

Introducing digital activities to Care Home residents – Nicole Winterbottom

Descriptor

Deanfield Care Home Activities Coordinator, Nicole Winterbottom, integrates digital dimensions into daily residents' activities using tablet technology supplied via public sector funding channels, including the TEC Connecting Scotland's Care Homes initiative, part of the Scottish Government's 2020 Covid-19 pandemic response.

Functions

Daily resident activities integrate a digital element that spans the full gamut of activities. For example:

- Armchair travel and walking tours courtesy of YouTube complemented by food from the region – allows residents to reminisce about places they've travelled to or places they used to live
- Video calls to family (especially during period of lockdown restrictions)

Benefits

Digital activities provide staff with increased flexibility of location/ approach and range of activities they can offer to residents.

Impact

- Ability to offer wider range of immersive and interactive activities – offers an alternative to daytime television
- Increased inclusivity and participation
 - o Bluetooth headphones eliminate background noise and distractions, useful for hard of hearing residents
 - o Opportunity to get involved in activities away from the main care home sitting room environment i.e. residents who prefer to stay in their own rooms or were required to remain in personal spaces during lockdown pandemic restrictions could join in on group activities via digital connections and tablet devices
 - o Opportunity to bring the wider outside world into a care home environment, e.g. quiz sessions can be conducted across care homes
- Increased personalisation to meet different needs and preferences of residents, e.g. residents supporting different sports teams can enjoy matches on a personal device without disturbing other residents
- Increased choice in how residents can engage in daily activities – online and/or offline although digital elements typically complement analogue variation

Considerations

- Residents and staff's digital confidence and abilities can vary widely. Family members may also need set up support or access to training to enable them to participate in e.g. digital calls
- Residents will typically require set up and password management assistance and gradual introductions to new-to-them concepts such as video calls to friends and family to become comfortable with new digital mediums such as tablets. The 1:1 support element for residents can be significant as some residents are not able to work technology independently.
- Crucial to establish new digital processes e.g. password management process for residents
- Consideration for dual experiences for residents – digital **and** sensory/tactile rather than as a wholesale replacement. Introduction of digital activities requires additional level of pre-planning of resources – e.g. reviewing YouTube clips or quizzes for appropriateness of content. Sometimes sensory trumps digital, e.g. jigsaws work better as a non-digital format as more residents can get involved.

- Connectivity of and within the care home will impact staff's ability to run and residents' ability to participate in digital activities
- Separate technology/kit for running digital activities helps ensure that there are no staff/resident bottlenecks for devices. Ratio of 1 device for digital activities per 10 residents has anecdotally been found to offer reasonable flexibility and coverage.
- Recurring budget for digital subscriptions to various services e.g. Senior Travel offers a paid subscription for scheduled daily live tours.

Potential Costs

- Costs of devices: e.g. tablets, Smart TV, cables for connecting/mirroring devices and digital additions – e.g. bluetooth speakers, noise cancelling headphones, stylus
- Costs of upgrading/extending WiFi coverage across care home (*TEC programme have commissioned a costed options evaluation for Care Homes to determine the best options to improve connectivity – results of evaluation due February 2022*)
- Costs of subscriptions to digital apps and services
- Potential costs of training for staff and families (digital familiarisation training also readily available for free to users via channels such as [Connecting Scotland](#) and [Barclay's Digital Eagles](#))

Additional information

- Care Workers' Compendium of Digital Resources: 2021 Edition – free TEC resource for more digital resources, tips and inspiration for introducing digital in care homes available: [Resources for Care Homes | TEC Scotland](#)
- Nicole Winterbottom: activities.deanfield@advinia.com
- Social Care TEC programme: nss.digicarehome@nhs.scot