

Pathfinders

Implementation Phase Case Study (2020/21)

Technology for care

The projects within this theme focus on the roll-out and increased uptake of technology for care within care homes.

Background

In 2020/21, the Social Care Digital Pathfinders implementation phase has funded 16 projects that support products and services that have already been piloted in small local areas, with a view to implementing them on a larger scale. Of these, two projects focused on the implementation of technology in care homes.

Friends of the Elderly (FotE): this project, entitled Acoustic Monitoring to Improve Patient Outcomes, was a collaboration between FotE (a charity that runs care homes for older people) and two commercial suppliers: Ally (providers of an acoustic monitoring system) and KareInn (a care home software provider). The initial focus of the project was to develop a Sleep Handover Tool that integrates the two suppliers' solutions. The tool can be used to analyse sleep trends and pass insights from the night shift to the day shift to improve residents' health and wellbeing.

Impact of Covid-19: the project team were unable to conduct face-to-face training and on-site implementation of services. This led them to delay the roll-out to further homes during the implementation phase and instead focus on the rollout of two new features that would be useful in the Covid-19 context: the resident wellbeing portal for family members and day-time acoustic monitoring of residents that identified increased patterns of coughing. The project team also noted that due to the Covid-19 pandemic there was improved connectivity in care homes meaning roll-out of their solution was easier.

National Care Forum (NCF): the original scope for the project was to create a network of three innovation hubs (i.e. digitally mature care providers) across England to showcase their use of digital technology and to inspire others to take up technology. It was planned that these hubs would host groups of visitors to showcase their technology, explain the adoption

and implementation process and discuss the benefits of using it. A variety of technology was selected to be showcased including: Electronic Care Planning, wearable GPS devices, acoustic monitoring and circadian lighting systems, amongst others. These were planned to run between March and November 2020.

Impact of Covid-19: For the National Care Forum, the Covid-19 pandemic meant that they had to rescope the project, creating a new virtual format. The new format involved a series of Zoom webinars with the innovation hubs, using a mixture of pre-recorded content and a live Q&A with staff in the hubs. Pre-recorded content was recorded in June and July 2020 in compliance with Covid-19 guidelines.

User research and prototyping

Friends of the Elderly: at the beginning of the roll out, the Karelnn team implemented the solution in one care home so that they could prototype it, test it and make amendments as necessary. The suppliers highlighted that they would frequently visit the care homes to get feedback from staff first-hand. The team also undertook virtual user acceptability testing. The team highlighted that one of the key lessons learned was that many frontline staff were not familiar with using technology. This led the team to change some of the language used or the route taken to access a particular page to ensure it was meaningful to the staff. The suppliers also joined handovers to understand how staff were working and updated the product based on what they discovered.

National Care Forum: the majority of user research took place in the initial scoping phase, including discussions with a hub about their experience running visits and a survey of visitors to the hubs. During the implementation phase, the project team asked all attendees from social care provider organisations to complete a benchmarking survey before the webinars, as well as a follow-up survey to measure the impact of the webinars. They noted that this was a challenging aspect of the project, as this meant that not everyone who signed up to the webinar attended (as the initial survey was a prerequisite). However, to mitigate this they overbooked the sessions to ensure there was always a sufficient number of attendees.

Benefits

Forecast benefits

Throughout the implementation phase, each project was required to submit a quarterly benefit report forecasting both the potential financial benefits of the solution, and the quality benefits. The financial benefits are summarised in the table below.

Figure 1: Table of forecast benefits

	Friends of the Elderly*	National Care Forum
Cash (eg. costs taken out or new income received)	-	-
Non-cash (eg. efficiency gains):	£18,324,130	-
Societal (ie. any service user, carer or general public benefits from Social Return on Investment)	£940,375	£80,000**
Total	£19,264,505	£80,000
Actual benefits	£214,377	£80,000

* this forecast covers the next 5 years, as the solution is scaled up and rolled out across more providers.

** this is the value of contracts signed with organisations who attended the Hubble webinars, reported by the Access Group (a software provider).

Quality benefits

Common across both projects is the benefit of increased digital maturity for care providers, which provides a number of benefits itself, some of which are highlighted below. Within the NCF project this relates to the providers who attended their sessions (58% of whom stated that attending a Hubble session helped develop their digital and technological maturity) and for FotE this relates to the care homes in which they have implemented the solution.

Other quality benefits highlighted were:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More responsive care and support • Fewer falls • Improve resident safety • Improved staff satisfaction • Improve resident health and wellbeing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An increased understanding of the potential benefits of technology for care • More efficient decision making around buying technology • Increase in uptake of integrated technology
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An unanticipated benefit highlighted by the FotE project team was the impact that the solution could have in the Covid-19 context. They highlighted that the solution can be used to identify potential cases of Covid-19 (through acoustic monitoring) and reduce transmission (by reducing physical interaction between staff and residents).

Key strengths of the projects

Both projects highlighted their ability to adapt to the Covid-19 context and use this to deliver more than they had originally intended. Key strengths of each of the projects include:

- The FotE project team highlighted that they are all focused on enhancing the wellbeing of the residents and have used this shared ambition to keep momentum on their project.
- The National Care Forum highlighted that their attendee feedback had been particularly positive – in November 2020, 93% of follow-up survey respondents rated the webinars as ‘very good’ or ‘excellent’ and every respondent stated that it inspired them to explore the use of technology in their care environments or think differently about the use of tech in care.

Friends of the Elderly

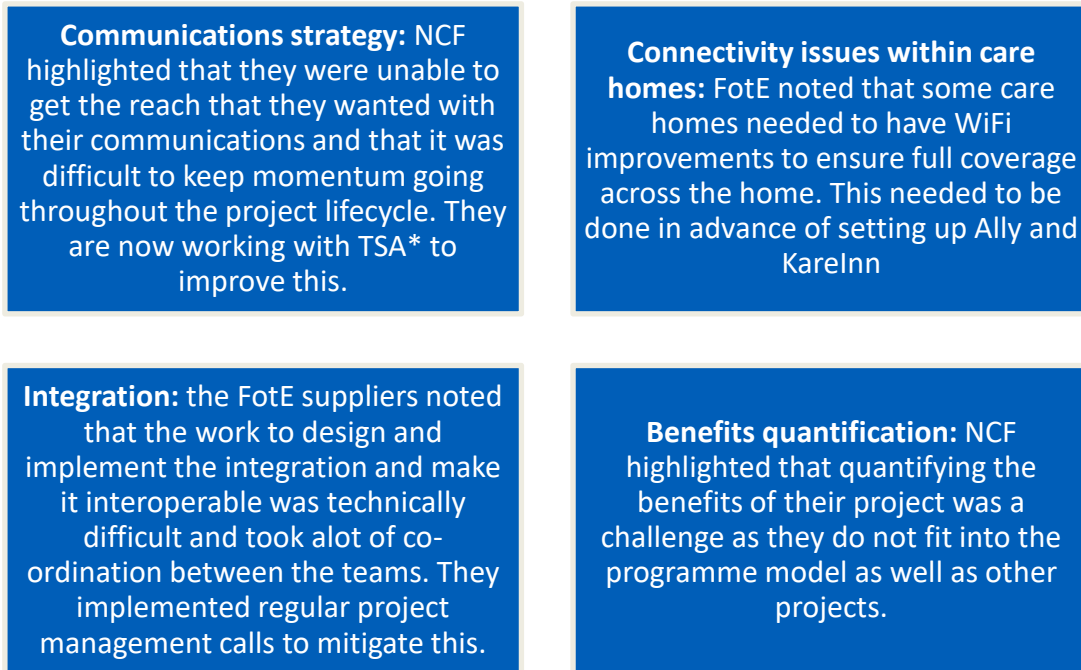
Working with KareInn’s digital care platform enabled the charity to integrate electronic care planning in a way which complemented its home-from-home ethos of delivering quality care with real-time accurate recording of outcomes. The further integration with Ally’s resident acoustic monitoring system helped the charity to prevent falls, not to disturb sleep, and free-up time to spend on residents’ wellbeing and support activities - Steve Allen, CEO, Friends of the Elderly

NCF

58% of respondents to the NCF follow-up survey stated that attending the Hubble sessions helped develop their digital and technological maturity as an organisation.

Challenges and Lessons learnt

Figure 2: Challenges to project delivery



*the representative body for technology enabled care (TEC) services

Lessons learned include:

- NCF highlighted that, were they to run the project again, they would involve some of the technology suppliers earlier on in the process and make sure they were regularly kept up to date
- NCF noted that they could have included a larger variety of technology in their webinars, that could be of benefit in domiciliary care settings.
- The FotE project team noted that for some care staff, the switch to a more digitised way of working was a large cultural shift – particularly in relation to trusting technology instead of checking on residents in person. With ongoing support, however, this can be overcome and can open up staff to the possibility of using other technologies.
- The FotE project team also noted that, in reflection, they would have refined the scope of their project earlier. They recognised huge potential for collaboration between KareInn and Ally and had to work hard to focus on developing a simpler starting point which could be used to validate the model before developing further.

Future plans

Friends of the Elderly: roll out to the two remaining FotE homes (delayed due to outbreaks of Covid-19) will be completed by the end of 2021 and contracts are in place for the suppliers to govern continual use of the product. The team noted that they have processes in place to upscale nationally and will use the work with FotE to show the benefits of their product. The suppliers noted that although they were able to tailor the solution to FotE's needs, they will limit this with other providers. As FotE are a mid-sized provider, they believe that the lessons learned are widely applicable. The suppliers also noted that there is potential for their product to have an impact on different cohorts (eg. people with dementia) and link in with other services such as GPs. The project team also noted that the potential for alternative funding models should be explored to support scale up to other local authority and charity care providers.

National Care Forum: the project team believe that their project is easily replicable and that there are several other types of technology that have not been showcased yet with a large appetite for attendance. They noted that should a similar project be run again, the ideal format may include a combination of a webinar, followed by a physical visit for those seriously interested. They highlighted that a network for this work would be beneficial, but that it would require dedicated resources. They suggested that the network would best be run with local care associations supported by a national hub. The project team highlighted funding, time resources and staff availability as the key barriers to this. They noted that, although the sector is currently focused on the Covid-19 response, that there is a real opportunity for this work as the sector recovers.

Contact details

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