Digital terms explained

The use of digital technology in social care is relatively new, bringing with it new terms and phrases which aren't always easily understood. These terms are commonly used words and phrases in adult social care.

Digital
The term used to describe the adoption and use of technology to support the secure and effective delivery of services across the care sector. Digital can include technology and computer systems and encompasses a variety of subjects including use of the internet, technology enabled care, social media, digital care applications, consumer or mainstream technology, cybersecurity, machine learning and artificial intelligence.

Digital skills
The particular abilities in the use of technology to support the safe and effective delivery of care services and/or to enable a member of the social care workforce to fulfil other aspects of their role.

Digital capabilities
The combination of learnt digital skills with the behaviours, confidence and motivation to apply these skills in a social care context, to achieve a desired outcome. Staff with greater digital capabilities will be more able to adopt and use technology to support effective delivery of care services by their organisation, increase options for learning and development, better manage their internal business processes and make informed decisions.

Digital leadership
Where people take the lead in their organisation to drive the adoption and use of technology, alongside the development of their workforce's digital skills to better deliver care services, as well as wider business and management activities.

Digital leaders in social care are creative, innovative people with strong networking and collaboration skills, who can mobilise and lead social care staff and others to share their vision and lead the journey to realising the wider use and benefits of digital technology. They require a range of skills and capabilities to allow them to effectively lead their organisation, guiding its workforce through the adoption of new technology and new ways of working, enabling the organisation to embed technology to remain effective, efficient, resilient and competitive within the adult social care sector.

Digital maturity
A measure of how capable and sophisticated an organisation is in their adoption and use of technology. It can include different dimensions including the culture of the organisation to support innovation, digital leadership, workforce skills to support digital working, the capability to use digital technology.

Digital readiness
This is a key factor behind an organisations digital maturity. A social care provider's level of digital readiness is the degree to which its staff can plan and deploy the use of technology in the delivery of care services.

There are self-assessment tools available online to help care providers measure their level of digital readiness. Access the Digital Social Care and Skills for Care digital readiness tool

Data protection

'Data protection' is defined as the legal control over access to and use of data stored in computers. In practice it represents a range of business processes and activities carried out by organisations to control and protect this stored data.

Within social care, this is particularly important given the sensitive, confidential, and critical nature of information that's held about people receiving care and support. Find out more about data protection and legislation

Cybersecurity

A protection against criminal or unauthorised use of electronic data held by an organisation and encompasses the security measures and processes that are involved in doing this. The Data Security Protection Toolkit (DSPT) is an online self-assessment tool which helps care providers to evaluate and improve their cybersecurity/data security. The DSPT sets out the standards required by social care providers to protect people's information from the risk of breach or cyberattack (also known as hacking).

DSPT completion is supported by the Better Security, Better Care programme which helps care providers to evaluate and improve their cybersecurity/data security with resources and support. Find out more on the Digital Social Care website