Core digital skills in social care

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Core digital skills in social care

Digital technology has impacted how we run our lives and businesses. From our homes, to our phones, work and leisure, all elements of our lives have changed. Social care is also changing, embracing what technology can offer.

Technology has been developed and introduced for communicating, storing and sharing information, and bringing new opportunities:

- Run social care businesses more efficiently
- Enable people who need care to gain control
- Create wholly new and alternate forms of support

Because of this employee at all levels in social care need to have core digital skills and have the confidence and competencies to use them.

What are core digital skills?

Everyone working in adult social care needs English, numeracy, digital and employability skills, including knowing how to manage their own health and wellbeing. These are core skills, and are needed by social care workers to provide high quality care. Core digital skills are the skills and knowledge needed to perform digital activities associated with your job. This includes finding and manging digital information, sharing personal data, using digital tech and e-learning. As well as using digital tech. 74% of social care staff have a personal smartphone, but only 20% have actually use their personal phone for work purposes.

Why do people working in social care need core digital skills?

Social care is not alone as a sector with core digital skills gaps, there are several reasons why increasing core digital skills in employees and the organisation is particularly important.

- **Policy direction:** Most the Care Act, Better Care Fund plans and Integration Pioneer projects anticipate collaboration between health and social care professionals, informal carers and the voluntary sector. A central goal of these plans is to develop data sharing, including the use of digital care plans with the NHS number as the key identifier.

- **Commissioners expectations:** Increasingly, social care providers are expected to interact with digital only tender processes, this means a minimum of one person in an organisation needs to have sufficient digital communication skills to tender local authority contracts digitally. Additionally, regulation processes and accessing funding for learning and development are all becoming more digitised.

- **Shrinking resources mean finding efficiencies:** A major cost to employers is developing and training staff. With many employers using digital teaching methods to:
    - Delivering learning content
    - Supporting collaborative learning
    - Managing the learning process

- **Changing customer expectations:** With more people who require care and support and their carers utilising digital skills in their day to day lives, they expect their care to become more digitised.

- **Opportunities for new types of services/diversification of services:** New technologies designed to aid people with everyday living, offer a range of choices for people requiring support as well as social care providers having the opportunity to change their services. This could include fall monitors, sensors and online bookings. Many emerging technologies involve digital elements, and so have implications for core digital skills in the workforce.

- **Core digital skills are important for:**
    - **Organisations** – to work more efficiently
    - **For employees** – to utilise online services to work more efficiently and, learn and develop
    - **For people who use care and support services** – they can engage with assisted living technologies

What are the core digital skills needed for social care?

Skills for care have drawn on the work of Go-ON and their basic digital skills framework to develop their model. The model explains what core digital skills a social care worker should have or aim to develop. There are four key digital skills areas or domains that a social care worker will need to have skills and knowledge in. These being:

- Managing information
- Sharing data
- Using digital skills in direct care
- Learning and development

The model describes basic digital skills and isn't based around any formal qualification level. It is important to note that it isn't the responsibility of the individual to have digital skills but for the organisation and it's employs.

How to use the core digital skills model?

The model can be used in many ways. You may wish to:

- Look at one domain at a time, with individuals or groups
- Share the wheel with your board or directors to simulate discussion about the skills of the organisation
- Highlight domain or skills within them where you need to concentrate development
- Appoint a 'digital champion' who can help others improve on their areas of weakness
- Use the wheel to simulate discussion about what else could be done using digital skills and ways of working
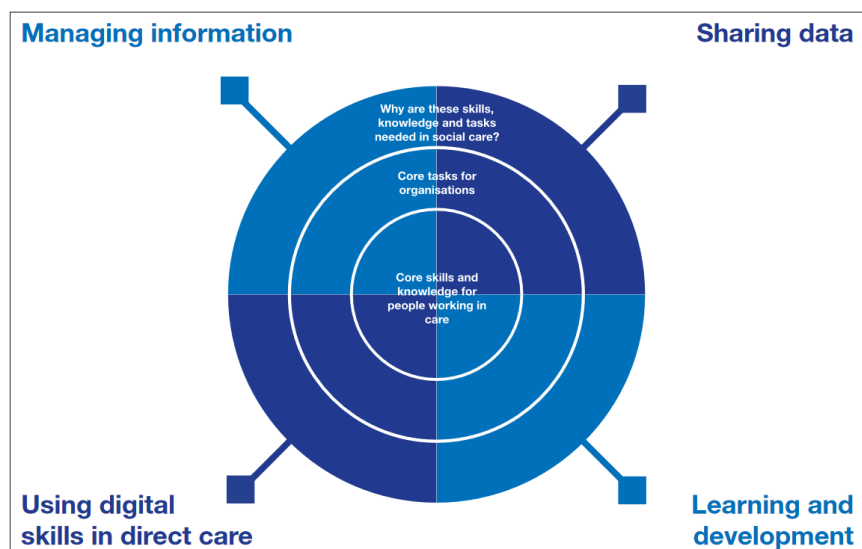
Sharing Data

Example core digital skills and knowledge for people working in social care

- Safely share appropriate data with colleagues in their own and other organisations
- Safely use password protection, and insertable and removable storage devices
- Complete digital records accurately
- Store information
- Read, send and receive email communication

Example tasks for organisations

- Safely store digital client records
- Use digital record sharing systems and password production
- Have and maintain adequate data protection security

Why are these skills, knowledge and tasks needed in social care?

- Comply with data protection laws
- Act in service user's best interests
- Use data and data sharing for safeguarding best interests
- Be a full partner in integration

Learning and development

Example core digital skills and knowledge for people working in social care

- Be able to create a log in and password for earning account, as well as being able to print off evidence of completion of learning
- Access mobile learning
- Record learning digitally for a portfolio
- Be able to bookmark a page
- Use search techniques to locate and select relevant information
- Recognise and take account of currency, relevance bias and copyright when selecting/using information

Example tasks for organisations

- Assess and use e-learning products
- Monitor and record staff learning and development
- Create resources to improve knowledge/skills
- Acquire and maintain software/hardware for learners to access learning from.

Why are these skills, knowledge and tasks needed in social care?

- To support staff development, assess knowledge and skills
- To monitor learning
- To evidence learning to regulators, and evidence and report learning to monitoring/funding bodies

Using digital skills in direct care

Example core digital skills and knowledge for people working in social care

- Know how to help someone use their diabetes app
- Know how to help someone with their falls monitor
- Know how to help someone access services on-line (such as claiming benefits, paying rent, booking appointments)
- Have the required skills and knowledge to research local activities for a person you support
- Know how to set up and support a remote medical consultation for a person you support

Example tasks for organisation

- Use telecare systems, and remote consultation
- Use assisted living technologies for best outcomes, and to prevent illness or accident

Why are these skills, knowledge and tasks needed in social care?

- Create business efficiencies
- Promote self-care
- Support digital inclusion for service users
- Conform with commissioner's guidelines/wishes re assisted living technology

Managing information

Example core digital skills and knowledge for people working in social care

- Home care; how to use remote monitoring via smart phone, how to update digital care plan
- Residential or nursing care; know how to update digital handover records in a killed way
- Work with files, folders and other media to access, organise, store, label and retrieve information.
- Demonstrate how to create, use and maintain secure passwords, and how to minimise risk of computer virus

Example tasks for organisation

- Understand and maintain remote monitoring systems
- Maintain public website/social media
- Utilise digital invoicing and payroll ensure and maintain information communication technologies ae safe and secure; ensure adequate virus checkers
- Safely store personal records

Why are these skills, knowledge and tasks needed in social care?

- Efficient internal and external communications
- Tendering for contracts
- Attracting private business
- Complying with monitoring requirements
- Business efficiencies