



Connectivity is facilitating innovation in health and social care services

- Telehealth innovations are increasingly saving healthcare and social care providers resources, but they rely on strong mobile network connectivity.
- Mobile-based innovations are also improving outcomes for service users.
- Policy-makers can take action – often without resource implications – to improve local mobile connectivity in order to get ready for these innovations.

As digital advances continue to make their way into the social care sector, care providers are increasingly recognising the transformative impact that telehealth technology can have on both business efficiency and care outcomes.

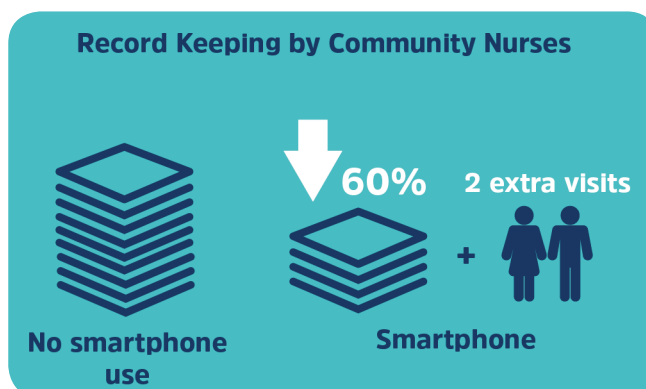
Recognising the potential of telehealth, NHS England Chief Executive Simon Stevens launched the 'NHS Innovation Test Beds' scheme in seven locations last year. The scheme seeks to use digital technology to improve monitoring and looks to evaluate the way in which devices such as wearable monitors and data analysis can increase patient wellbeing. Furthermore, the NHS Institute for Health Research is prioritising research into new methods of patient home care and self-care which will utilise the mobile network.

As the trend towards the use of telehealth and e-health applications continues to grow, councils can ensure they receive the cost and convenience benefits of these applications by ensuring they have the right mobile infrastructure in place to support platforms. According to the Department for Communities and Local Government, new technologies are helping care professionals “to work seamlessly across teams and locations, interact securely with other care professionals, and enable quick access to information across the care system.”

A 2014 report from Deloitte, *Connected Health – how digital technology is transforming health and social care*, showed that smartphone use significantly minimised avoidable service

use, promoted patient independence and, crucially, demonstrably improved service user outcomes. The report showed that smartphone record-keeping allowed community nurses to reduce their paperwork time by 60 percent and allowed them to see an extra two patients daily.

Mobile network operators are increasingly supporting the telehealth agenda. As one example, Vodafone's Machine to Machine technology has partnered with CRF Health (a leading global provider of electronic Clinical Outcome Assessments) to improve the accuracy of patient records. As software developers find new ways to streamline services and save councils money, it will increasingly be innovative, well-connected areas that are most able to take advantage of these changes.



The UK government has recognised the link between mobile connectivity and its digital inclusion agenda. Complementing the extensive investments that the mobile network operators have made since the introduction of 4G technology – amounting to £2bn every year – the 2010-15 Coalition government invested £150m to improve the quality and coverage of mobile phone voice and data services, and the 2016 Autumn Statement announced over £1bn for mobile and internet upgrades. The May 2017 Conservative general election manifesto meanwhile includes a promise of £740m for digital infrastructure investment.

But central spending alone cannot solve the UK's mobile challenges. Local action is needed, which is why Mobile Britain has launched its new Building Mobile Britain campaign to get local authorities, mobile network operators, central government and other players working together to take action.

Local authorities can streamline and improve health and social services through better connectivity, by:

- Improving access to public assets for mobile providers
- Abolishing planning controls for small equipment installations
- Requesting that developers and planners consider mobile connectivity at the beginning of a project
- Explicitly supporting the Mobile UK campaign, Building Mobile Britain, including in local development plans
- Partnering with mobile providers to trial new methods of extending mobile coverage
- Promoting the use of mobile-friendly materials in construction projects and creating local digital or connectivity champions.

Mobile UK is the trade association for the UK's mobile network operators – EE, O2, Three and Vodafone.

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