# Virtual Hospice – Executive Summary

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A key objective of hospice care is to empower individuals and carers to live with life-shortening illness in their own communities, by offering support and increasing their confidence. This project involved collaboration between the Highland Hospice and Experience Labs with the aim of widening access for patients and professionals and enabling higher quality palliative care at a distance through a 'Virtual Hospice.' The research project involved designing a sequential series of labs in order to define the various elements of the Virtual Hospice.

Participants in the Labs included Highland Hospice staff, healthcare professionals, patients and carers in order to explore awareness, use and barriers to use of Highland Hospice services and identify opportunities for future services. One of the Labs took place in four different locations in the Highlands (Inverness, Fort William, Isle of Skye, and Wick).

A number of key barriers to accessing Highland Hospice services were identified and future opportunities for services and ways for these to be delivered in the different locations of the Labs were explored. This led to ideas specific to the local context, including collaboration with a Men's Shed project in Skye and a care home in Fort William. Both ideas involve leveraging on existing community or care groups as hubs for delivery of hospice services. In this way, the definition of a Virtual Hospice expanded from a purely digital platform to involve a multi-layered and interconnected network of people and places supported by technology.

A framework was developed which aimed to link the key themes and the barriers identified through the Labs, to a set of design principles and success criteria that could help Highland Hospice to develop and evaluate the hubs.

Recommendations are made for future development of the Highland Virtual Hospice including developing future services, strengthening existing collaborations and improving communications.