



# The Care Technologist Test of Change 2022-2023

## Summary Report

## Overview

The Care Technologist Test of Change (ToC) ran for twelve months, between July 2022 and July 2023 and provided person-led digital evaluation and support with service users accessing care and support from Baillieston Community Care, HRM Homecare Services, SRS (Specialist Resource Solutions) Care, and care homes nationwide. This was funded by TEC (Technology Enabled Care) Scotland, and the roles hosted by Scottish Care.

The team of four Care Technologists delivered assistive technology, devices and tools to the service users to improve independence, increase safety and grow confidence with technology. Alongside this, Care Technologists provided ongoing support on device use for service users, staff working with them, and their loved ones.

Over sixty care at home service users were supported across three organisations. Twenty care homes were supported across three localities, extending reach to around six hundred residents.

### Demographic

- Around or over sixty years old
- Living with age-related long-term conditions and disabilities, such as frailty and dementia
- Men made up 55% of the supported demographic while women supported made up 45%.

### Support time

On average, five meetings with a single service user or care home were needed to get to know them, provide an evaluation and set up devices. The meetings typically spanned over six weeks and took six to eight hours of in-person activity; however, this reflects hours towards 1-2-1 support and does not account for time spent in evaluation and other support.



## **Top Technologies**

### **Smart speakers**

The smart speaker connected devices around the home for service users to manage via voice control or app. Further to this, individuals were able to reach their loved ones using the calling and drop-in functionality, connect to their community through apps, and increase their daily activities with games. The device increased independence, improved wellbeing, and contributed to increased safety in the home.

### **Smart bulbs and plugs**

Voice or app activated lights and devices to set up around the home, used in conjunction with a smart speaker. The team found these can reduce fall likelihood for those with poor mobility, improve independence and contribute to a safer home environment.

### **Dementia pets**

Robotic pets were great for homes unable to host animals and have proven to be a therapeutic aid for people living with dementia.

### **Sensor lights**

Sensor lights proved to benefit in homes where internet connectivity challenges meant that smart technology could not be used. Sensor lights greatly benefited people with limited mobility, who are prone to falls, or living with dementia.



## **Key Achievements**

### **Improving reach**

Of all service users who accessed support from the ToC, only one was receiving other support to develop digitally. This evidences that the ToC was successfully extended to support people in the field of digital health and care who had previously not accessed support and were otherwise at risk of being digitally excluded.

### **Improving digital skills**

Most service users supported across the ToC said their digital skills and knowledge improved. A small number of service users said their skills and knowledge stayed about the same. Nobody said their skills and knowledge decreased during the ToC

### **Piquing interest in care technologies**

Despite having individuals who were apprehensive of technology to start, every service user described themselves as interested in or supportive of technology at the end of the ToC. For one service, the results saw a 40% increase of interest and support for technology from the start of the ToC. These results show that technologies have been integrated into the lives of people who previously did not consider themselves a technology interested individual.

### **Key improvements in quality of life**

- Increased feelings of safety in the home
- Improvement in general wellbeing
- Increased independence in the home
- Improved access to daily activities that keep people connected



## Key Challenges

### From a Care Technologist perspective

- Ensuring service users have necessary technology for successful integration (smartphones, internet connectivity)
- Limited time capacity in team to provide support necessary across all service users
- Budgets for individuals and services to sustain long-term progress in technological skill building

### From a service user perspective

- Connection in the home to fully utilise devices
- Confidence in using technology alone after support is provided
- Remembering to use the technology in the home – many service users are used to a structure that doesn't include technology and need prompted to use it.

### From a service perspective

- In care homes, there is a larger responsibility on staff to support the use of technology with residents, and post-pandemic, most care homes are still adapting to higher-priority challenges. Examples of this include the cost-of-living crisis, staff insecurity, and many homes seeing frequent changes in ownership. This causes staff to be redirected with new priorities and strategies to improve care periodically, limiting capacity overall to focus on digital and technology development in care.
- Using a staff referral process means staff involved have a responsibility to learn about the ToC, digital health and social care, and technology to refer appropriately. As a complex topic with varying degrees of support available for service users, this can be challenging to navigate.



## **Recommendations & Next Steps**

- The Care Technologist role must be recognised as the current solution to bridging the digital gap in care homes and care at home services. While the gold standard may be to have staff equipped to deliver digital support, the capacity of health and social care staff does not permit this.
- The Care Technologist role should exist in each locality across Scotland, to ensure that each has the time capacity and budget to fully support the service users engaging within that community.
- Local funding and/or financial support must be made available to rural communities to install broadband in homes currently without connectivity, to significantly improve digital exclusion nationwide, enabling Care Technologists to provide necessary support.
- Service staff must have the opportunity at work to become trained in digital skills so that they can support service users where required with devices.
- Future Care Technologist roles will be implemented using a locality-based delivery, as opposed to a service-based delivery. This is so Care Technologists can have more autonomy in the referral process, as many staff will not have capacity to do this effectively.
- Long-term solutions to accessing information, training and resources to use technology will be prioritised. This will be in a centralised location and designed with digitally excluded and vulnerable people in mind.
- Further development with multicultural communities facing digital exclusion will follow this ToC to ensure that support is delivered to those facing additional barriers to using technology.

### **Improving sustainability of support**

As a Test of Change, it is important to look beyond the short-term support and explore how digital health and social care, and technology support can be accessed in the long-term. The team are designing a platform that has engaging, easy to use information and resources that enable people, services and families to continue their digital journey and self-manage or co-manage conditions with the assistance of technology.

### **Extending support to other localities**

With the Test of Change successfully reaching and supporting people at risk of digital exclusion, the team aim to extend the work to other localities in Scotland to increase reach and engage more people and services in rural and remote areas.

### **Extending support to other communities**

Throughout the Test of Change, the team did not reach service users from minority ethnic communities. The challenge of reaching people from these communities should be addressed to reduce barriers to accessing digital support - such as language, awareness of support available and locating referral routes. This can be done by extending the work referral pathways to more community services.

### **Constantly learning and improving**

Taking what the results have shown, the team are looking at new opportunities to develop the Care Technologist role in a way that reflects the needs of the services and individuals. This includes looking at improving referral routes, trialling locality-based support as a way of improving reach and expanding workstreams to learn more about local community contexts of health and social care.

## Final Words

“The input from Care Technologists Katherine and Dan have enhanced the wellbeing of the individuals within our care home. We appreciate their time and effort.”

**Oakminster Care Home staff**

“I didn’t have a lot of knowledge of the things I was capable of doing and thanks to the Care Technologist I’ve learned more and feel safer. I feel less stressed about managing my daily life.”

**Service User**

“The care is the thing you can’t be taught; the technology is the thing that you can be taught.”

**Cheryl, Care Technologist East Ayrshire**

“It made tech less intimidating”

**Service User**





This report is a summary of findings. If you have any questions relating to the ToC, please contact Care Technologist Lead Katherine Long at [Katherine.long@scottishcare.org](mailto:Katherine.long@scottishcare.org) .

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