Navigating Barriers to Cultural and Behavioural Change in Hybrid Care

CGI

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Introduction

The landscape of health and care delivery is rapidly evolving, and one of the emerging concepts at the forefront is hybrid care.

This white paper delves into the intricacies of hybrid care, exploring its definition and the innovations that enable it. Its aim is to assist health and care organisations in navigating the complexities of hybrid care.

By combining the advantages of digital technology with the invaluable aspects of in-person interaction, hybrid care presents a transformative approach to delivering health and care services.

This paper also sheds light on the benefits and challenges associated with implementing hybrid care models and provides practical guidance for organisations looking to embark on their own hybrid care journey. With a focus on enhancing individual outcomes, optimising resource utilisation, and fostering individual empowerment, hybrid care represents a pivotal step towards shaping the future of health and care in the UK.

Combining the advantages of digital technology with the invaluable aspects of in-person interaction.

Executive Summary

Hybrid care integrates digital technology with traditional care to enhance patient and service user outcomes and experiences. It enables remote monitoring, consultations, and support from home using wearable devices and telecare systems. This proactive approach prevents the deterioration of conditions and unnecessary hospital admissions and enables the potential for simple procedures to take place at home or in the community.

The benefits of hybrid care include improved access to person centred health and care services from the right person, in the right place and at the right time for the individual. Additional benefits include providing personalised care plans, cost-effectiveness, improved efficiency and enhanced experiences. It aligns with national plans for digital health and social care, improving outcomes for health and care quality, improving inclusivity, levelling up and supporting individuals to maintain independence. Furthermore, as a consequence of reduced travel, optimised resource allocation and reduced paperwork, hybrid care systems can contribute to local authorities and health and care organisations lowering their carbon footprints and meeting their Net Zero and Green Plan goals.

Implementing hybrid care faces challenges such as patient and service user engagement and adoption, staffing pressures and acceptance, technology integration, regulatory considerations, data privacy and security concerns. Navigating these challenges requires ringfenced training, robust technological infrastructure, and compliance with regulations.

Successful hybrid care models require an openness to shifting established practices and mindsets to embrace innovative thinking, with strong leadership, dedicated suppliers, and the integrated services needed to enact these changes. Good partnerships with technology suppliers ensure customised solutions and positive outcomes. Skilled and adaptable health and care professionals play a vital role, supported by enabling technologies and senior clinical expertise.

The UK's current hybrid care landscape exhibits variations in care models, adoption levels, and consistent application of service models, pathways, and clinical decision-making. Opportunities for advancement exist within integrated health and care systems, primary care networks, and digital home care initiatives. Connectivity and self-care engagement whilst involving families and circles of care in the community are essential for success.

To begin implementing hybrid care, organisations should define objectives; engage stakeholders; assess their infrastructure; establish workflows; invest in the required technology, educate patients, service users, families and staff; ensure data privacy, cyber security and, evaluate and act on outcomes.

By embracing hybrid care, health and care organisations can create opportunities for new ways of working that improve outcomes for patients, service users, their families, and the workforce. This approach optimises resource utilisation and improves the overall health and care experience for all. Successful implementation of digital innovations in health and care delivery requires careful planning, stakeholder engagement, and a strategic approach.

What is Hybrid Care?

Hybrid care, also known as blended care or integrated care, is a health and social care model that combines traditional in-person health and care services with digital solutions and enriched data integration which streamlines and improves visibility of all aspects of the support a person is receiving or needs. It aims to provide continuous and personalised care where and when it is needed, leveraging the power of technology to improve patient and service users' outcomes and experiences. This model can ensure that patients and care recipients can be seen by the right people, at the right time, in the right place so that the right treatment can be provided in the most efficient and effective way.

In this model, while in-person care remains essential, data, digital technologies and devices enable the provision of remote monitoring, consultation, and support from the comfort of the person's home.

For example, individuals with chronic conditions like heart failure can have their vital signs remotely monitored through wearable IoT devices and other monitoring devices. The data collected, such as heart rate, respiration, and blood tests, can be transmitted to health and care professionals who can analyse it and provide necessary guidance on medication adjustments or further testing. This proactive monitoring helps prevent the deterioration of the condition and unnecessary hospital admissions.

Through virtual consultations, individuals and their families along with care teams, which may include nurses, home carers, voluntary or third sector support (e.g. Macmillan Cancer Support) and specialists, can access and engage with health and care professionals to discuss the monitoring data and make any necessary adjustments to the care plan. Remote consultations with specialists, such as tissue viability nurses, can also occur to examine wounds remotely and provide advice on treatment, or in complex specialist needs cases surgical experts from anywhere in the world could access the case and consult with the clinical team.

Additionally, remote health and care monitoring systems installed in the home can go beyond the traditional means of summoning assistance in case of a fall and can be used to proactively monitor activity levels to identify key risk times and places to prevent the risks. This information can be used to adjust the care plan, including helping with tasks like toileting and falls prevention services. Preventative telecare measures can include reminders for medication intake and connecting service users with volunteer befriender programs. In the future, we will see the use of big data supporting predictive analytics identifying an event before it occurs enabling early intervention to avoid for example a fall or a hyperglycaemic event.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) plays a crucial role in enhancing capacity within hybrid care, through the use of predictive analytics. By leveraging AI algorithms and machine learning techniques, health and care organisations can analyse large volumes of data to identify patterns, trends, and potential health risks, allowing them to allocate resources more effectively and make informed decisions for service users and patients. This enables the concept of doing more with less or the same resources, optimising efficiency, and ultimately improving outcomes for service users.

Hybrid care not only aims to provide integrated care at home but also focuses on prevention and assistance to enable individuals to remain in their homes instead of being confined to a hospital bed. This in turn provides additional benefits to the emotional and physical well-being of the person, as they receive treatment from their home, minimising infection risks during travel and while in hospital settings. This model involves innovation and collaborative efforts among health and care professionals, home care providers, community, families, and voluntary sector as well as third sector care providers and technology partners to ensure seamless coordination and quality care.

With the expansion of Virtual Wards and the integration of social care with digital innovation in health and care, health and care organisations are facing both challenges and opportunities to transform the way treatment and care are provided. By embracing hybrid care, organisations can seamlessly leverage technology to optimise resources, improve patient and service user outcomes, and enhance the overall health and care experience.

Most importantly, hybrid care represents a paradigm shift in health and care delivery, going beyond the existing practices of virtual wards and telecare. It encompasses the vision of integrated and seamless remote health and care monitoring, supported by advanced technologies. The focus is on designing and implementing innovative models of hybrid care that leverage properly integrated remote monitoring solutions and digital response services. By harnessing the power of these technologies, health and care providers can create a more holistic and proactive approach to care, enabling timely interventions, personalised support, and improved outcomes.
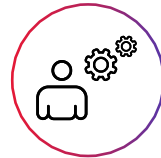

The true potential of hybrid care lies in redefining the way health and care services are delivered, transforming the patient experience, and paving the way for a more connected, sustainable and effective healthcare system.

Benefits of Hybrid Care
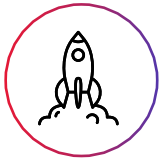
Innovative solutions that empower
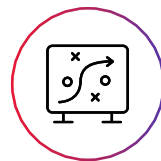
Improvements to working environment and workloads

Prevention and early detection

Reductions in carbon footprints

A person-centred approach that fits individual needs

Enhanced system planning for public health

Increased efficiencies and diminished backlogs

Cost savings

Implementing a hybrid care model offers numerous advantages and benefits, revolutionising the health and care experience for both individuals and providers. By combining digital innovations with in-person care, hybrid care unlocks new possibilities and improves health and care in the following ways:

1 **Access to the right care at the right time:** Hybrid care bridges geographical barriers and expands access to health and care services. Through digital platforms and remote consultations, patients and care recipients can receive timely care regardless of their location. This is particularly beneficial for individuals in rural or underserved areas who may face challenges in accessing traditional health and care facilities.

2 **Personalised care:** Hybrid care enables the building of a comprehensive view of a person through data and analytics, facilitating a personalised approach to the delivery of health and care services. By leveraging digital tools and data analytics, health and care providers can gather comprehensive information about patients and service users, allowing for personalised treatment plans that align with individual needs and preferences. This personalised approach enhances patient and service user satisfaction and outcomes.

3 **Cost-effectiveness:** Hybrid care models have the potential to establish new and innovative models of service delivery, which can increase capacity to deliver services, lead to the development of new and different ways of working across the sector. Remote monitoring, telehealth, and virtual consultations minimise the need for in-person visits, reducing transportation costs and lowering the burden on the health and care infrastructure. Moreover, preventive interventions and early detection facilitated by digital technologies can lead to cost savings by averting expensive treatments down the line.

4 **Enhanced patient and service user experience:** Hybrid care improves the overall experience through convenience, efficiency, and continuity of care. Patients and service users can benefit from reduced wait times, streamlined processes, and increased engagement in their own health and care. Digital platforms enable easy access to medical records, appointment scheduling, and communication with health and care providers, empowering patients and service users to actively participate in their care journey.

5 **Circle of care and community empowerment:** Hybrid care can connect those receiving health and care services, their loved ones, carers and agencies, while taking a preventative approach to client care, providing reassurance to families and friends, and easing pressure on carers. A good 'circle of care,' where the load is shared appropriately and safely, balances the demands of care between family, community and state, providing additional capacity and improving financial stability.

6 **Multi-disciplinary team collaboration:** Multi-disciplinary team collaboration enhances the hybrid care experience, benefiting staff by automating processes, simplifying information management and facilitating seamless teamwork. This saves time, empowers professionals to make better decisions, and improves care quality. By reducing administrative burdens, health and care professionals are able to focus more on the provision of direct care, leading to improved outcomes and positive systemic change.

7 **Equality and inclusion:** Regardless of location, personal circumstances or situation, hybrid care offers the opportunity to create equality and a standardised approach to health, care and well-being in patients with frailty or with complex conditions; empowering people to live independent lives where possible and have less dependency and intrusion.

8 **An attractive profession:** A fully integrated hybrid care model has the potential to make health and care professions more attractive by supporting the retention of the existing workforce through improved ways of working. As the system evolves, innovation, new skills and job opportunities will continue to emerge, contributing to the professionalisation of care. By reducing administrative tasks and fostering collaboration and integration among care and health professionals, hybrid care enables professionals to dedicate more time to hands-on care, making the sector a more appealing, less stressful and fulfilling career choice.

9 **Environmental integration for public health predictions:** For individuals with chronic conditions, such as asthma or heart disease, integrating weather forecasts and environmental data will help predict and manage changes to conditions more effectively. For example, real-time alerts can be sent to vulnerable individuals, advising them to take precautions during periods of poor air quality or extreme heat to prevent any exacerbations of their conditions.

10 **Sustainability and reducing the carbon footprint of health and care:** Hybrid care presents an opportunity for local authorities and health organisations to improve their carbon footprint by reducing the need for physical transportation and optimising resource allocation. Through the integration of telemedicine and digital solutions, hybrid care enables more efficient and environmentally friendly healthcare delivery, leading to a significant reduction in carbon emissions associated with traditional care models. Various scientific studies have established that telemedicine contributes to the reduction of healthcare visit-related carbon footprint, mainly by minimising transport-related emissions.
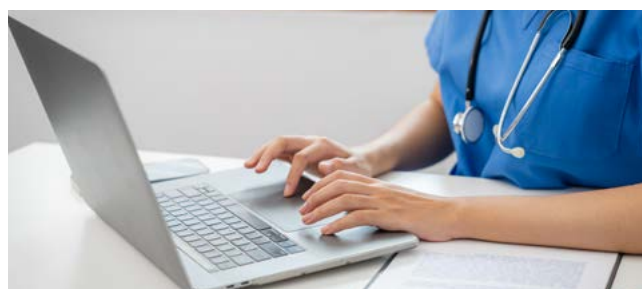
Hybrid care aligns with the goals set forth across the united Kingdom and illustrated in the Department of Health and Social Care's June 2022 Plan for Digital Health and Social Care, of improving care quality, transparency, accountability, and supporting individuals to maintain independence. By leveraging digital technology, it becomes possible to enhance care quality and safety, reduce avoidable hospital admissions and readmissions, and enable individuals to live independently in their homes for longer.[1]

Over **99%** of patients on existing virtual wards would recommend the service.

23% of patients treated in a virtual ward achieved a more independent social care outcome than they would have in an acute setting.

2.5 times fewer patients treated on a virtual ward are readmitted to frailty beds than the national acute benchmark.

Patients are **5 times** less likely to acquire an infection when treated on a virtual ward compared to an acute setting.

Patients are **8 times** less likely to experience functional decline whilst in a virtual ward compared to equivalent treatment in an acute setting.

[1] **Making the most of virtual wards: GIRFT and NHS England**

Getting It Right the First Time (GIRFT), a national programme designed to improve the treatment and care of patients, and NHS's England Virtual Ward programme further outlines the successes and most important criteria of virtual wards as being the informed patient choice, where someone who when given a choice, wishes to have their care provided at home. Their report, 'Making the most of virtual wards, including Hospital at Home Guidance by NHS' (May 2023) demonstrates that there is strong evidence for the benefits of virtual wards and observed that:

Embracing digital transformation in the adult social care sector requires support for implementation and design improvement while building analytical skills within the health and care workforce. A comprehensive digital records system offers benefits beyond paper based systems, enabling easier information capture, quicker response to people's needs, secure information sharing, and minimising risks to safety.

Ultimately, hybrid care puts people and families at the heart of care, offering them choice, control, and support to live independent lives. It values the contributions of unpaid carers, promotes community integration, and ensures fair and accessible adult social care.

IIntegrating IT systems between primary and secondary care further enhances the effectiveness of hybrid care. Seamless access to full patient and service user records enables more impactful conversations, efficient referrals, and faster care delivery. It also helps provide a more holistic view by creating a single view of a person or a complete person record which enhances the effectiveness of care and enables seamless access to full patient and service user records. This leads to improved decision making, and better coordination across health and care settings.

Seamless access to full patient and service user records enables more impactful conversations, efficient referrals, and faster care delivery.

Challenges

The implementation of a hybrid care model is not without its challenges and barriers. These challenges must be recognised and addressed to ensure successful adoption and integration of digital innovations in health and care.

Some key challenges and considerations include:

Cultural and behavioural change: Shifting established practices and mindsets to embrace hybrid care can face resistance by organisations as well as the public, due to a reliance on traditional models and routines. Overcoming this resistance requires a fundamental shift in mindset, embracing technology, collaboration, and adaptability. Addressing concerns about privacy, security, and the impact on existing roles is crucial for successful implementation and unlocking the transformative potential of hybrid care.

Staffing pressures and training: Developing staff proficiency in utilising technology effectively and safely to provide care is crucial. It requires training and upskilling health and care professionals to leverage digital tools and embrace new ways of delivering care. Staff buy-in and engagement are essential for successful implementation.

Technology integration: Ensuring the availability and accessibility of technology in patients' homes can be a challenge. Telecare services and other digital tools must be readily accessible to assess people's needs and provide the appropriate preventative and assistive technology alongside hands-on care. Seamless integration of different technologies and connectivity, together with access to skills development and software systems learning are necessary for efficient care delivery.

Lagging legislation and standards: The health and care sector is currently behind other industries in implementing legislated and contracted standards for data sharing, encompassing both consent-based sharing and agreed-upon open APIs and integration protocols. Unlike sectors such as open banking, which have effectively utilised regulations to drive the adoption of open standards across the industry, the health and care sector is still engaged in ongoing discussions regarding the establishment of the appropriate standard. The sector can draw valuable lessons from the open banking model to leverage regulatory measures and promote an open standards-driven approach, fostering interoperability and seamless integration among technology and service providers.

Data privacy and security concerns: As digital technologies collect and transmit sensitive patient information, data privacy and security become paramount. Protecting patient data from unauthorised access and ensuring compliance with relevant regulations, such as General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), require robust security measures and adherence to privacy protocols.
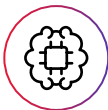
Ethics in data modelling and AI: With rapid advancements in data modelling and AI garnering concerns globally, the health and care sector must prioritise understanding and actively engaging in the ongoing ethical debates surrounding data modelling and the use of AI in the field. Being at the forefront of these discussions will enable the sector to navigate the complex ethical considerations associated with AI adoption and ensure responsible and accountable use of these technologies in delivering health and care services.

Regulatory considerations: Adhering to regulatory frameworks and standards is vital when implementing hybrid care. Health and care organisations must navigate regulatory requirements related to telehealth, data protection, and electronic health records to ensure compliance and mitigate legal risks.

Variance of care and infrastructure: Despite implementing standardised policies and processes, variance in care delivery can persist. Ensuring a well-supported workforce and adequate infrastructure, particularly in primary care and community services, is essential to maintain continuity of care and prevent unnecessary strain on secondary care services.

Patient and service user challenges and engagement: Individual acceptance and adoption of digital technologies can pose challenges. Not all people may be comfortable with virtual appointments or using unfamiliar technology. Additionally, technical issues and limited access to support services can hinder patient and service user engagement and satisfaction. Addressing these concerns and providing adequate support is crucial to ensure the patient or service user's acceptance and successful implementation.

Suboptimal management and capacity challenges: Suboptimal management of hybrid care systems can lead to a lack of patient and service user engagement and self-management. Clinical capacity challenges, particularly during the transition to new systems, can hinder efficient care delivery. Adequate training and support for health and care professionals are needed to overcome these challenges and empower stakeholders to effectively leverage technology.

Connectivity and equality: Connectivity issues and digital exclusion can pose significant equality challenges in the context of hybrid care, especially as those living in remote and rural areas can benefit the most from this system. While advancements in technology have revolutionised health and care delivery, not all areas in the UK have the necessary level of connectivity to support this transformation. In fact, a recent survey[2] showed that three-quarters (74%) of community nurses cited connectivity issues as a challenge to working digitally. In order to bridge this gap, innovative thinking is required, such as exploring alternative solutions like OneWeb, a CGI-partnered project that leverages low-orbit satellite broadband technology. By utilising such emerging technologies, health and care providers can extend their reach to remote and rural areas, ensuring equal access to health and care services and addressing one of the biggest barriers to equality and inclusion in these communities.

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[2]Nursing Times: Connectivity issues still barrier to community nurses using tech (2023)

Financing and initial investment: In order In order to adopt a hybrid care approach, significant upfront investments in funds and human resources are necessary to build capacity, redesign processes, develop pathways and protocols, conduct training and set standards. The health and care sector must change its mindset from seeing this initiative as a cost to understanding this is a critical and necessary investment in a future model of health and care which is less dependent on statutory services and promotes self-responsibility, accountability and prevention. Generations to come do not have the same respect for the inefficiency and inequality that are often experienced. The highest performing health and care services in the world are enabled by data and digital at their core. In order for health and care public services to be sustainable globally, we must accept the future of all services in all sectors is enabled by digital; it is more cost-effective, efficient and consistent. An investment mindset prioritises long-term value, innovation, and improved user outcomes rather than seeking quick and inexpensive fixes.
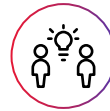
Finding the right solution partner: It is crucial when selecting a partner, health and care suppliers choose a long-term invested partner through a strong strategic partnership. Such a partnership can provide not only the necessary expertise and solutions and commitment to support and collaborate in navigating the financial aspects of the initial investment. By fostering a strategic partnership, organisations can leverage shared goals and resources to overcome financial challenges and ensure sustainable and successful implementation of hybrid care. The health and care sector must embrace substantial digital investments and shift away from a cost-centric mindset, recognising that a paradigm shift is needed to effectively invest in digital transformation.

Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that includes training and support for health and care professionals, engagement and education of the patient and care service user's circle of care, robust technological infrastructure, data privacy safeguards, and regulatory compliance. By proactively identifying and addressing these challenges, the implementation of hybrid care can be successful, leading to improved health and care outcomes and experiences.

Success in Hybrid Care

Examples of hybrid care models have demonstrated significant positive outcomes and transformative impacts on health and care delivery.

Strong leadership plays a crucial role in driving the adoption of hybrid care and delivering a model of care that focuses on providing support in the home. By investing resources in preventative services, leaders can effectively reduce the need for more costly care in hospitals or care homes. The ultimate result is a more effiecient cost-effective model that enhances the health, well-being, and independence of individuals receiving support. Moreover, hybrid care models free up health and care staff to utilise their skills more effectively with hands on care, as data and technology takes on the responsibility of administration and integration enabling remote support providing additional guidance and advice, including access to specialists.

A key aspect of success in hybrid care lies in finding a reliable and dedicated technology and data partner who understands the unique needs of the health and care organisation and is committed to developing and sustaining a valuable partnership. A good strategic partner not only provides the necessary technology and tools but also values the partnership and works collaboratively to customise solutions that meet specific requirements. This partnership approach fosters trust, open communication, and a shared commitment to achieving positive outcomes in health and care delivery. By forging a strong relationship with a capable partner, health and care organisations expand their team, capability and brain space to leverage their combined expertise to optimise the implementation of hybrid care models, leading to improved experiences and better economic, health, care and overall system outcomes.

Cyber secure

Person centred

Reliable

Accurate

Safe

Well communicated

Safe and Equitable Hybrid Care

Successful virtual care models offer a comprehensive range of integrated services that are revolutionary and put the person at the centre of their care These models establish strong connections with core teams, including pharmacy, dentistry, opticians and overnight care, fostering seamless coordination and reducing avoidable hospital admissions. Furthermore, virtual care collaborates closely with social care, rehabilitation, and recovery services, ensuring holistic support for social care needs and recognising the crucial role of caregivers.

A skilled and adaptable workforce lies at the heart of these virtual care models, comprising diverse health and care professionals such as consultants, practitioners, pharmacists, nurses, and social care workers. Furthermore it creates inclusion with family, community, voluntary and third sector providers where it is appropriate to do so ensuring a whole system view of the individual is created which strengthens the insight and decision making processes.

By leveraging enabling technologies, like point-of-care testing and remote monitoring, virtual care enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of care delivery. The models are typically led by experienced senior clinicians or consultants who serve as dedicated points of contact and decision-makers, offering expert guidance and oversight. Enabling this new approach to health and care service provides 24 hour coverage 365 days of the year, rather than the current inconsistent extended operating hours and complex provisions for out-of-hours coverage. Hybrid care ensures continuous support and timely access to senior clinical expertise, resulting in improved patient and service user outcomes and enhanced experiences throughout the care journey using a variety of tools including virtual access.

To ensure the successful adoption of hybrid care, implementing a comprehensive culture change programme is pivotal. While technology plays a facilitating role, cultural acceptance is the key to its effective implementation. This program should encompass cultural, systemic, and integration changes, emphasising effective communication and involving stakeholders throughout the journey. Cultural change is the cornerstone of technological transformation in health and care organisations, yet it often receives inadequate investment and proves challenging to achieve. Leadership within the organisation wields the greatest influence on culture, and establishing a supportive and embedded culture becomes a critical responsibility for leaders. By fostering knowledge and addressing gaps, organisations can cultivate a culture that supports and enables the desired changes. It is within a culture of compassion and communication that quality improvement and innovation efforts can thrive and drive meaningful impact.

Effective transformation in health and care requires more than just the introduction of technology for the sake of it. In fact, poorly planned integration of new technologies can have the adverse effect of hindering services and care provided, adding to the already burdensome workload of health and care staff. It is essential to carefully consider the impact on workflow, training requirements, and the overall user experience, to ensure that technology implementation enhances efficiency and supports the delivery of high-quality care. Being clear about the problem we are trying to solve from the outset is essential. Effective transformation of health and care systems necessitates a comprehensive system change driven by the people delivering services, supported by integrated data, and with a clear focus on specific outcomes. Prioritising the allocation of resources requires a thorough understanding of the desired results before investing in any technology that requires public funding.

Case Study

[Culture, capability, and co-design](#) – how technology-enabled remote monitoring is helping move the dial towards empowered personal care in Dorset.

In March 2022, NHS Dorset launched the Digital Access to Services at Home (D@SH) program, in partnership with the Academic Health Science Network (AHSN), which enables hundreds of people in Dorset to manage their longterm conditions from the comfort of their homes. The program, developed by a multidisciplinary team of clinical and non-clinical specialists, focuses on providing equitable digital access to all individuals while avoiding creating additional dependencies on patients and caregivers.

Through the use of technology-enabled remote monitoring, the D@SH program aims to promote better self-management of long-term conditions and challenge misconceptions about the potential use of digital services based on age, gender, and deprivation. The initiative has demonstrated a behavioural shift among the population, encouraging individuals to take control of their health and lifestyle choices through digital support and tools. The program also emphasises the importance of workforce infrastructure, including digital champions, data ambassadors, and care coordinators, to ensure the ongoing success and progression of the service.

The D@SH program utilises various tools and technologies, such as the Omron Hypertension Plus[3] software, which enables patients to track their blood pressure readings in line with NICE guidelines. The program has shown promising results, with over 31,000 blood pressure readings recorded by more than 450 patients since its full launch. Patient testimonials highlight the positive impact of the program, including improved lifestyle choices and reduced reliance on face-to-face appointments.

Since the project launched to July 2022, the programme has also reported:

55% cost saving on patient appointments, by optimising GP and workforce activity and time per patient

5% reduction in hypertension patient appointments

A productivity value increase of **£181,000**

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[3] [OMRON Healthcare aids NHS clinicians with groundbreaking remote patient monitoring platform for hypertension](#)

Current Landscape

Notable examples of successful efforts to integrate and scale hybrid healthcare can be seen in both Scotland and Wales. Scotland's Technology Enabled Care (TEC) Programme, overseen by the National Digital Citizen Board, stands as a notable example of efforts to scale up and integrate hybrid care into routine practice. This includes initiatives such as the expansion of blood pressure monitoring, the widespread adoption of virtual consultations through platforms like Near Me, a video consulting service that uses the Attend Anywhere® platform, and the use of video conferencing for health and care purposes.

Delta Wellbeing in Carmarthenshire is proactively and collaboratively working with government, local authorities, the health board, the ambulance service and community services in what is designed to be a transformative whole system approach to integrated health and care in the community, sharing information and data between agencies to improve statutory outcomes and providing seamless step up and down support to people in their own homes first.

Changes in the health and care sector, particularly the transition towards integrated health and care systems like Integrated Care Systems (ICS), provide opportunities for further advancements in hybrid care. As primary care networks and specialist teams are developed within these integrated systems, there is potential for the integration of digital health and care services to eradicate their silos and come together in a new form of hybrid care focussed on enabling the person and starting in the home first.
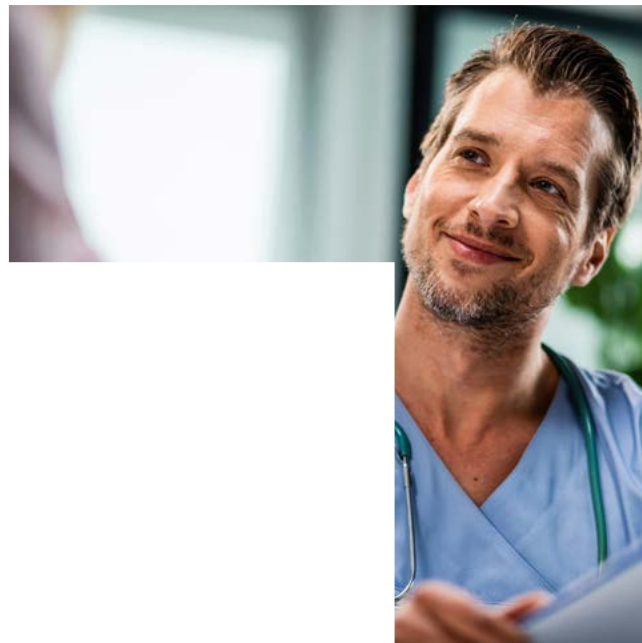
The current landscape of hybrid care in the UK exhibits significant variations in its adoption and implementation. While some areas have embraced this model, others have yet to fully leverage its potential.

Care data matters: a roadmap for better adult social care data published in December 2023 further alignes with the Care Act and the vision for social care reform. The updated framework emphasises six key objectives to prioritise outcomes in adult social care. These objectives include maximising individuals' quality of life, promoting independence, empowering individuals through access to information and advice, ensuring safety, fostering social connections, and delivering continuity and quality of care.

Notably, NHS England reported that between November 2020 and January 2023, over 487,000 individuals have been supported at home through digital home care and remote monitoring technologies funded by national initiatives like the Regional Scale Programme. Connectivity plays a pivotal role in hybrid care, enabling peer-to-peer communication, organisational collaborations, and service user engagement with the health and care systems. Enhanced connectivity provides reassurance to individuals, ensuring their safety and the availability of support when needed, particularly for those living alone or lacking strong support systems.

Motivating individuals to engage in self-care is another area where hybrid care has demonstrated success. Regular monitoring and feedback mechanisms drive adherence to medication regimens and lifestyle modifications. Additionally, the use of gamification techniques has proven effective in encouraging individuals to actively participate in their care and share their experiences.

In addition, systems are yet to consider, not least benefit from, the opportunity of accessing and utilising personally held data, for example, smart watches and weigh scales which may provide more accurate information and insight relating to a pattern of living.

The NHS reports that AI is currently being used in a variety of ways, including supporting people in virtual wards, who would otherwise be in hospital to receive the care and treatment they need in their own home or usual place of residence. Remote monitoring technology such as apps and medical devices can assess care recipients' health and care while they are being cared for at home. The NHS in all nations in the UK have AI strategies and initiatives underway to explore and exploit the significant potential this technology offers. There is a significant opportunity to leverage the integration of the individual's own data which further enhances insight.

With the widespread availability and use of wearables (such as smartwatches and fitness trackers that can easily be purchased from pharmacies or online platforms), consumer digital health and care equipment presents a valuable resource. Statutory services can save costs associated with purchasing additional hardware by finding ways to effectively integrate the vast amount of personal health data that already exists and enabling individuals to leverage their own devices. While establishing minimum standards may be necessary, the topic of integrating personal health data from popular brands like Apple, Fitbit, Samsung, and Garmin holds immense potential for enhancing the hybrid care system and delivering personalised and efficient care to individuals.

Overall, the current landscape of hybrid care in the UK encompasses a range of initiatives, varying adoption rates, and evolving trends. Efforts to integrate hybrid care models into routine practice and leverage technology to improve care outcomes and experiences are key focus areas within the health and care sectors.

Where to begin

Implementing a hybrid care model can be a transformative step for health and care organisations, however, knowing where to begin can be a daunting challenge. By strategically planning the implementation process and considering key factors such as the needs of the person, technological capabilities, and workforce readiness, organisations can embark on their hybrid care journey with confidence.

Below are 12 steps to consider:

1 **Understanding the problem:** Prior to embarking on any transformation, it is crucial to thoroughly comprehend and agree upon the priority, strategy and problems of the organisation or the region. Attempting to fix a problem without a clear understanding of its root cause can lead to lengthy and costly processes that may result in incorrect decisions and wasteful investments. Spend time to engage with key stakeholders, conduct a need assessment and consult with experts to gain a deep understanding of the issue at hand.

2 **Engage stakeholders:** Involve key stakeholders, including health and care professionals, administrators, IT, digital and data personnel, patients, service users and their circles of care in the planning and implementation process. Seek their input, address concerns, and ensure buy-in from all parties involved and maintain regular communication and updates on progress and challenges, be open and transparent.

3 **Assess current infrastructure and capabilities:** Evaluate the organisation's existing infrastructure, technology capabilities and resources. Determine what digital tools and platforms are already in place and identify any gaps that need to be addressed, understand the skills and experience required and ensure any resource gaps are addressed.

4 **Define objectives and goals:** Clearly define the objectives and goals of implementing a hybrid care model. Identify the specific outcomes the organisation aims to achieve, such as improved access to care, enhanced patient experience or optimised resource utilisation and start small. Choose one cohort to develop and learn from, iterative feedback and continual improvement will be key in the development of the full programme of work. Don't be tempted to 'go big', starting at home with one pathway will ensure you establish strong foundations for the others to build on.

5 **Establish governance and standardisation:** Develop clear workflows, protocols, pathways, care assessment and clinical decision-making algorithms that outline how hybrid care will be integrated into existing care processes. Define roles and responsibilities for health and care professionals, establish guidelines for remote consultations, prescription management and data sharing.

6 **Invest in the right technology:** Identify the right strategic transformation partner who will ensure you know what you already have and what you need, as they will support you to invest in the necessary data and digital solutions that support hybrid care. This may include telehealth platforms, remote monitoring devices, electronic health records (EHR) systems, secure communication tools and mobile apps. It's important to note that an organisation should only invest in the technology once a service has been re-designed to include the home and the wider circle of care. Technology is an enabler of people, not the other way around, so ensure you are clear what the technology can do and how it will support the redesigned process and people, ensuring the investment is well made, lasts and provides ROI.

7 **Train and educate stakeholders:** Provide comprehensive communication, training and education to health and care professionals, staff, service users, patients and their families on the use of digital tools and hybrid care practices. Consider how to engage wider circles of care and organisations who will interact with the individual that can build capacity and create efficiency gains for statutory services. Ensure they are comfortable and competent in delivering care through virtual channels before going live and undertake a soft launch to support a smoother transition.

8 **Ensure data security and privacy:** Implement robust security measures to protect individuals' data and ensure compliance with data protection regulations. Use encrypted communication channels and secure storage systems, and regularly update security protocols.
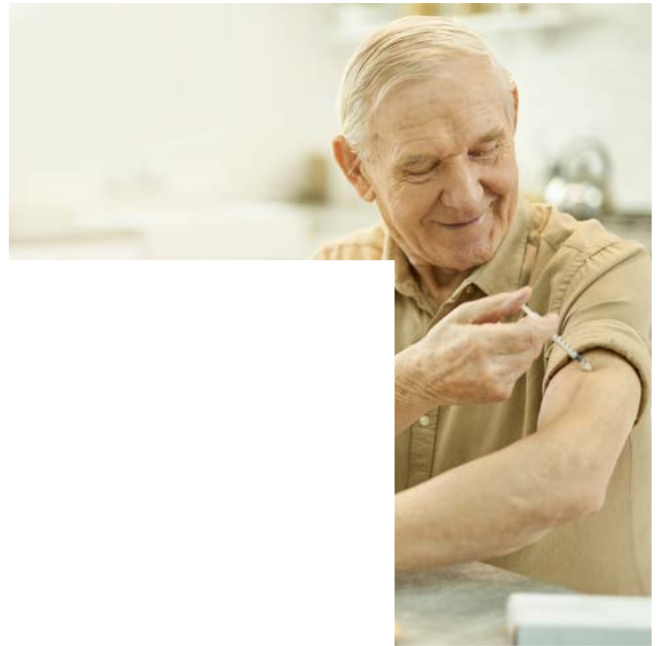
9 **Monitor and evaluate:** Continuously monitor and evaluate the implementation of hybrid care. Collect feedback from service users (including patients, care recipients, families of service users, health and care staff, and executives depending on the insight and reporting from the change) to identify areas for improvement. Use data and analytics to measure the impact and outcomes from hybrid care on patient and service user experience outcomes, satisfaction, and resource utilisation. Organisations must also ensure that they are monitoring the return on investment in order to evaluate the financial impact, efficiency and sustainability of the system.

Collaborate and share best practices:
Engage with other health and care organisations, health and care associations, and government bodies to collaborate and share best practices. Learn from successful implementations and adapt strategies accordingly, be open to sharing your learning including the challenges and successes.

Iterate and improve: Hybrid care is an evolving model, so organisations must be prepared to iterate and continually improve over time. Stay updated with advancements in digital health technologies and continuously refine the hybrid care approach to meet the changing needs of service users and the organisation to deliver enhanced sustainability and successful outcomes.

Establish a culture change programme:
To successfully adopt an integrated hybrid care system, it is essential to establish a comprehensive culture change programme. A culture that empowers staff, allowing them the freedom and confidence to act in the best interests of the individual receiving treatment or care, is crucial for sustainable operational and financial performance. A wider community coaching programme should be established to bring members of the public along with you. Supporting them to become empowered to stay independent and as healthy as possible at home will be welcomed, but will require careful and considerate change management for them too. This programme should encompass cultural, system, and integration changes, emphasising clear communication and engaging stakeholders at every level. Recognising the significant number of stakeholders involved is vital, as their buy-in and active participation are key to driving successful transformation.[4]

[4] The King's Fund: A programme with NHS Improvement to support culture change through collective leadership

Key barriers and how to overcome them

Digital divide and inequity

One of the primary challenges is the existence of a digital divide, where individuals or communities may not have access to or be comfortable using digital technologies. This can create inequities in health and care access, particularly for marginalised or disadvantaged populations who may already face barriers to health and social care.

How to address these challenges:

- Recipients of care should be provided with access to digital devices and internet connectivity in underserved areas.
- Sufficient training and support for individuals throughout the care process should be offered.
- Collaboration with local government and non-profit actors to bridge the digital divide and ensure equitable access to virtual care.
- Engage with the local community, schools and third sector to support technology familiarisation and learning for those who may not feel comfortable with it.
- Invest in communicating the opportunity as an exciting and innovative approach to making life better, users need to feel engaged, not daunted.

Staffing pressures

The adoption of digital technologies and remote care models can place additional demands on health and care professionals, requiring them to adapt their skills, workflows, and communication methods. Some of the staffing challenges include the need for adequate training and upskilling of staff to effectively use digital tools, managing expectations that there will not be an increased workload due to the integration of virtual care, ensuring a balance between virtual and in-person care responsibilities, and addressing potential resistance or scepticism towards technology-driven approaches. The most important aspect of this is providing time to learn and adapt and for good planning.

How to address these challenges:

- Invest in comprehensive training programmes, offer continuous support and resources for staff, patients and families, and promote a culture of innovation and digital fluency. Explore collaborative care models that optimise the roles and responsibilities of health and care professionals, as well as those of individuals and their families. Furthermore, effective workload management, clear communication channels, and strong team coordination are crucial to alleviate staffing pressures and guarantee the successful implementation of hybrid care.
- Community Responders can build upon the existing local volunteer infrastructure to build capacity within the local community to address low acuity or social care needs. These can include shopping or caring for an elderly neighbour with an infection or on discharge from hospital. This is a community-led initiative coordinated for the most vulnerable.

Infrastructure and connectivity

Effective hybrid care relies on robust digital infrastructure and reliable internet connectivity. In some regions, particularly rural or remote areas, there may be limited access to high-speed internet, hindering the seamless delivery of virtual health and care services. Addressing these infrastructure gaps is crucial for ensuring equal access to hybrid care across the country.

How to address these challenges:

- Advocate for improved digital infrastructure and high-speed internet access in underserved areas.

- Explore partnerships with telecommunications companies to expand connectivity to all available options as well as innovative communication modalities such as OneWeb.

- Develop mobile solutions or offline capabilities to overcome connectivity limitations in remote areas.

- Britain's Smart Metering Implementation Programme offers a direct channel into every home receiving mainline gas and electricity. Explore options to utilise one of the two currently redundant secure communication channels within these smart metering systems.

Regulatory and legal considerations

Hybrid care involves navigating various regulatory and legal aspects. Regulations regarding telemedicine, data protection, consent, and licensure need to be adapted to accommodate the unique aspects of hybrid care. Striking a balance between patient and service user safety, quality of care, and regulatory compliance is essential.

How to address these challenges:

- Stay informed about evolving regulations and guidelines related to hybrid care.

- Collaborate with legal experts to ensure compliance with data protection, telemedicine, and licensure requirements.

- Participate in policy discussions and advocate for regulatory frameworks that facilitate the delivery of hybrid care.

- Communicate openly and widely with the public on the benefits of sharing data and provide reassurance on safety and who can access the data.

Data privacy and security

Hybrid care involves the collection, storage, and transmission of sensitive and critical patient and service user data. Ensuring robust data privacy and security measures is essential to protect the individual's confidentiality and maintain trust in the health and care system. Strict regulations and guidelines must be in place to safeguard the patient or service user's information and prevent unauthorised access or breaches.

How to address these challenges:

- Establish robust cybersecurity protocols and training programs to educate users on best practices, threat recognition, and incident response.

- Implement continuous threat monitoring systems to safeguard all sensitive health information.

- Ensure robust data protection measures, including encryption, secure storage, and access controls.

- Adhere to relevant data protection regulations, such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

- Conduct regular audits and risk assessments to identify vulnerabilities and ensure compliance with security standards.

Integration with existing systems

Integrating hybrid care into existing health and care systems can be complex. Seamless coordination between virtual and in-person care, interoperability of electronic health records, and integration with other health and care providers and systems are essential for ensuring continuity and quality of care. Standardisation and interoperability frameworks need to be established to facilitate smooth information exchange and care coordination.

How to address these challenges:

- Collaborate with other health and care providers and organisations to establish interoperability standards.

- Invest in health information exchange platforms to facilitate seamless sharing of the patient or service user's data.

- Implement electronic health record systems that support hybrid care and enable easy access to patient or service user information.

- In addressing the challenge of integrating hybrid care with existing systems, it is imperative to recognise the need for a significant transformation in data-sharing practices, where the adoption of open standards becomes common practice, eliminating the option to deviate from established norms.

- Learn from other industries, i.e. financial services with open banking.

Technological literacy and skills

Hybrid care requires individuals to have basic technological literacy to navigate digital platforms, use telehealth tools, and manage their health information online. Some patients or service users, particularly older adults or those with limited digital literacy, may face challenges in adopting and using digital solutions effectively. Education and support programs are needed to enhance digital skills and promote inclusivity.

How to address these challenges:

- Develop resources to ensure accessibility of the technologies used, working with third-sector and local government to ensure sufficient digital literacy skills among individuals, particularly older adults.

- Offer training programs and workshops to educate health and care professionals on using digital tools and platforms effectively.

- Provide user-friendly interfaces and intuitive technology solutions to minimise the learning curve for patients, service users and health and care service providers.

- Consider engaging senior year school students in volunteering programmes to support older adult learning and coaching, providing the students with real life experiences and volunteering time.

Risk Aversion

Risk aversion poses a significant barrier for health and care organisations, mainly due to limited experience and fear of potential negative outcomes. Overcoming these barriers requires a proactive approach and strong leadership, including fostering a culture of innovation and experimentation, and investing in training and education to build confidence and competence in utilising digital care technologies.

How to address these challenges:

- Encourage a mindset that embraces change and innovation, where experimentation and learning from failures are valued.

- Provide a safe space for staff to share worries and ideas, collaborate, and take calculated risks in adopting new technologies.

- Offer comprehensive training programs to build the skills and knowledge necessary for utilising hybrid care technologies effectively.

- Provide ongoing support and continuous learning opportunities to address the limited experience and enhance the confidence of not only health and care professionals, but also patients, service users and their families.

⛮ Funding and costs

Addressing funding and cost challenges in the context of hybrid care requires careful planning and strategic measures.

How to address these challenges:

- Identify areas where hybrid care can have the most significant impact and prioritise funding accordingly to unlock real organisational value. Determine the specific services or programs that will benefit from digital solutions and allocate resources accordingly. This ensures that limited resources are allocated strategically to maximise the return on investment.

- Seek out grant funding opportunities, research grants, and partnerships with relevant organisations to support the implementation of hybrid care. These external funding sources can help alleviate some of the financial burdens and provide resources for infrastructure development, training programs, and technological investments (e.g. Adult Social Care Digital Transformation Fund)

- Leverage digital technologies and automation to enhance operational efficiency and optimise resource utilisation. This can involve implementing electronic health records (EHR) systems, telehealth platforms, and remote monitoring tools to reduce administrative burdens, improve workflows, and streamline processes.

- Collaborate with other health and care organisations, payers, and stakeholders to share costs, resources, and infrastructure.

- Continuously evaluate the financial impact, ROI and effectiveness of hybrid care initiatives through data analysis and performance metrics. Monitor key indicators such as cost savings, patient / service user outcomes, and resource utilisation to identify areas for improvement and optimise the allocation of funds.

- Ensure that savings and efficiency gains are adequately tracked and evidenced in order to support the continual development of services releasing benefit and value back into the system wherever possible.

- Select a strategic long term partner who will co-invest and support your transformation journey and share the burden of change with you.

⚠ Effective Change Management

Hybrid care requires cultural and behavioural shifts among health and care professionals, patients, service users, caregivers and the wider community. Acceptance and adoption of digital solutions may vary among different stakeholders. Education, training, and awareness programs are needed to promote a positive attitude towards hybrid care and ensure successful implementation.

How to address these challenges:

- Develop comprehensive training programs to educate health and care professionals about the benefits and best practices of hybrid care.

- Engage in positive public awareness campaigns to promote the acceptance and adoption of digital solutions among patients, service users and caregivers.

- Foster a culture of innovation and continuous learning within the organisation to drive positive attitudes towards hybrid care.

Conclusion

Hybrid care, which combines in-person health and care services with digital technology, holds immense potential for improving health and care delivery outcomes and improving financial and service stability, and the health and well being of staff and management. It offers the opportunity to create inclusivity and maximise the whole system's investment. This can be achieved by connecting the individual's family and circle of care with statutory, community, voluntary, private health and care, and third-sector services. By doing so, health and care organisations will remove wastage, create a holistic view of the person, enhance decision-making and identify priority cases faster in a system already under unprecedented strain. Expanding access to health and care, enabling personalised care, optimising resource utilisation, and enhancing the individual and workforce experiences, hybrid care will revolutionise the way health and care services integrate and provided and deliver significant system, economic and wellbeing outcomes.

However, implementing hybrid care comes with its challenges, including staffing pressures and training, technology integration, data privacy and security concerns, regulatory considerations, variance of care and infrastructure, patient and service user challenges and engagement, and suboptimal management and capacity challenges. Navigating these challenges requires strong and effective leadership, and selecting the right strategic transformation partner, a comprehensive approach that involves training and support for health and care professionals, patient and service user education and engagement, robust technological infrastructure, data privacy safeguards, and regulatory compliance.

Successful hybrid care models rely on strong leadership, dedicated partners and suppliers, and collaborations with core health and care teams and the community. They leverage enabling technologies, establish seamless coordination, and provide continuous support and timely access to senior clinical expertise.

While the adoption and implementation of hybrid care may vary across the UK, there are opportunities for further advancements, particularly with integrated health and care systems and initiatives like the Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework. Efforts to integrate hybrid care models into routine practice and leverage technology to improve care outcomes and patient experiences are key focus areas within the health and care sector.

Embracing hybrid care models and advancing digital transformation in health and care will play a pivotal role in shaping the future of the UK's health and care sector for generations to come. This evolution promises to foster equality and inclusivity, elevate care quality, empower individuals, and enhance the overall health and care experience. Additionally, it will contribute to the well-being of our population and stimulate the local economy.

To begin implementing hybrid care, your organisation should assess their current organisational and infrastructure capabilities, define objectives and goals, be crystal clear on the problem you are trying to solve, and the outcomes you wish to achieve, engage stakeholders, invest wisely and considerately in change management, technology and cyber security, establish workflows and protocols that put the user and staff teams at the centre, train and educate everyone involved, ensure data security and privacy is a priority, monitor and evaluate outcomes. Empower the team to pivot in response to new information or challenges and, most importantly, to collaborate with invested, trusted, and reliable partners.

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