

Pioneering technology deployed in Bolton care homes during COVID-19 outbreak

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Bolton NHS Foundation Trust and Bolton Clinical Commissioning Group have enlisted the support of healthcare technology from Tunstall Healthcare to help protect residents, staff and clinicians in 34 of the town's care homes.

Tunstall Healthcare has been at the forefront of technology innovation for the health, housing and social care markets for over 60 years. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, Tunstall developed robust propositions to respond to the emergency, offering care providers technology solutions including remote health monitoring, to assist with caring for the elderly or vulnerable.

Paul Beech, Head of Strategic Commissioning, Bolton Clinical Commissioning Group, said: "We've introduced various initiatives to proactively support the health and wellbeing of care home residents, but the COVID-19 crisis meant it became critical to look at ways we could use technology to deliver more care without face to face contact."

In April, Tunstall's 'triagemanager®' and 'myKiosk™' systems were deployed in Bolton's care homes. Both enable closer monitoring of the health of vulnerable residents, whilst reducing the need for clinical staff attendance thus reducing the risk of cross infection. It can also help clinicians to effectively prioritise residents' care, as the system clearly identifies those most in need of interventions.

By alerting clinicians to symptoms such as rising temperature at an early stage, care staff and clinicians can enable faster interventions. This can help to avoid the need for more complex care, improving outcomes and for COVID-19 patients, enabling them to be isolated and treated as soon as possible.

Joanne Dorsman, Bolton NHS Foundation Trust, said: "The systems give us objective information to support effective clinical decision making. This remote monitoring approach is helping us during the pandemic, but will also enable us to provide more proactive care over the longer term, improving the wellbeing of residents and helping to reduce the pressure on primary and secondary care.

"The success of the programme will be measured over time, with metrics such as reduced ambulance call outs being assessed, as well as resident outcomes and the impact on caseload management.

Gavin Bashar, MD of Tunstall Healthcare, said: "The triagemanager and myKiosk system will help clinicians to effectively prioritise residents' care, as the system clearly identifies those most in need of interventions. It enables closer monitoring of vulnerable residents, whilst reducing the need for clinical staff attendance thus reducing the risk of cross infection.

myKiosk provides objective insight into a patient's health status which enables more proactive and preventative care. It is a multi-user remote health monitoring solution, which enables multiple patients to be supported by telehealth in grouped living environments. Where care staff have concerns about the health of a resident, a member of care staff will use the myKiosk tablet to record their vital signs and help them to answer questions about their health and symptoms using the touch screen. For example, residents with dementia may find it more difficult to communicate if they feel unwell, meaning their condition may not be identified until it has advanced.

The information is then securely transmitted to Tunstall's patient management software, 'triagemanager'. Results which breach the parameters set for that patient will raise an alert on the system, prioritising them on the triage screen using colour coding relating to the level of risk. This data can then be accessed and reviewed by Advanced Nurse Practitioners at the Community Services Hub, enabling them to make an informed decision regarding next steps in the patient's care.

Gavin concludes: "As COVID-19 presents the worst public health crisis for a generation, technology can help to address some of the immediate challenges presented by the current emergency. Technology enabled care solutions can also provide a robust platform for future health and care delivery, connecting people to enable more proactive and preventative care and, ensure a sustainable and scalable network is in place should we ever have to face such a crisis again."

Healthcare technology from Tunstall Healthcare can greatly reduce the pressure on the NHS by empowering providers. Its pioneering software, hardware and services enable new delivery models which can transform community-based health and social care, and enable people to live independently and with an improved quality of life.

Tunstall has worked with social care providers, healthcare services, retirement living providers, and nursing and care organisations for more than 60 years, improving the lives of millions of people around the world, including those living with dementia, learning disabilities, physical disabilities and long-term health conditions.