Core digital skills

in social care

skillsforcare

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Introduction

How we run our lives and businesses has fundamentally changed due to the growing impact of digital technology. From our homes, to our phones, to our work, to our leisure, all elements of our lives have changed. Social care is changing too, embracing what new technologies can offer.

Technology has been developed and introduced for communicating, storing and sharing information, and learning bring new opportunities to:

- run social care businesses more efficiently
- enable people who need care and support to gain greater control
- create wholly new and alternative forms of support.

Therefore, to make the best of these opportunities, employees at all levels within social care need to have core digital skills and have the confidence and competencies to use them.

What are core digital skills?

Digital skills make up one element of core skills.

Everyone working in adult social care needs English, number, digital and employability skills, including team work, knowing how to manage their own health and wellbeing as well as how to plan their personal learning and development.

Together these are known as core skills. Core skills are the skills needed to enable social care workers to provide high quality care, meet sector standards and complete qualifications. For more information and support on how to identify and develop other core skills please visit www.skillsforcare.org.uk/coreskills.

Core digital skills are the skills and knowledge needed to undertake everyday digital activities relevant to your job role. This can include finding and managing digital information, sharing personal data digitally, using digital technology and making use of e-learning. It may involve using a personal computer, laptop, tablet or phone.

Once people have basic digital skills, they may find it easier to use these skills across a range of different technologies. Examples of everyday tasks that use digital skills may be:
- sending a Facebook message
- applying for a job online
- paying bills with an app
- checking what day the bins are collected on the local council website.

For the types of core digital skills that are needed in social care, please see the core digital skills in social care model on page 11 .

Of equal importance is the need for social care organisations to develop their systems, processes and ways of working to become digitally capable. In research by Skills for Care, we found that 74% of staff have a personal smartphone, but only 20% actually use their personal phone for work purposes. We also found 45% have a tablet device at home compared with only 8% having a work tablet. This suggests social care organisations aren't always utilising the digital skills of their staff in the workplace, or making best use of the technology available.

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

Social care isn't the only sector with core digital skills gaps, as reports suggest the economy in general has work to do in improving workplace digital capability.

- The most recent Lloyds Bank UK Business Digital Index report (2015), which measures the use and attitudes towards digital technology among small businesses and charities, says 23% of SMEs and 58% of charities are still without 'basic organisational digital skills.'
- The 2015 CBI Education and Skills survey reports 48% of employers have insufficient staff digital skills for their needs.

For social care employers, there are particularly pressing reasons why increasing core digital skills in employees and the organisation is particularly important:

Policy direction

Most aspects of the Care Act, Better Care Fund plans, and Integration Pioneer projects anticipate greater collaboration between health and social care professionals, informal carers and the voluntary sector. The Better Care Fund in particular has provided a focal point for joint working by local authority and NHS services.

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.

The NHS National Information Board (NIB) is responsible for the implementation of a joined up approach to information sharing between health and social care, and strongly suggests that digital technology is integral to enabling the sectors to meet this challenge. All of these policy directives suggest that social care employers will become more reliant on digital ways of working, particularly around sharing data and managing information.

Commissioners expectations

Increasingly, commissioners require social care providers to engage with digital-only tender processes, meaning that at least one person in the organisation needs to have sufficient digital communication and information management skills to tender for local authority contracts online.

Some commissioners also insist on real time digital monitoring of service provision with any homecare provider they contract with. This will have skills implications for staff required to report via/log on to the monitoring system.

Even where providers are choosing not to tender for local authority contracts, processes of regulation (via CQC) are becoming more digitised and routes to funding for learning and development (for example through the Skills for Care Workforce Development fund) require a digital input of information.

Shrinking resources mean finding efficiencies

As resources shrink, the case for digital ways of working becomes stronger. The Uplands Nursing Home share the difference working digitally and up-skilling staff had to their business. This video case study is available at **www.skillsforcare.org.uk/housing**.

Although only one out of 138 staff didn't have an email address, a survey revealed most weren't using it so some simple steps were taken so staff could embrace technology:

- all wage slips are now sent via email - even the most resistant workers are now logging on
- all holiday requests need to be logged electronically
- auto-enrolment of pensions is now only by email.

All of these small changes saved postage, time and human resources.

A major cost to employers is developing and training their staff. Many employers are now choosing to deliver some of their learning via technology (usually via e-learning). Digital technology can have an important role in the learning process, including:

- delivering learning content
- supporting collaborative learning
- managing the learning process.

For guidance on using learning technologies see: **www.skillsforcare.org.uk/learningtechnologies**

"People are really keen when they have just accepted a new job, so we make good use of this enthusiasm. We make our induction more efficient and effective, by enrolling new-starters on our online induction training in advance of their arrival, so we can have people arriving on their first day, having already got up to speed with the underpinning knowledge on safeguarding, for example."

Sheldon Carolan, MacIntyre

Changing customer expectations

With more people who need care and support and their carers using digital skills in their daily lives, they expect to see this incorporated in the care they receive. For example, someone who receives care and support may expect that a social care worker can show them how to connect digitally with relatives or friends, perhaps via email or Skype. They may also assume that their personal information is shared between the different professionals involved in their care, and many will give their consent to this, but this so often relies on digitally stored data being entered and then shared by employees who know how to do this safely.

Opportunities for new types of services/diversification of services

New technologies designed to assist people with everyday living (assisted living technologies (ALT) or technology enabled care) offer a new range of choices for people who need support, as well as an opportunity for social care providers to change elements of their service. They could include fall monitors and sensor or booking online .The growth in the use of ALT in recent years has been driven by both technical innovation and consistent policy trends directed at supporting an ageing population, including self-directed support and personalisation, self-care, early intervention and preventative action and reablement. Many of these technologies involve digital elements, and so have implications for core digital skills in the workforce.

Core digital skills are important for:

- **Organisations** - so they can offer an efficient service that makes best use of resources.
- **For employees** - so they can utilise all that the 'online' world has to offer, work more efficiently, move upwards or onwards from their role and use all the learning opportunities available, including those online.
- **For people who use care and support services** - so they can engage with ALT's, utilise the benefits of being able to use technology and so they choose to self care via the use of information and peer networks.

Case studies

As part of Skills for Care's research into the digital capabilities of the workforce, we spoke to employers who were already using digital technology to see what impact it was having on their services and business processes.

For further information on all Skills for Care's work on digital learning, working and information sharing see www.skillsforcare.org.uk/digital.

What are the core digital skills needed for social care?

Skills for Care has undertaken research and worked with social care employers to explore policy implications and employers views about core digital skills in social care. We have drawn on the work of Go-ON and their basic digital skills framework to develop the following 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 are:

- managing Information
- sharing data
- using digital skills in direct care
- learning and development.

The model describes basic digital skills and is not based around any formal qualification level.

Digital skills (often implied) can be found within the qualifications and units that exist within social care. For example, The Care Certificate Standard 14 'Handling Information' states that the learner should:

- 14.1a Describe the agreed ways of working and legislation regarding the recording, storing and sharing of information
- 14.1b Explain why it is important to have secure systems for recording, storing and sharing information

Therefore, whilst digital skills are not mentioned explicitly, many learners will need to know how to record store and share information digitally if this is the way their employer works.

It is also important not to view the example task for individuals in isolation from the example tasks for organisations or vice versa; it is pointless and frustrating for a worker to have digital skills they can't use as the organisation is yet to catch up and vice versa.

How to use the core digital skills model

You can use this model in many ways. You may wish to:

- look at one domain at a time, either with individuals or with groups
- share the wheel with your board or directors to stimulate discussion about the skills of the organisation
- highlight domains 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 stimulate 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

- know how to safely share appropriate data with colleagues
- safely share data with colleagues in other organisations/professions
- know how to safely use password protection
- be able to complete digital records accurately.
- be able to store information safely
- be able to safely use insertable and removable storage devices
- read, send and receive email communication

Example tasks for organisations

- safely store digital client records
- use digital record sharing systems
- use password protection
- 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 users 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 a learning account
- be able to print off evidence of completion of learning
- access mobile learning via a tablet or smart phone
- record learning digitally for a portfolio
- be able to bookmark a page so it's easy to find again
- use search techniques to locate andselect relevant information.
- recognise and take account of currency, relevance, bias and copyright when selecting and 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
- to assess knowledge and skills
- to monitor learning
- to evidence and report learning to monitoring/funding bodies
- to evidence learning to regulators

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 knowledgeto 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 organisations

- use telecare systems
- use assisted living technologies for best outcomes
- use remote consultation
- use assistive living technologies 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 serviceusers
- conform with commissioners guidelines/wishes re assisted living technology

Managing information

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

- home care; know how to use a remote monitoring system via a smart phone
- home care/day support; know how to update a digital care plan
- residential or nursing care; know how to update digital handover records in askilled way.
- work with files, folders and other mediato access, organise, store, label andretrieve information.
- follow and demonstrate understandingof the need for safety and securitypractices.
- demonstrate how to create, use andmaintain secure passwords;
- demonstrate how to minimise the risk ofcomputer viruses.

Example tasks for organisations

- understand and maintain remotemonitoring systems
- maintain public website/social media
- utilise digital invoicing and payroll
- ensure and maintain informationcommunication technologies are safeand secure; ensure adequate viruscheckers
- 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

Useful links for learning on each of the domains

We have also compiled some existing resources that can support the domain skill areas:

- managing Information - www.skillsforcare.org.uk/coredigital-information
- sharing data - www.skillsforcare.org.uk/coredigital-data
- using digital skills in direct care - www.skillsforcare.org.uk/coredigital-directcare
- learning and development - www.skillsforcare.org.uk/coredigital-learning

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