



SOCIAL CARE

## Homecare Service InfoCare Unit Technology

### Summary

Nottinghamshire Social Services has recognised that effective technology is critical to its business efficiency and initiated a project in 2000, to procure a novel electronic solution, to record its home care delivery, based on smartcard technology. This solution, chosen for its added benefits for both staff and service users, was provided by Burall InfoSmart and later named the InfoCare Unit.

**This pioneering UK project has been praised by other Authorities for:**

- Endeavouring to meet the requirements of Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI)
- Improving the efficient delivery of Home Care services to elderly and disabled service users
- Looking to improve the safety of service users, along with that of their home care assistants.

### Quote

***“I have trouble using my mobile phone, but I won't have any problems with this, it's a piece of cake!!!”***

Homecare Staff Member

## Project background

One of the key drivers of the Best Value Review was to look to the way the delivery of home care services could benefit from the use of IT, in terms of both reducing overheads and subsequent unit costs, and enabling partnership working with all providers. In addition to this, CSCI has announced a radical overhaul of the regulation and inspection frameworks of social care. This means that as an Authority we need to be able to understand and measure both the quantity and quality of the home care delivered to our service users.

The initial aim was to eliminate the paper-chase traditionally associated with providing home care services, for example 900 paper timesheets and 900 paper rosters were being produced weekly by one provider. Staff are now being freed up from paperwork to spend more time with their service users.

The electronic solution is being used in partnership, to record all home care commissioned on behalf of the council, whether this is provided directly or by voluntary or private organisations.

During the period between July 2004 and October 2005, the project has introduced the use of the new InfoCare Unit technology across Nottinghamshire to approximately 900 Community Care Assistants and approximately 2,500 Service Users.

## Partners

At the beginning of 2004, Nottinghamshire County Council went out to tender and subsequently entered into a contract with Burall InfoSmart who, despite being market leaders in time logging equipment and smartcards, had very little knowledge of Home Care. Therefore, we pooled our knowledge into the development of the 'InfoCare' Unit, so that it would address the gaps we found when looking at conventional systems which were available on the market at that time.

## Objectives

- Reduced costs
- Better management information to both plan and deliver services across the sector
- Improved monitoring arrangements for the commissioners
- Opportunity to improve the quality of all services both in line with National and Local Performance Indicators
- Potential added benefits to service users.

## Benefits

InfoCare Units reduce the amount of paperwork care assistants need to complete thus protecting resources. It also records in 'real time' which means that for the first time we can address the safety issues around lone working, in a staff group that is predominantly female and visiting isolated or problematic areas late at night. Trade Unions have been particularly interested in pursuing this feature and have actively encouraged staff to use the units.

The 'real time' information is transmitted to back office software where it is sorted and sent across multiple interfaces. The information is used to pay staff, and provider agencies, bill service users; as well as provide management information for service analysis.

As well as the obvious benefits of collecting accurate electronic information for billing and monitoring levels of care, the InfoCare Units also automatically checks the service users room temperature and alerts a central contact point if there is a dramatic fluctuation. This immediately picks up if there is a risk of hypothermia or fire, and could ensure that a serious situation is averted, thus increasing the safety of our service users.

The Units also include a free call-back facility, so if a person wishes to talk about their care package or has any concerns or praise, they can press a button on the Unit and someone from the provider agency will call them back, and they will not have to pay for the call.

The InfoCare Unit holds a clear record of the home care services a person has received over the past two weeks, and by simply pressing a 'REVIEW' button on the Unit, the service user, family member or health worker can check that a vital visit has taken place.

Because the InfoCare Unit is with the service user and not the care assistant, there is also potential for its usage across a whole spectrum of directly provided services such as Meals at Home, Community Health Nurses and District Council Housing.

## Critical success factors and lessons learned

- All stakeholders need to understand and agree to the business case, key objectives and project deliverables
- Keep the service user at the heart of the planning
- Routine and clear communication between relevant staff at key times through out the project
- Use the InfoCare solution as an enabler, not the end in itself
- Use 'proof of concept' to inform procurement
- Ensure key partners are able to deliver
- Ensure funding streams
- Utilise enthusiastic and committed 'Champions' to drive the project
- Document and learn from any problems encountered, noting how they were overcome.

## Risks

- **Proof of concept:** pilot implemented involving all stakeholders, feedback was integrated into future planning. Approach of project was to ensure routine involvement of key frontline staff to engender ownership and understanding of project aims
- **Interface with other departmental systems:** relevant managers in IT and administrative services were included on the project board. An 'organic' process was adopted to agree changes and modify plans as required within the overall framework. Transparent recognition of other Projects or change processes within the department that impacted on the Project Pathway
- **Funding;** as this was a 'blue -sky' project the funding implications were not always clear and coincided with government stringencies on both social services and health organisations. The initial financial plan was adapted to fit the developing project. Changes were agreed by the Directorate and financial decisions were driven by analysis of a 'return on investment' model
- **Business case:** the project needed to reflect a clear business case with transparent aims and objectives. The world of social care is unpredictable and the business case may need to be amended. If so the project and financial plans need to be modified accordingly
- **Cultural change:** the project aimed not for just acceptance of InfoCare but enthusiasm for what it delivered. Without Champions a proposal can be lost: the Project Manager and Service Head have been with the project since its proposal in 2000 and have lead from the front and back and sometimes the side!

## Transferability

### Principles that can be transferred to other projects:

- Using IT to accelerate the achievement of business objectives
- Streamlining business processes to deliver efficiencies
- Cross sector working that ensures the priority and focus is on the service user and not the provider
- Delivering innovative improvements in the service delivered to service users living in their own homes
- Delivering health and safety improvements to remote staff groups
- Measuring quality
- Facilitate and enhance partnership working with all stakeholders.

## Contact

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