

# The Housing LIN Summit: Better services, better lives and planning for a digital future

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The recent adult social care reform white paper *People at the Heart of Care* has a clear focus on integration, not just with health, but with housing, recognising the vital importance of where people live on their quality of life and health outcomes. Along with £300m to help embed this integration into local strategies, the white paper also promises at least £150m of additional funding to drive greater adoption of technology and digitisation across social care.

**These commitments are to be welcomed, by the stakeholders responsible for delivering these integrated services, and by the people whose lives will ultimately be improved by them. However, both integration and increased use of technology have long been seen as a key part of transforming health and social care delivery, yet there has been more dialogue and debate than real change. As we emerge from the pandemic, the next twelve months represents a pivotal time that will shape housing, health, and social care for decades to come.**

Working together is in everyone's interests, and greater integration and uptake of technology will not only enable increased and improved innovation, but will ensure our services can meet the population's health and care needs, and save taxpayers' money.

We need to consider our shared common goals. Housing, health and social care must work together to have a positive and long-lasting impact on population health, and ensure we put citizens at the heart of decisions about their health and care.

Housing, health and social care are all intrinsically dependent upon each other. If care delivery is ineffective, this places increased pressure on our healthcare system, therefore leading to an inability to support housing tenants. We need to have a truly joined up, integrated approach where we listen to citizens, understand their everyday needs and work together to bridge gaps in our services.

When we achieve successful and integrated services for citizens, the benefits flow through the system to primary, secondary, community, social care and ultimately housing. If we get our approach right, citizens stay in the place of their choice for longer, delaying entry into care.

As services become more efficient and citizen outcomes are improved, we are better able to deliver cost efficiencies. Improved condition management and medication compliance for example has a clear impact on decreasing GP visits, clinicians are able to target patients that need support, and early intervention can prevent future, often high cost, care requirements.

Using technology to support people is low cost, meaning citizens can stay at home for longer with an increased quality of life. Likewise, relatively low-cost telecare systems can help to avoid hospital admission, delay and prevent the need for residential care, and reduce carer burnout.

Understanding the solutions that are required and adapting as things change- not to be driven by contracts but in providing solutions- will ensure innovation continues to flourish. We need to go back to a stage before solution building in that if we understand the problems faced on a daily basis, we are better placed to co-design straight-forward and effective solutions.

Technology has historically been seen as an addition to existing service delivery, rather than a means of transforming models of care, leading to difficulties in integrating technology effectively. Cultural change is required which in turn needs early engagement. We must lead from the top to ensure stakeholders have input at an early stage into how technology can help them and the citizens they support. There is still misapprehension that needs to be addressed; stakeholders need to understand that technology is an enabler for better services, not a replacement for human contact.

Our aging population means we have no choice but to look at the ways we can deliver care differently in order to cope with increasing demand. Between now and 2040 there will be an extra 6 million over 65s. Increased integration and use of technology both not only enhance the care that people receive, but also enable them to remain at home for longer and increase the efficiency and capacity of services.

Other challenges remain, such as the UK's move from analogue to digital communications network. This will require significant investment from the public sector at a time when budgets are already under extreme pressure, however, this brings a once in a generation opportunity to modernise, improve and shift thinking from a reactive, to a proactive delivery model. AI, machine learning and the use of data is hugely important to this. But we need to educate people to understand the value of data, for example greater creativity being enabled through the provision of data through digital solutions, and how ultimately this means empowering users and enabling care to be delivered where and when it is needed most.

Integration and investment in technology will enable us to reconfigure and integrate our services. It's essential that service providers and end users are involved in the digital transformation if we're to innovate, embrace technology successfully, and deliver new approaches which create benefits for citizens.