

People powered technology

The challenge

With a population of 320,000, Wigan is the ninth-largest metropolitan authority in England and the second largest in Greater Manchester. The authority faces a number of challenges, including:

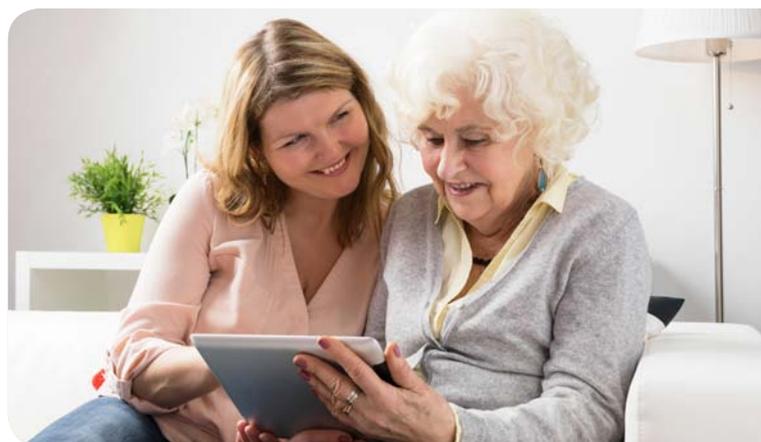
- A continued financial challenge requiring the delivery of a further £60m worth of efficiencies by 2019
- An increase in life expectancy that will result in increased demand for services from an ageing population
- A higher level of deprivation compared to England as a whole

These challenges led the council to redesign the way it delivers services and embark upon a journey of reform. Central to its strategy is the 'Deal for Communities', an informal contract between the council and its residents to change behaviours in order to achieve a more positive future together.

What we did

The Council's vision is for Wigan Borough to be a confident place with confident people. Great progress has already been made, transforming services to save more than £100m since 2010 and seeing resident satisfaction with the Council increase by 50% since 2012. This is largely due to its asset-based approach to public sector reform, a key element of which is 'The Deal', a strategy to build self-reliance across the borough. This new relationship between public services and citizens enables shared decision making, genuine co-production and joint delivery of services, including:

- An asset-based approach that recognises and builds on the strengths of individuals, families and communities
- Integrated services that place families and communities at the heart of everything
- Use of new technology to support residents to be independent and in control, enabling them to access services and support digitally



- An evidence based understanding of risk and impact to target services effectively and ensure the right intervention at the right time
- Building self-reliance and independence resulting in behaviour change and reduced demand for services

“ Technology is a key component of the way we're transforming services in Wigan. We want to work together with our community, enabling people to become more independent and self-sufficient. Technology can empower people to have more control over their services, and act as a gateway for them to find out what's available to support them at home.

Jane Stevens, Assistive Technology Lead,
Wigan Council

The role of technology

The Council's ambition is to use new technology to empower residents to be independent and in control, enabling them to access services support digitally. It aims to:

- Provide a single access point for customers to access information and advice services, self-service and own their own records and data
- Invest in technologies to ensure service delivery is as efficient and effective as possible, rationalising case management systems, moving towards a single view and enabling staff to work flexibly
- Empower people to manage their own care and take advantage of technology-enabled care solutions that maintain independence

Technology enabled care (also known as assistive technology or telecare) systems have been in use in Wigan for some time. The systems work by using a range of wireless sensors in the home which communicate with a central hub, which uses the telephone line to raise an alert at a 24 hour monitoring centre if an event such as a fall or fire is detected. By managing risks, the systems enable people to remain at home with the confidence that help will automatically be sent if it is needed. The systems can also support people living in residential environments, by alerting staff to potential risks such as people leaving their beds or rooms during the night.

This 24 hour support is being supplemented and expanded as part of The Deal, with technology enabled care being used to underpin new initiatives, support new client

groups and become more accessible to people wishing to fund their own care. An example is the introduction of therapeutic care in nursing homes, designed to reduce the frequency and impact of falls, which is being supported by the use of telecare such as bed and chair sensors and fall detectors.

Active later life

The Active Later Life programme aims to help people keep their independence through keeping active in later life and reducing the risk of falls. It delivers a number of low cost evidenced based strength and balance classes in community venues across the borough, and also delivers a 10 week 'Skilling Up' programme for frailer older adults unable to attend the community sessions. Six week home exercise programmes are also supported with home assessments, booklets and follow up phone calls. Physical activity programmes for people living with dementia and activity programmes for residential settings, day services and community groups are also available. Participants are also supported by telecare systems in their homes.

Adherence to the community programme in 2016 was 72%, with 73% of completers increasing their score on the Falls Efficacy Scale (FES-I). Active Later Life is currently seeking to expand its reach by using tablets to show films of the exercises to participants who do not want to attend group sessions, with a particular focus on men, who currently form only 22% of participants.



Results

The Council's innovative approach is focused on the person and how they can best use their strengths and skills to become more independent and contribute to their community. Joined up health and care services will ensure joint investment in prevention and health and care pathways that are seamless and co-ordinated no matter who provides the service. Health services are becoming more community-based and focus on prevention and early intervention, with fewer acute hospital beds. Support will be provided to people to allow them to stay in their own communities for longer and be in control of their lives and their care.

The use of telecare in supported accommodation has also created financial gains, as sensors which monitor for events such as epileptic seizures and people getting out of bed can be linked to a CareAssist pager, meaning staffing be changed from waking to sleep in, or in some cases removed by using a hub and spoke model.

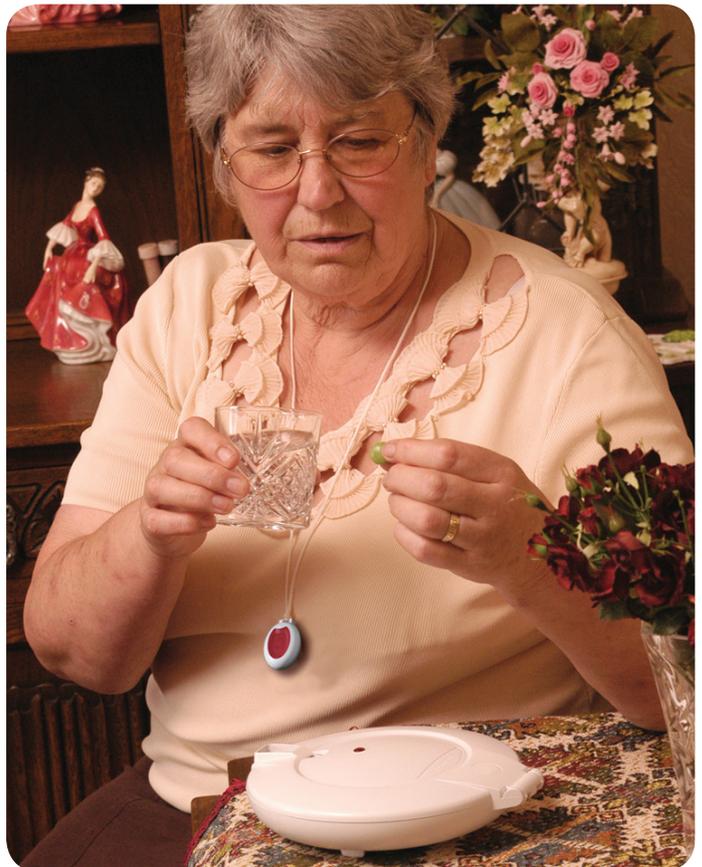
In 2016 Wigan Council was named Digital Council of the Year at the Local Government Chronicle (LGC) Awards in London.



Case studies

Medication reminders

Mrs J lives alone and was confused about the multiple medicines she was prescribed. Her son Mark expressed concern to social services that although his Mum was receiving two care visits a day, she needed more support to be able to take her medication properly.



A medication dispenser was installed, which is filled with Mrs J's medicines and prompts her to take it at the appropriate time. If Mrs J fails to access her medication, the dispenser will automatically alert the monitoring centre who can talk to Mrs J and remind her.

Mrs J is a regular viewer of several television programmes, so the dispenser prompts have been timed to coordinate with her viewing habits, acting as an additional reminder. She has adapted very well to using the dispenser reports feeling more positive about managing her medication. After six weeks a review showed that Mrs J had only forgotten her medication on one occasion and she identified and corrected this herself.

Mrs J has since cancelled her lunchtime and evening visits and she and her son feel there is no need for ongoing services at this time.

Next steps

Wigan Council is continuing to explore the ways technology can support people with long-term care needs. This includes utilising mainstream consumer technology, such as:

Amazon Echo – a smart speaker which answers questions, reads audiobooks, plays music, reports news, traffic and weather, provides local and personal information and can control the home environment

Google assistant – a voice assistant for Android devices similar to Amazon Echo

Embrace watches – designed to improve the lives of people with epilepsy by monitoring seizures, sleep and physical activity

App based social care – reviewing the range of apps available to support professionals and customers

Professionals, service users and families work together to review new technologies before they are made more widely available. The Council is currently evaluating the Tunstall Companion, an easy to use tablet, which enables people to keep in touch with family and friends, access the internet, keep a record of health and wellbeing and communicate with care staff.

The Council continues to ensure Wigan has a robust IT infrastructure, and work with other councils within Greater Manchester to ensure that the region is a world top 20 super-connected city by 2020.

The Council is also examining how it can reshape its offer for supporting people with learning disabilities, increasing its use of technology and working in partnership with health partners.



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