



Surrey Care Association  
Supporting Social Care Providers in Surrey



## The Impact of going Digital in Care

**This paper was developed from a round-table discussion of members of the Surrey Care Association held on 26th October 2017 at Denbies Wine Estate in Surrey, supported by Cura Systems.**

**The contributors were:**

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## Challenges Facing Care Providers Today

In October 2017, Surrey Care Association hosted a round-table supported by Cura Systems to search out achievable solutions to the most prevalent challenges facing care providers today. Together, the group of technologists, social care professionals, residential, domiciliary and learning disabilities care providers' explored best practices in supporting those working in care to do what they do best, care.

### The common thread - getting the right talent... the people... the right numbers

In January 2017, a McKinsey & Company study found that about 30% of tasks in 60% of occupations could be computerised\* and last year, the Bank of England's chief economist said that 15m UK jobs might be taken over by robots\*\*.

Care giving is protected to a degree as no machine can care in the same way as a human- but does that make care future proof? How do you attract good people that care?

"Where's the travel agent? There was a time when you would go into a shopping centre, get a brochure from a few travel agents and then got to your chosen supplier and book your holiday face to face with an advisor in store. Now you would research online, price compare - maybe even book everything separately to keep costs low. The function of the traditional travel agent is no longer required. This shows that technology has a place when used effectively. Companies in any sector need to evolve to reduce the risk of being wiped off the face of the earth. Technology will assume at least some of the tasks... it's only a matter of time and degree of change."

**Abu Omar - Founder - Cura Systems**

UK nationals are seen as reluctant to apply for roles in care due to the fact they are typically paid little more than the minimum hourly wage at age 25 or over.

"People would rather have less responsibility and stress and get a job in Tesco stacking shelves than work in care - and I understand why."

**Amin Virani - Owner - Heatherwood**

Also hanging in the background is the potential detrimental impact of Brexit on care delivery. The social care recruitment crisis may be exacerbated by an exodus of EU migrant workers. An estimated 6% of jobs in the sector are filled by EU migrants. That may not sound much, but the vast size of the social care workforce means that this figure equates to 80,000 people in England alone.

This is why some care providers try to go above and beyond to help and support their staff. Some of the participants give staff interest free loans if they require them. Some run a rent guarantee scheme to act as guarantor for their staff.

Plans to upskill your staff will show that you consider their personal development, a key priority and hopefully, reduce staff turnover.



## A Paradigm Shift - a Fundamental Change in Approach

The current model appears to be breaking at the seams. The Care and Support Alliance, which represents 80 charities for the elderly and disabled, said a funding crisis in social care has resulted in thousands of vulnerable people remaining in hospital, when they should have been cared for in their homes.

Bed-blocking has risen more than 40 per cent in a year as hospitals continue to be overwhelmed with people needing care. This need will only increase and is rising to an all-time high.

“We take a lot of residents from hospital into our care home and the longer people have been in hospital the more they decline.”

**Graham Elliott - Director - Downing Care**

People are now living longer with more long term conditions. There is now a greater medical content in a typical care worker's role. With this comes greater potential risk. Are paper based medicine administration systems up to the task?

### Is technology the answer?

10 of the participants use technology in some form or another in their care setting. In companies where technology is in place, between 5 and 15% of their care staff's time is apportioned to administration tasks. Companies not using technology typically spend between 20 and 25% of care staff time on chasing paperwork. A clear case for reform, if ever there was one.

Only 2 of the 10 participants who utilise care technology employ a full time IT and data manager. However, best practices suggests the technology lead should be a (care) business manager and not an IT professional. Adoption of IT should be led by business (care) needs and not the reverse.

“The technology was initially hated by staff but is now embraced. I think it was fear but if we are open and transparent with staff they will see the benefits of technology to support them to have more time to care.”

**Kasia Paul - Office Manager - Home Counties Carers**

Care businesses can provide employees with the technology tools necessary to perform well in their job but they must have the confidence and knowledge to utilise them effectively and feel motivated to achieve this. It is therefore vital for a workforce to feel engaged with the care organisation they are working for and be aligned with the goals they strive to achieve.

Furthermore, care businesses must now cater for a new generation of workers, with different needs and expectations of their employers. Generation Y, or the Millennials, are beginning to filter into organisations. Known for being mobile and well informed, they are comfortable embracing emerging technologies.

Although it is very unlikely that anyone will deliver more services with fewer staff by utilising technology, the providers that have adopted technology now have fewer errors and greater transparency, so quality of care has improved. Time released from doing paperwork may also lead to more time for care as well as changing the composition of skills required to maintain quality care. With information and training guides more readily available online, care providers might be able to reduce the overall staff cost by employing fewer highly skilled care workers to provide the same level of care.

Technology also helps with the management and costing of travel time enabling staff to give improved quality time to clients.

When implementing a system, a vital element to success is the training of staff, how you manage this on an ongoing basis and the need to understand how you want it to work for your company. Using technology can help to streamline and make your company more efficient when managed correctly. The aim should be to support care workers and not to simply lower costs through de-skilling.



“At a previous company in construction we tried to use technology to enable less skilled people do a higher grade job in order to help to grow the business and sustain levels of staff. BUT in reality we found the business went backwards. We found you need to have skilled workers and also support them - if you add de-skilled workers with supportive technology it didn't give the desired outcome. Staff still need to be trained and skilled.”

**Rajesh Patel - Owner - Florence Avenue**

“IT systems are only as good as its management & implementation. If you don't give it the time it requires it will never get off the ground.”

**Alastair Shanks - Owner - Right at Home Guildford and Farnham**

“Our technology doesn't work to its full capacity as we haven't invested the time to make it work specifically for our processes. We were naïve but the best advice I can give is you have to be prepared to invest time to enable the supporting technology to reflect your service. 3 years down the line and our systems still need work.”

**Lindsay Hill - Chief Executive - Meath Epilepsy Charity**

The solution you adopt should ideally be highly configurable so that you can amend it to suit your requirements today and going forward. If you have to go back to the IT company and get bespoke development it can become a very costly exercise.

Technology is now slicker. 25 years ago when I delivered support I did my notes with the service user, now my concern is where all that information goes? Where do we go to get this information when something goes wrong? Systems need to talk to each other.”

**Chris Browne - Head of Residential Services and Positive Behaviour Support Lead - Active Prospects**

It will require a change in mind-set about data sharing, across all parts of the care delivery industry. We need to challenge technology suppliers to commit to a common language and to an open architecture that will easily allow flows of information from primary to step-down care and vice-versa.

Do we bring in the community into the care setting? What about volunteers, religious visitors, school involvement?

“Technology can aid care becoming the centre of the community. We have volunteers from schools come into our care homes and help the clients learn how to use technology. This is great for the residents.”

**Martin Barrett - Owner - Nellsar and Totem Care**

Care can survive if we make it the centre of the community - have more time to care by having more people giving care in various capacities. We can engage the community with a technology app, which would be further strengthened by technology suppliers committing to open architecture.

Think hypothetically - technology is now moving towards AI (artificial intelligence) and it will revolutionise the world. AI in care could produce predictive analysis and for example, aid fall's prevention.

This would have a huge impact on care delivery and management as we know it today.

Technology should never be the 'skill' element of the job - Technology is good at fast repetitive tasks, but AI can be predictive. Technology is an enabler. The way it's adopted and how much input the care provider is prepared to give is important.

If you give staff and clients the technology tools to be able to do things themselves, they will. Multiple, tiny steps of achievement make the biggest differences.

## The CQC's reaction to care going digital

It would not be an exaggeration to say CQC's response to the adoption of technology during an inspection is down to the particular inspector's personal views.

"Andrea Sutcliffe actively promotes technology - but maybe this needs to be encouraged throughout the CQC team."

**Erica Lockhart - Chief Executive - Surrey Care Association**

Some react positively noting the use of technology as innovative. Others say they like things printed out. Whilst some have noted they want an IT system that has every page easily printed!

"Our CQC inspector was anti-technology and just not interested in it. I can quote they "still like the written word". Where is the requirement for the written word in the health and social care act?"

**Amin Virani - Owner - Heatherwood**

This highlights that the critical need for simplicity of technology- it must be so simple to use even a reluctant CQC inspector can use it with minimal training.

"CQC inspectors think a paper based MAR sheet is acceptable - I deem them to be useless! Get yourself a digital system and see the updates and amendments in real time! Now that's progress."

**Simon Carter - Owner - Melody Care**

"I don't understand how the CQC can justify that out of date information is good."

**Rebecca Page - Support Manager - CHD Living**

Are the care providers ahead of the CQC with their thinking and technological evolution? Do perceptions need to be changed across the board?

The improvement in resident's outcomes is what the inspection should be about. If all care providers were transparent and open enough to give the CQC inspectors their own login access to the IT systems they could (subject to appropriate consents) carry out a preview that will shorten their review time and lead to a better outcome for the provider.



### Making it happen

What should the first steps be? The decision to go digital is easy. It's the commitment at all levels that will make it really happen, however, this is a clear case of leadership from the top buying the hearts and minds of staff.

“It’s been so useful to get around the table with everyone - Let’s stop keeping each other at arm’s length.”

**Martin Barrett - Owner - Nellsar and Totem Care**

“I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the participants. I really appreciate everyone taking the time out of their busy schedules and this really shows a determination to improve the care that is offered. I would also like to thank everyone for their honesty and the transparency of their comments during the discussion.”

**Abu Omar - Founder - Cura Systems**

“Our

We welcome you to join the discussion going forward. If you have any questions, or would like to contribute to the debate please get in touch with us: [sca@cura.systems](mailto:sca@cura.systems)

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\*Reference: <https://www.mckinsey.com/global-themes/digital-disruption/harnessing-automation-for-a-future-that-works>

\*\*Reference: <http://www.bankofengland.co.uk/publications/Pages/speeches/2015/864.aspx>



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