, and that some people need help to engage with the digital technology is understood.
- Digital technologies are used in the best interests of people needing care and support and at all times to support their choice and independence.
- Digital information is shared securely and transparently and workers, people with care and support needs, and carers have confidence in the systems used to store information electronically.

What each principle means

Digital working should be a natural way of working for everyone in adult social care. Each principle has a specific meaning and sets out actions for commissioners and employers. The principles provide a framework for assessing progress with digital workforce development.

1. Everyone involved in delivering care and support has the confidence and competence to work digitally and the opportunity to develop their digital skills.
 - All workers understand how to use digital care and support resources and have access to learning that helps them to use digital resources effectively.
 - Access to digital resources to facilitate work is available to all workers and workers have the confidence to use those tools to interact and collaborate in the workplace.
2. Digital learning is recognised as a crucial part of workforce development, and part of a blended approach to learning and development including the achievement of standards and qualifications.
 - Commissioners and employers recognise that digital learning is most effective when used as part of a blended approach to learning and development.
 - Workers have the confidence and competence to use digital learning resources effectively.
 - Workers are able to use technology as a means to store and record achievement of knowledge and competence to maximise the potential of technology to reduce learning repetition and recognise learning.
 - Workers have access to the tools to complete digital learning activity both in their place of work and the community.
3. The potential of digital technology to enhance the lives of people with care and support needs, and that some people need help to engage with the digital technology is understood.
 - Digital tools and resources are understood and routinely integrated into an individual's care and support plan.
 - Opportunities for people to learn and use their own digital resources as part of their care and support are recognised and encouraged.
4. Digital technologies are used in the best interests of people needing care and support and at all times to support their choice and independence.
 - The reasons for using a digital approach to working, learning and care and support are fully understood and explained.
 - When people with care and support needs do not want to use digital technology this should be respected, recognising that digital care and support could be seen as intrusive.

5. Digital information is shared securely and transparently and workers, people with care and support needs and carers have confidence in the systems used to store information electronically.

- Commissioners and employers have clear workforce development programmes and protocols in place on working with digital information.
- Workers have completed learning and development programmes on working with digital information.

Digital networking

Ideal Care Homes use technology as a support for their experiential face-to-face training. The technology enables innovative approaches to informal workforce development and peer-to-peer learning.

The company provides every member of staff with an iPhone, and uses it to communicate about all aspects of people's work, from everyday recording of staff hours, rotas and holiday entitlement, to the sharing of good practice.

"It's about the balance between face-to-face and online methods for encouraging staff learning. We do believe induction has to be face-to-face. But then if, for example, someone in one care home has a really good idea about how we can practically improve the bathing experience, then we can use our video technology, distributed through our company iPhone system, to let everyone know about that."

www.idealcarehomes.co.uk



Next steps

Digital working, learning and information sharing is rapidly evolving and becoming more integrated into the way in which people are supported. The coming years will see digital solutions to people's care and support becoming an everyday part of adult social care.

This strategy outlines the context and workforce principles for digital working, learning and information sharing in adult social care.



It recognises that co-produced ways of digital working, learning and information sharing are vital and that digital products and services meet the needs of their user's integrated care and support should include integrated digital ways of working.

To take the strategy forward four actions are proposed.

These are:

- Examples of how technology is being used to enable workers, employers, people with care and support needs, and carers to work and learn differently, and an exploration of the evidence of the impact of using digital technology will be collated and shared.
- The current capability of the workforce to work and learn digitally will be reviewed and any skills gaps and key issues identified.
- A guide to commissioning and providing workforce development for digital learning, working and information sharing will be produced.
- A workforce development support resource for digital working, learning and information sharing will be developed from the guide. The resource will aim to address how digital working and learning can support integrated workforce development and examples of how digital products and services can be co-produced.

The knowledge, enthusiasm and innovative approach of everyone contributing to this strategy has been exceptional. The strategy, its principles and actions build on the platform of existing digital innovation in adult social care and reflect a desire to deliver excellent support for all.

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Bibliography

Ipsos Mori (2013) *E-readiness in the social care sector for SCIE: Final report*.
DH (2012) *Digital Strategy: Leading the culture change in health and care*.

Existing tools and resources

Skills for Care

Skills for Care have developed a range of tools and resources. Examples include:

- A guide to learning technologies for learners.
- A guide to using learning technologies for induction and qualifications.
- Case examples of how employers are using technology in action.

- Scoping of workforce issues in relation to Assistive Living Technology Workforce development for assistive technology, telecare and telehealth: what is the current landscape? (November 2011, 14pp).
- In-depth case studies at three sites in England - Workforce development for assisted living technology: understanding roles, delivery and workforce needs (Centre for International Research on Care, Labour and Equalities (CIRCLE), University of Leeds, May 2012, 54pp).
- A learning and development framework, supported by an on line hub which provides a range of learning materials to support staff in the field of Assisted living technologies.
- NMDS-SC - providing key information on social care providers and their workforce.
- NMDS-SC dashboards - aggregated NMDS-SC information in an easy to understand format. Employers can select the workforce area of interest to them and choose their own comparator group. The dashboards provide tailored interpretation, simple guidance and links to related resources.
- In March 2014 a workforce strategy for eAT will be live, with an implementation plan and knowledge and skills sets. These will all be under the title of 'Technology to Care'.

In partnership with Skills for Care and Development

- Learn from Learning – a free comparison website providing information about the range of learning available to sector employers, workers and learners. It will include an online evaluation tool to help employers and learners manage learning better and get better value for money. As well as helping them find the best free learning materials available on the worldwide web.
- Mlearning solutions – currently developing mlearning on a range of subjects including – safeguarding (in partnership with SCIE), the principles of workforce redesign, community skills, code of conduct, self-care and skills selection.

The College of Social Work

TCSW has made use of technology to develop and provide membership services, all designed to support the continuing professional development of social workers. Examples include:

- **E portfolio:** a tool to record and store cpd which includes prompts when using other membership services, and allows members to map their development onto the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) so as to identify their learning and development needs.
- **Knowledge @ the College:** an online helpdesk, that enables members to ask professional practice advice from experts, and to browse previously asked questions, so building a practice knowledge base.
- **Athens access** to enable members to access e books and journals.

The National Skills Academy for Social Care

The Skills Academy has used technology in developing a range of tools and resources, designed to strengthen leadership capacity across the sector and particularly for Registered Managers. Examples include:

- A Virtual Learning Environment, The Careship Development Zone that enables online learning alongside traditional approaches and hosts a range of diagnostic tools.
- Online Self-assessments for individuals and organisations, linked to the Leadership Qualities Framework, for assessing and tracking leadership capacity.
- E-learning programmes, such as the Governance e-learning programme, to support Board Members and Trustees of adult social care businesses and charities.
- E-portfolios: a tool on the VLE to record and store CPD and link it to the Leadership Qualities Framework.

- E-bulletins on a monthly basis to our Members and to the wider sector.
- Survey work with Registered Managers and across the sector, looking (inter alia) at preferred learning methods.
- A National Online Network for Registered Managers.
- Access to tailored online resources, grouped by subject, for Registered Managers.
- An online Values-based Recruitment Toolkit for Employers, including access to a personality profiling tool, being piloted across the sector. (Jointly developed by the Academy, Skills for Care and MacIntyre).
- An online as well as hard copy Guide for Registered Managers (to be published in Spring 2014).
- A Leadership Qualities Framework App for Registered Managers (to be launched in Spring 2014).

Social Care Institute for Excellence

SCIE has developed a range of digital learning and information resources which are freely available from their website. These materials draw on SCIE's research and evidence Guides to inform and showcase best practice. SCIE is currently re-developing its digital presence to optimise access to content via popular social media sites such as You Tube, syndication of content to key partners, and making more content available, in appropriate formats, on mobile platforms.

Examples include:

- Integrated Working Tool – a new virtual planner which enables organisations and multi-agency teams to work together.
- Social CareTV film – over 100 short films on a wide range of social care topics.
- eLearning modules for practitioners and managers on topics such as reablement, managing risk, minimising restraint, communication skills, interprofessional interagency collaboration.
- Dementia Gateway – online resources, developed by dementia experts and with carers and people with dementia.
- Social Care Online – a free database of information and research evidence on all aspects of UK social care and social work.
- Get Connected, a national project (2010-2012) which made funding available to put new technology - especially PCs and laptops into care homes, primarily to enable residents to build online links with friends and family via routes including email and Skype.

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