Conference Abstract

Using a personal networked neighbourhood service to support wellbeing

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Abstract

The growth in Telehealth and Telecare has enabled new spaces for innovation to emerge in terms of assisted living opportunities. One such space lies between the informal support provided by carers and neighbours to older and vulnerable people and the formal care and response approach offered by traditional social/health alerting systems.

This presentation outlines the development of a recently trialled pilot service which, in turn, forms part of a large national research project. This large project aims to upscale and roll out assisted living technology services to greater numbers of people across the UK in the coming years.

The purpose of this pilot service study was to link together a range of standard telecare sensors within the customer's home in order to provide relevant information to an identified neighbour and carer network regarding the wellbeing of the customer. Each group formed a 'personal networked neighbourhood'. This presentation focuses on experiences of living with the technology, its usefulness and the effects of the technology on the personal network. Using this approach the neighbourhood did not rely on an external formal response centre and the technology was not a replacement for the emergency response service provided by many telecare providers. This innovation separates this new service from existing telecare models.

Using co-creation workshops, the views of potential customers, carers, statutory/third sector groups and industry representatives helped to identify which sensors to trial. These included door sensors, electrical consumption monitors, ambient temperature sensors and a home hub. Positive wellbeing, status and activity SMS message options were designed e.g. "I'm OK", "I'm away" or "the person is active". The sensors could detect whether a kettle had been used, a specified fridge/cupboard door had been opened or whether the temperature in the home had fallen below an acceptable threshold. Out of the ordinary activity resulted in a SMS text to the responder (neighbour or relative) to act accordingly.

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Following ethical approval the service was piloted during winter 2012. 12 personal networked neighbourhoods took part. Interview and diary data was collected from 32 participants over the 10 week trial period.

This presentation focuses on the experiences of the personal networked neighbourhoods. Interviews findings were overwhelming positive about the use of the technology and the impact it had on the development of personal neighbourhood networks. Participants found the service reassuring as it provided positive messages about the individual's status, it addressed previous concerns that some of the participants had been worried about in terms of finding ways to support the customer and it did not intrude on existing lifestyles. The service was quick and simple to install and easy to use. In addition the service did not detract from or reduce social contact experienced by participants.

The research demonstrated that the potential to develop new service offerings such as the one described was strong and that the concept of the 'personal networked neighbourhood' could offer many future convergence opportunities to support a range of individuals, neighbours and carers in new and creative ways.

Keywords:

Telecare, personal, neighbourhood, network, services

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