

**A CONSULTATION ON THE DIGITAL STRATEGY FOR SCOTLAND**  
**SCOTTISH CARE SUBMISSION – December 2020**

Scottish Care welcomes the opportunity to inform the Digital Strategy for Scotland. Through our recently established ‘Technology Advisory Group’ and our [Collective Care Future](#) programme we are able to provide a robust insight into the aspirations, experiences and priorities for digital across the sector in Scotland. This submission is informed by our significant body of knowledge including our [Vision for Technology and Digital in Social Care](#), [Tech Rights](#) report and [Human Rights Charter](#) for Technology and Digital in Social Care. Our submission is also shaped by our recently published futures paper, [What If and Why Not? Making the Future of Social Care A Reality](#), of which creativity, innovation and digital is a core theme.

**Do you think there are opportunities to realise this collaborative approach?**

Yes. Scottish Care welcomes the focus on a collaborative approach throughout the strategy. However, we emphasise the importance of ensuring involvement from appropriate partners and including a diversity of perspectives early to minimise ‘tokenistic’ forms of collaboration.

We would like to reinforce the need for longevity and continued investment in future exploration of digital and technology, and the sustainability of the technologies explored. In addition, we also stress the critical need to underpin human rights in any exploration of technology and digital, and the need for a rights-based approach to design, development, implementation and scale.

We recommend prioritising a human rights mindset and approach to enabling many of the ambitions included in the strategy and as a vehicle to realising collaboration across multiple groups, partners and sectors. Prioritising human rights as a foundation and embedding human rights as an approach will help to ensure that the responses to the areas and actions proposed within the strategy meet the needs of the people and groups intended, by recognising and involving their voice throughout the process.

It is critical that the independent sector, particularly the independent social care sector, is recognised, valued and included as providing a key voice and contribution in driving forward and realising many areas of the strategy. The independent sector provides 90% of care home places for adults in Scotland, delivers over 55% of home care hours for older people and employs over 104,000 people.

**Of the opportunities which you have identified, which do you think are the priority ones?**

All of the above.

**Is the vision that we have set out in the supporting narrative in each of these sections the right one?**

**No one left behind:** We would like to reinforce the urgency and prioritisation of ‘broadband coverage for all’. Connectivity is a key barrier which has been highlighted repeatedly by our members across different parts of Scotland. In particular, we highlight the critical importance of supporting the infrastructure required to enable connectivity for all care homes in Scotland, enabling access for staff, residents and family. Connectivity is a critical foundation of all other aspects of the strategy and will require a national response, working with the sector to identify needs and provide the support mechanisms to ensure availability of connection to all. As we have

highlighted in previous consultation responses, we hope to see much more infrastructure around connectivity in the design, planning and resourcing of social care in order to achieve parity with other settings. Connectivity to enable digital access should be supported and enabled in a non-discriminatory way, irrespective of age, setting or wider circumstances.

We also emphasise the need to be cognisant of digital choice. This supports ensuring the right to connectivity, but also the right to choose to engage in digital forms of access to services and support. In addition, we stress the importance of exploring digital across generations. We note that all examples provided in this narrative are related to children and young people. There is a need to ensure adults, specifically older adults, are supported to engage and included as key voices in shaping any future forms of digital services and support that may be available to them. We highlight the need to be cognisant of the difference between programmes that widen access to digital and programmes that are truly 'inclusive' of all ages, groups, settings and contexts.

**Digital services:** We welcome the commitment to ensure a needs-based, person-centred approach to the design of digital services. However, we would suggest building on this further to enable digital innovation that is *led* by the needs and aspirations of people and communities. This includes not only having people as part of design decisions but as part of setting the direction and agenda from the outset. As such, we recommend supporting approaches that enable *genuine* co-design and involvement.

In order to support the development of digital services that enable choice and control, we also recommend building on existing frameworks such as our [Human Rights Charter for Technology and Digital in Social Care](#) and accompanying [Guidance Document](#). Although co-produced primarily for the social care sector, the principles within this charter extend to many other areas and topics to support engagement and design of digital solutions and services.

**Transforming government:** There is limited reference to how the vision set for public organisations will also support or interoperate with independent sector organisations. Opportunities that support organisations to build capacity in digital and reduce bureaucratic processes, enabling time for human interaction, are welcomed. The challenges of data sharing are historic and systemic, yet data sharing offers huge potential in enabling an appropriate response to ensure people are supported by the most appropriate service/support at the time they need it. Attempts to streamline information and data sharing are welcomed but it is crucial that these are developed in collaboration with all partners and parts of the 'system' involved.

**Digital and data economy:** The focus on increasing diversity in digital roles and increasing digital skills is welcomed. However, we highlight the need to support this across all sectors with particular investment in sectors which are at earlier stages in their digital journey e.g., social care. It is important that an inclusive approach to skills development is adopted which recognises of the needs of specific sectors and works to overcome existing barriers to skills development, learning and training.

We also emphasise the importance of prioritising the concept of citizen-controlled data to enable people to tell their story once and provide a single point of personal truth. In this concept the citizen decides what happens with their data and can choose to share this on their own terms.

**Vibrant tech sector:** The vision for innovation and growth is welcomed as is the focus on a wellbeing economy. We stress the importance of ensuring appropriate funding and resource are provided to enable the independent social care sector to engage with technology partners to promote opportunities for person-led innovation. There is a strong appetite for digital and technology across social care, however this must be resourced appropriately to ensure organisations and the workforce have the capacity to engage and participate in innovation opportunities.

**Ethical nation:** The commitment to becoming an ethical digital nation and the key actions to achieve this are welcomed. We highlight the need to consider ethics holistically, not only procedural elements but ethical mindsets and ethics in practice. We urge the need to avoid duplication in the development of the framework for an ethical digital nation by building on existing work such as the [Human Rights Charter for Technology and Digital in Social Care](#) – which includes

a set of key principles and guidance co-produced from a range of perspectives and expertise. In addition to frameworks and principles we also recommend developing scenario examples to support ethics in practice and we look forward to progressing work in this area early in 2021 with partners.

### **Do you think that the potential actions set out in each section will deliver the vision set out in the supporting narrative?**

#### **Key actions:**

- Recognising the contribution of the independent sector and including all sectors as part of the strategy.
- Prioritising a human rights mindset and approach to achieving the vision of the digital strategy.
- Prioritising the infrastructure required for connectivity for all.
- Supporting approaches to design and development of digital that enable *genuine* co-design and involvement.
- Involving all voices to explore digital across the generations and ensure person-led innovation.
- Recognising and prioritising digital choice in services and support.
- Building on existing frameworks such as Scottish Care's [Human Rights Charter for Technology and Digital in Social Care](#).
- Ensuring appropriate funding and resource are provided to enable all sectors to engage in innovation opportunities.
- Enabling a digital independent sector to ensure parity.
- Supporting a culture of innovation that has the confidence and permission to 'fail fast' and pivot in response to project learning.
- Enabling digital *wellbeing* not only digital *health*.

### **Are any of the potential actions more important than others?**

As highlighted earlier in our response, it is critical to frame and underpin the strategy from a human rights mindset and realise the vision and actions through a human rights-based approach. Ensuring people are involved in the design of digital services and supports that will affect them is crucial to realising the actions and vision of the strategy.

### **How realistic do you think it will be to deliver these potential actions?**

We believe it is possible to deliver the actions and vision proposed in the strategy through working in true collaboration across all partners, sectors and with the people of Scotland. Enabling involvement and collaboration are key to the success of this strategy and we reiterate the recommendation to apply and embed a human rights-based approach to all activity.

### **Is there anything else you wish to comment on that has not been covered elsewhere?**

We would like to highlight the need for longevity, sustainability and continued investment in any exploration, adoption and implementation of digital. In addition, we also reiterate the critical need to uphold digital choice, for human rights to underpin the strategy and the need for a rights-based approach to the design, development, implementation and scale of digital. As we outline in '[A Vision for Technology & Digital in Social Care](#)' (2020), it is essential that developments move away from a continued focus on the needs of the service and system. Defining, designing and developing the role and use of digital across any sector needs to be framed by the aspirations of the person, the context and situation, and identify the intention, outcomes and appropriateness of digital before considering the functionality and form of the resulting digital service or support.

Scottish Care would welcome the opportunity to be involved in the development of future digital strategies such as the Digital Health and Care strategy and to contribute to other strategies such as

the Data Strategy. We look forward to further dialogue and engagement with partners in how we can support a person-led approach to digital and technology in social care and create opportunities for collaboration that enable the integration of health and social care.

**For further information, please contact:**

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