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Respite care home technology

Adult Social Care
Digital technology and skills review

Ipsos MORI, Institute of Public Care and Skills for Care

Respite care home technology

This case study supports a review of technology and digital skills in adult social care, undertaken by Ipsos MORI, the Institute of Public Care (IPC) at Oxford Brookes University and Skills for Care on behalf of NHSX. Further information is available on the study webpage.

Problem to be solved

Kirklees Council identified that the demand for overnight respite care was increasing, and the resulting lack of capacity and space meant adults with profound, multiple and complex health needs were having to access services outside of their community and further away from their homes. Respite care is important for adults with a learning disability and their unpaid carers, as the provision of high-quality respite accommodation enables them to continue living at home. In addition, the local authority wanted young adults progressing from school settings to adult services to have continued access to the types of therapeutic and sensory provision available to them in school.

The project

The resulting project to extend capacity of overnight accommodation at Cherry Trees Respite Unit also provided an opportunity to enhance the facilities provided, such as breakout capacity in the form of calming spaces and enhanced therapeutic and multi-sensory areas.

"…we were expanding the [care home] building to increase the number of beds.... And at the same time, was the opportunity to enhance the services that we offer in there, so bring[ing] in the Wi-Fi, bringing video conferencing for families, bringing in the immersive room and the additional facilities that were possible."
IT change manager

The local authority's 10-year capital program provided an opportunity to fund the extension and renovation. The budget allocated for this project included £200,000 for the digital technology improvements.

Implementation

A range of stakeholders were involved in the revitalization of Cherry Trees throughout, including families, people with care and support needs, care and support workers, social workers, and occupational therapists. The local authority also worked with partners in health, their local provider trust, adult social care services, local councillors, and local Clinical Commissioning Groups.

The project team initially researched options for digital technology online to identify appropriate suppliers, and conducted visits to various sites and schools (pre-pandemic) to explore the available technology and ensure it would meet their needs.

"… the potential deployment of these more innovative technologies within a health and care setting, it's truly quite innovative and amazing what can be done."
Senior manager, Public Health and Adult Social Care

Before proceeding with the renovation, the local authority trialled portable interactive sensory devices known to help calm people with behavioural needs. The pilot technology projected visual experiences on a surface for residents to engage with. This helped with reducing isolation, by encouraging engagement and participation and building confidence among residents who had previously been isolated but who

were interested in this new technology. Staff responded positively to the pilot; they were trained on using the technology and identified how best to engage residents with it. The local authority understood that if the pilot technology was successful in engaging residents, other technologies could too. The success of this pilot motivated the Council to proceed with an immersive and sensory room.

Once the building was complete and the new technology was in place, staff received ongoing regular training from the technology suppliers and adapted quickly to the new devices available. The suppliers helped to boost staff confidence by building support plans showing how individuals could use and benefit from the equipment in the therapeutic and multi-sensory rooms.

Outcome and impact

- Improving the lives of people with a learning disability through the use of assistive technology has been the key outcome reported by staff, allowing people to remain in their own communities, and providing a better transition from school to adult social care through access to familiar therapeutic and sensory environments. The positive outcomes observed, such as helping to relax individuals during their stay at Cherry Trees, have been greater than originally anticipated.

- Improved outcomes for individuals are currently measured using support plans; for example, staff record observations and develop case studies and storyboards. Support plans have also changed to include specific sections on how people can be supported to use the immersive and sensory rooms.

- The benefits for staff include upskilling on how to use new equipment to support care and increased staff satisfaction, due to improved outcomes for the people they support and a positive working environment.

Lessons learned

One lesson learnt is the importance of factoring in sufficient time to implement a project like this, including managing the impact of factors that may be out of the project team's control (such as the COVID-19 pandemic) and how this can affect the speed of service redesign and technology implementation.

They have also learnt about the importance of engaging all stakeholders and communicating a shared vision throughout the project. This included focusing on how technology will accomplish shared goals of improved care outcomes and collaboration.

The immersive technology can be used in various settings. The local authority is currently speaking with a University about incorporating immersive technology into schools and for supporting staff wellbeing.

For further information see https://www.kirklees.gov.uk/beta/regeneration-and-development/cherry-trees.aspx

For more information

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