Conference Abstract

Getting the best of assisted living technologies: utilising an evidence-based, iterative approach to support social care workers in practice

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Abstract

Introduction: As the Sector Skills Council for the adult social care workforce in England, Skills for Care recognises the increasingly important role of assisted living technologies (ALT) in social care. This paper draws on evidence from a project designed to explore the status of workforce development in social care, and develop resources to support the learning and development of staff.

Aims and objectives:

1. To scope the current landscape of ALT in England, thereby better understanding current policy, delivery and workforce development models.

2. To explore the perceived development needs of the workforce and current gaps in provision.

3. To provide the social care workforce with comprehensive and practical guidance on the skills, knowledge and understanding of ALT in a variety of community based roles.

Methods: A three-stage methodological approach was adopted. Firstly, primary research, through the use of interviews with social care staff, case study development and an online survey was commissioned to develop an holistic picture of workforce development activities and needs relating to ALT .

Secondly, we used the results from the primary research to produce a learning and development framework that addressed the requirements of social care organisations in relation to the ALT workforce. Framework development was an iterative process, with regular feedback provided by an educational reference group.

The final stage, the development of five learning resources, supported the implementation of the learning and development framework. Opportunities were given to staff, their commissioners and their employers to engage with and inform this process. Each resource was tested by social care

workers across England, and appropriate changes and enhancements made in response to feedback.

Results: The primary research demonstrated that workforce development in relation to assistive technologies was uneven and – in many areas – lacking. There was no clear framework for building up the knowledge and skills of staff and a lack of insight into the available learning and development resources.

To address the gaps identified in the primary research, the learning and development framework included a number of elements, such as:

• Workflow tools to map the pathways of ALT

• Key areas of ALT activity and the knowledge and skills needed to perform them well

• Job exemplars demonstrating how existing job roles in ALT link to both the workflow tool and the learning framework

• Mapping of existing qualifications, frameworks and standards

The resources produced to support implementation of the framework covered a range of topics from general social assessment to the specifics of dementia care. A number of different techniques and platforms were utilised, from face-to-face workshops to mobile applications.

Conclusions: Some areas of the social care workforce are inadequately prepared to work with ALT. This paper demonstrates how an evidence-based, iterative and inclusive process has led to the development of practical resources to support the learning and development of social care workers.

Keywords:

telecare, alt, socialcare, workforce, development

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