New Horizons for Self Care

A White Paper

Technology Strategy Board
Driving Innovation
Introduction

The ‘Self Care in the Digital Age’ White Paper outlines the relative success of self-care and assistive technologies and digital services currently being introduced to the UK, laying out the urgent need for a wider debate on the role technological and digital innovation should play and the importance of greater uptake in the health and social care sectors.

This analysis will challenge all stakeholders in health and social care to understand how traditional methods of care will have to change to accommodate the needs of an ageing and often technologically excluded population. It will pose questions about how investment in assistive technology and digital services which enable self-care is essential for the future of health and social care in the UK, and challenge whether self-care will ever become embedded in society.

The UK is leading European countries in trialling new products and services. Almost 1.7 million people in the UK benefit from ‘telecare services’ and this number is growing.

However, our research shows that we still have some way to go in generating widespread awareness about assistive technologies including telehealth and telecare. Just six per cent of us know what telehealth is while five per cent are aware of telecare. What’s more, among those who know of these technologies, few understand how they can improve lives – despite high levels of satisfaction among the few that have experienced them.

The dallas (Delivering Assisted Living Lifestyles At Scale) programme enables smarter, more independent living through digital technology, helping to transform the health and wellbeing of people across the UK. Developed by the UK’s innovation agency, the Technology Strategy Board, dallas consists of four projects leading innovative and ambitious programmes and testing them with communities throughout the UK.

This programme aims to benefit 169,000 people across the UK by 2015, giving them access to new and innovative products, systems and services to transform their health and care choices.

1 Figures from the Telecare Services Association, http://www.telecare.org.uk/about-us
Findings in detail

Understanding the UK’s health and care needs

Before investigating the awareness and uptake of assistive technologies and digital services for health and care, it became apparent it was crucial to understand the key factors the UK’s population look for from their health and care system.

For the purposes of this research, we have focused on a range of health and care technologies to provide a view of the general public’s awareness and adoption. These are telehealth (equipment to monitor your health in your own home consists of a ‘hub’ and various peripherals that measure blood pressure, blood glucose levels or weight depending on the individual’s need), telecare (a ‘hub’ that is wirelessly connected to environmental or personal sensors that enable people to live independently, minimise risks and relate emergency or lifestyle changes over time), self-care (technology that enables people to look after themselves in a healthy way as preventative and wellbeing measures), and health and care apps for smartphones or tablets (health, care and wellbeing applications available for use on internet-enabled mobile devices). Please see the appendix for our definitions of these technologies.

The most important factors for the UK population when considering the health and care of both themselves and of their family are to feel informed (62%) and to feel cared for (56%). Both are central benefits of the new self-care technologies since they provide more and greater opportunities for people to engage with their own health and care, as well as getting more information from the many online advice sites now available.

Most important factors when considering health and care for you and your family

![Chart showing the most important factors when considering health and care for you and your family, with Feeling informed and Feeling cared-for being the most important at 1000 respondents each, followed by Feeling independent at 500 respondents, Feeling connected at 300 respondents, and Being in touch with a health or care professional, Physically seeing a health and care professional, Feeling cared-for, Feeling connected, Feeling informed, A feeling of freedom, Feeling independent, and None of the above at 0 respondents.](chart.png)
It is also striking that 37 per cent of respondents felt that physically seeing a health and care professional was one of their top three health priorities. That contrasts favourably with the 30 per cent of respondents who said simply being in touch with a health or social care professional was sufficient, indicating a strong basis for the use of technologies to enable greater engagement and connection with these professionals.

*The doctor - patient relationship remains very important to patient peace of mind*

New assistive technologies and digital services will impact how future health and care is administered, redefining the way patients think about the doctor-patient relationship.

With that in mind, the previous findings bear further investigation. More than a third of our respondents (37%) said having an appointment with their GP was among their top three considerations when prioritising the health and care of them or their family.

That is supported by the finding that only two in ten people (22%) said that a feeling of independence was an important priority for their health and care. When asked why they would not consider telehealth, for example, 43 per cent said they would prefer to be consulted by their doctor face to face.

*For the purposes of this research, we have focused on a range of health and care technologies to provide a view of the general public’s awareness and adoption. These are telehealth, telecare, self-care, and health and care apps for smartphones or tablets. Please see the appendix for our definitions of these technologies.*

That data show a prevailing mind set apparent in the UK, eschewing new technologies for traditional appointment-based relationships. This is the biggest barrier to a more widespread commitment to self-care, while awareness and understanding of technology is developing.
**Awareness of health technology is sorely lacking**

Despite the fact that ‘feeling informed’ was the most important factor the UK public wanted from their health and care, the vast majority of the UK population has not heard of telehealth or telecare (9% is aware of each), while approximately seven in ten people have never heard of self-care technologies.

More surprisingly, despite the ubiquity of mobile technologies including iPhones, iPads and their like, almost three quarters of people (73%) are not aware of the many health and care apps available for smartphones or tablets.

Even those people who claim awareness of these technologies are not fully aware of their benefits. 38 per cent of people said they did not understand the benefits for both self-care technologies and for health and care apps for smartphones and tablets. Similarly, while many respondents had an idea of telecare and telehealth benefits, many were labouring under misapprehensions – confusing either with television-based advice services or 24/7 access to doctors, for example.

These figures are not entirely surprising. Telehealth and telecare have long been sources of confusion among the general public, not least due to the similarities of their nomenclature. Apps are
also a relative newcomer into the public sphere, with a lack of awareness and understanding surprising given their high profile though not entirely unexpected.

While awareness is low, that does create is a significant opportunity for assistive technologies and digital services to make a difference in the UK.

*Demand for more information and use of health technology outstrips take-up*

This lack of general awareness of assistive technologies and digital services is disappointing, but does not represent an insurmountable barrier for our hopes.

More than two thirds (67%) of respondents say they would use or would like more information on technology such as telehealth, telecare, self-care mobile apps or equipment to monitor glucose or blood pressure, in order to live a healthier life, prevent illness or raise awareness of potential health problems.

**Would you ever use technology to live a healthier life, prevent illness and raise awareness of potential health problems?**

- Yes I would use or like more information on health and care technology
- No I would not use or like more information on health and care technology
Of that 67 per cent of people, there was an almost equal split between respondents who would use telehealth, telecare, self-care or mobile apps (52%) to people who would like further information about the use of those technologies.

However, interest does not equal adoption. Of the reasons not to use assistive technologies and digital services for health, care and wellbeing, the most prevalent are awareness and tradition.

Reasons not to use telehealth, telecare, self-care and mobile health and care apps

More than half of respondents (53%) said they didn’t know what these technologies were showing a lack of awareness (‘I don’t know what it is’), and 43 per cent said they would prefer to go to the doctor – underlining our hold on tradition.

Other barriers saw minimal, and surprisingly consistent numbers, with only 13 per cent of people noting that worry about sharing their private health details online was a barrier to use of these technologies.
The jury is still out on open data

Shared data across our care system is essential to building compatible technology systems and ensuring collaboration across health and social care organisations. Because of its importance, we saw fit to investigate this issue in more detail.

There has been widespread negative coverage of both open data as well as numerous privacy breaches to cloud opinions on the subject. However, an almost equal amount of people in the UK are comfortable with their health details to be accessed by healthcare professionals (34%) as would not (38%).

Would you allow your health details to be shared online for health and care professional use if it were safe and secure to do so?

Of those who would not allow information to be shared online, the prevailing concerns were data privacy (63%) and worries regarding the security of information online (57%). Interestingly, almost a quarter of those respondents (23%) said they would prefer their records were kept as a hard copy.

When it is used, the assistive technology experience is worth recommending to family and friends
Despite the low levels of awareness and adoption, the actual experiences of users are uniformly positive.

Of people who had experienced telehealth, telecare or self-care, almost two thirds of people (64%) would definitely recommend their experience to family or friends.

Would you recommend your experience of any of these technologies to a friend or a member of your family?

The benefits they enjoyed were the speed of information about their wellbeing (38%) and an ability to manage health before it became urgent (33%).

The benefits of healthcare technology

- Convenience - was able to stay at home
- Speed to get information about my wellbeing
- Ability to manage my health before it became urgent
- Solved my problem or answered my questions
- Spoke to an intelligent healthcare professional
- Reduces burden on the healthcare system
- Ensures doctors are available for people who really need them
However, the most important benefit was that of convenience – the ability for the user to stay at home and enjoy their health and care in an easy, safe place. This is a key finding, and underlines why telehealth and other assistive technologies are so popular, when they are implemented.

**The UK leading the world in assistive technology and digital services for health, care and wellbeing**

While take up of assistive technologies and digital services is relatively low, two thirds (64%) of people could not name another country more technologically advanced when it comes to health and care.

One in five people outright believed that the UK was more advanced in terms of assistive technology for health, care and wellbeing than the rest of the world. This is an interesting finding given the low proportion of awareness of telecare, telehealth, self-care technology and even health and care apps on smartphones and tablets.

Beyond the UK, the USA is most often cited when asked which country is better placed for assistive technology, followed by Germany and Japan.

It is heartening that, despite the UK’s apparent awareness gap which presents problems when viewed in light of the ever ageing population and increasingly stretched health and care resources, the country remains a leader in health and care technology in the eyes of its public.
What is dallas doing to help?

dallas is a flagship project designed to enable smarter, more independent living through digital technology. Developed by the Technology Strategy Board, dallas brings together four communities to share innovation and expertise in the delivery of new approaches to health, care and wellbeing. The innovative programmes supported by dallas are:

- More Independent (Mi)
- Living It Up (LiU)
- Year Zero
- iFocus

Technology is at the centre of facilitating consumer information-sharing for care.

For example, one man Scotland contacted LiU offering to be a ‘buddy’ to someone caring for a relative with dementia, sharing the insights he had himself gained from caring for his own mother who had dementia.

dallas is promoting innovation in digital technology to enable independent living. Examples of the good work the programme is doing every day include:

- **Year Zero** is creating an online health and care record that is owned by the patient, allowing them to add and organise personal health information as well as to integrate health records from different providers, and share this with other individuals and institutions.

- **LiU** will provide a choice of health and care access points to people across Scotland while at home or ‘out and about’, through web, TV or smartphone. Customisable and integrated menus of services, information, products and social activities will support social, health, care, intellectual and personal interests – to keep consumers connected.

- **Warm Neighbourhoods** acts as a wide scale programme focused on health and care project integration through technology, providing reassurance and support for the family members of ageing dependents through discreet connected home sensor technology.

- By the end of 2013, **Mi** will have opened 50 digital hubs from community venues and workplaces across Liverpool to help people get online for the first time.
The dallas programmes

Mi is a Liverpool-based scheme designed to enable people to take charge of their health, wellbeing and lifestyle through technology.

Mi allows people to live more independently in their own homes, offering peace of mind both to them and their family, whilst reducing the amount of time spent on appointments by supporting people to manage better at home.

Year Zero is creating personalised electronic health records to allow people to take greater control of their own health and wellbeing, while transforming the relationship between patients and health care professionals.

Year Zero will digitise electronic health records for children, in the form of the eredbook, as well as providing health and care planning tools for the rest of the family.

Living it Up is a digitally-enabled community that supports better health, wellbeing and active lifestyles in Scotland.

LiU provides personalised experiences to keep people connected with one another and with their health and wellbeing. LiU services save time and are affordable, easy to operate and understand, and are ‘at the fingertips’ of any person in Scotland.

i-focus collaborates with health organisations on interoperability and best practice to transform health and care by providing better service delivery through digital comms and technology.

Part of i-focus, Warm Neighbourhoods helps families stay connected by using simple sensor technology. It provides support and reassurance for families with vulnerable members who live alone.
Conclusion

Assistive technology and digital services are now widely available than ever before in the UK to allow people to live more independent lives as they get older. However, there is a real need for greater awareness and understanding of the very basic elements of these offerings.

As our population changes it is becoming vitally important to make sure those with long term conditions and social care problems can benefit from such services that can allow people to live independent lives.

Similarly, there is a significant opportunity for businesses and partner organisations to educate and enable that population with these technologies.

Yet there are several factors we need to address, outlined within this white paper. The traditional view of the importance of one on one doctor/patient relationship will change as technology becomes more embedded in the care system.

However, awareness of the relevant technology is still low and those who have heard of telecare and telehealth and other technologies are largely unaware of their benefits. Despite those problems, interest in new technology among patients is high because of the convenience and speed of access to personal health data.

The purpose of this research has been to increase understanding of how assistive technology and digital services should be supported to enhance self care in the UK. Traditional care delivery methods are no longer as affordable or desirable from a governmental perspective and while there will always be a need for intensive and institutional care, new methods of care at home for the chronic sick and those with real social care needs has to be properly developed through guided collaboration to ensure people receive the support they need.

Methodology

This research was commissioned by dallas and conducted by OnePoll, surveying 2,000 UK adults during March 2014.

Our research shows there are still challenges ahead while public awareness remains low.