

Small change: why we need to think bigger when it comes to technology in social care

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“The best way to predict the future is create it.” So said Abraham Lincoln, and it’s a view I wholeheartedly support. As Digital Communications and Technology Lead for the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services I strongly believe that embedding technology into services simply has to happen to enable us to both manage demand and improve the experience of the people both receiving and delivering social care.

I’m not alone, and I’ve attended any conferences featuring key speakers who have successfully used Technology Enabled Care (TEC) to underpin new models of care delivery that are more person-centred and asset-based. And yet we are still not seeing TEC as an intrinsic part of the social care offer. This is despite technology offering such a cost-effective means of support at a time when council budgets are under extreme pressure, and clients and their families are often having to pay for their care.

At the last ADASS Spring Seminar I ran an interactive workshop on the ways we can use technology to shape the future of adult social care. This provided a space for senior decision makers to push the boundaries within this area and be radical in our thinking, with interest in further progressing the idea of creating an ‘imprint of oneself’ that goes beyond the world we know.

This followed the National Children and Adult Services Conference, where ADASS and Tunstall Healthcare brought together seventeen senior figures from the social care and health sector for a roundtable discussion about the potential challenges and opportunities represented by the latest wave of technology.

The output was an ADASS Think Piece about Connected Social Care, which you can read [here](#).

Some key points emerged, such as the need for technology to be individual, enhancing independence and inclusion. There was some discussion around how staff may be impacted by technology, in terms of different ways of delivering services, and the need to upskill to make the most of data insight. There was broad agreement, though, that technology offers multiple potential benefits in adult social care including enhanced communication, freed up workforce capacity, and more reliable advice.

The results of the workshop and the roundtable were also fed into Tunstall’s product and services development roadmap, ensuring that the voice of commissioners is heard in the way future offerings are shaped.

Following the recent appointment of a new Prime Minister, Matt Hancock remains the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care. He has, on many occasions, made it clear that he believes technology to be central to delivering social care and health. Technology is moving fast, and social care needs to keep pace with this change. It is our responsibility not just to deliver effective services today, but to shape the next generation of social care, and technology-enabled change is not a ‘nice to have’ or an option, it is an essential ingredient in better service delivery.