

Digital and Data: Achieving the Digital Shift in the Community

1st July 2026



Session Agenda

1

Background and purpose

2

Projects in focus

3

Panel discussion

4

Reflections and close

Who we are and why we exist

- We support the **adoption and spread of proven innovations** into our health and care system.
- Alongside our regional EoE remit, we also have a **consultancy function**, which allows us to support national, multi-system programmes.



Background and purpose

- The NHS is moving from **analogue to digital**
- The **digital shift will only work** if it **reflects practical realities**
- Digital transformation depends on **more than the technology** itself. #
- Session today will focus on the **practical aspects of the “digital shift”** through three practical examples focusing on:
 - digital access through family and maternity services
 - digital and AI-enabled innovation in adult social care
 - digital inclusion for children and young people



Digital Equity Project: Growing Inclusion across Maternity and Family Services across BLMK

Laura Balkham – Maternity Public Health Lead

Bedfordshire Local Authorities (Luton, Bedford and Central Bedfordshire)

Background

- Partnered with Health Innovation East (HIE)
- Funded by Department of Science and Innovation Technology (DSIT)
- Potential local need for support with digital access – Electronic Patient Records and Electronic Red Books (Health Visiting)
- Bid writing team – supported by HIE consisting of Public Health and Maternity colleagues across BLMK
- Successful bid – Nov 25
- Project launch – Jan 26





Local Challenge

- Lack of local or national data – showed young families and pregnant people, most likely to be suffer digital exclusion
- Many families are one step away from exclusion
- Exclusion includes digital/health literacy
- Digital and Health literacy - people living in the most deprived areas are the least likely to access health information online
- Leads to ‘word of mouth’ health promotion

Project Design



- Aim – provide SIM card and/or SMART phones and digital literacy support to those identified as digitally excluded
- Collaborative by design
- Every Child Online – Discounted reconditioned Smart Phones/Amnesty Events
- Good Things Foundation – Free data loaded SIM cards
- Training Package/Resources/Project Support – designed and delivered by Health Innovation East
- System wide delivery – Maternity Services, Best Start Family Hubs





Delivery



- Connected Care questions asked to identify digital exclusion – Pocket Talk device for translation
- Provided with SIM Card without contract costs and/or Smart Phone
- Download local apps/Electronic Records/Digital skills training





Using Technology to Support Your Pregnancy Journey

Can you download apps, make calls, and send text messages on your mobile device?



Are you able to access the internet at home?

Are you able to access the internet away from home?



If you have answered "no" to any of these questions please speak to your midwife, who may be able to help.



আপনার প্যারেটিং বা সন্তান লাগন-পালনের যাত্রায় প্রযুক্তির ব্যবহার আপনি কি আপনার মোবাইল ডিভাইসে অ্যাপ ডাউনলোড করতে পারেন? আপনি কি ফোন কল করতে এবং গ্রহণ করতে পারেন? আপনি কি টেক্সট মেসেজ পাঠাতে এবং গ্রহণ করতে পারেন? আপনি কি আপনার বাসা থেকে ইন্টারনেট ব্যবহার করতে পারেন? আপনি কি বাড়ির বাইরে থাকাকালীন ইন্টারনেট ব্যবহার করতে পারেন? আপনি যদি এই প্রশ্নগুলোর মধ্যে কোনোটির উত্তর 'না' দিয়ে থাকেন, তবে অনুগ্রহ করে আমাদের একজন কর্মীর সাথে কথা বলুন, তিনি আপনাকে সাহায্য করতে পারবেন।

Folosirea tehnologiei pentru a vă ajuta de-a lungul călătoriei ca părinte
Puteți descărca aplicații pe dispozitivele dvs. mobile? Puteți efectua sau primi apeluri telefonice? Puteți trimite și primi mesaje text?
Puteți accesa internetul de acasă?
Puteți accesa internetul atunci când sunteți departe de casă?
Dacă ați răspuns „Nu” la oricare dintre aceste întrebări, discutați cu un membru al personalului, care v-ar putea ajuta.



Përdorimi i teknologjisë për të mbështetur udhëtimin tuaj të prindërimit
A mund të shkarkoni aplikacione në celularin tuaj? A mund të bëni dhe të merrni telefonata? A mund të dërgoni dhe të merrni mesazhe me tekst?
A mund të hyni në internet nga shtëpia?
A mund të hyni në internet kur jeni larg shtëpisë?
Nëse lu përgjigjet 'Jo' ndonjëherë prej këtyre pyetjeve, ju lutemi flisni me një anëtar të stafit, i cili mund të jetë në gjendje t'ju ndihmojë.

آپ کے والدین بننے کے سفر میں مدد کے لیے ٹیکنالوجی کا استعمال کیا آپ اپنے موبائل ڈیوائس پر ایپس ڈاؤن لوڈ کر سکتے ہیں؟ کیا آپ فون کالز کر اور وصول کر سکتے ہیں؟ کیا آپ ٹیکسٹ میسیجز بھیج اور وصول کر سکتے ہیں؟ کیا آپ گھر سے انٹرنیٹ تک رسائی پا سکتے ہیں؟ جب آپ گھر سے دور ہوں تو کیا آپ انٹرنیٹ تک رسائی پا سکتے ہیں؟ اگر ان میں سے کسی بھی سوال کا جواب آپ نے 'نہیں' میں دیا ہو۔ تو براہ کرم کسی اسٹاف ممبر سے بات کریں جو آپ کو مدد دے سکتے ہیں۔





Challenges

- Very short project delivery time
- Operational capacity in Maternity hindered project delivery – variation in readiness across the system
- Amnesty event – not fruitful



Successes/Evaluation

- Demonstrated importance of partnership level working
- Multi system approach supporting capacity issues
- Provided a scalable blueprint for future local digital transformation

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Good Things Foundation - <https://www.goodthingsfoundation.org/>

Every Child Online - <https://everychildonline.co.uk/>

‘A parent cried she was so happy, as she could not afford a to run a phone’

Case Study 2: Creating a tech-enabled social care sector

Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Digitising Social Care (DiSC) Programme



Anna Ellis | Digitising Social Care Programme Manager

June 2026

Adult Social Care Context

The 10-year Health Plan for England set out a clear ambition for social care, with a particular focus on integration, innovation and a place-based approach.



Neighbourhood approach

- Multi-disciplinary, patient-centred teams
- Care in the community
- Predictive and preventative care

Genuine integration across health, social care and partners is central to the vision.



The importance of innovation

Digital and data infrastructure to support genuine integration across health, social care and VCFSE is at the heart of the neighbourhood ambition

Digital care technology to enable monitoring, prevention and early intervention



The 3 shifts

- **Analogue – Digital**
- **Hospital – Community**
- **Sickness - Prevention**

Innovation Adoption

- Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes (BLMK) Digitising Social Care (DiSC) Team were one of three areas awarded funding through the Adult Social Care Technology Fund.
- The project aimed to evaluate the implementation, effectiveness and impact of two digital technologies:



RoboPets (robotic companion animals)



PainChek™ (AI-enabled pain assessment)

- Piloted across BLMK Integrated Care System to support adults experiencing dementia, cognitive impairment, learning disabilities, communication difficulties, low mood, anxiety and behaviours that challenge.
- Supported by Health Innovation East and the University of Hertfordshire

Practical Experience

1



Start with provider engagement – establish need and appetite

2



Knowledge share and promotion

3



Process for application – screen against criteria and assess engagement

4



Training and installation – highlighted need for examples in practice

5



Balancing evaluation, targets and timescales during roll-out

Barriers

- **Leadership** buy-in and decision-making autonomy
- **Managing change** in care providers and embedding change into governance
- **Staff readiness** and engagement – risk of feeling de-skilled
- **Staff turnover** – loss of knowledge and continuity
- Sustaining **engagement** – resource, capacity and time pressures
- Tech **not used as intended** – inconsistent adoption
- **Paucity of data** and restrictions on inter-organisational sharing
- Perceived **effort vs. benefit** - 'pilot-itus'
- Digital **interoperability** – 'another system'
- Impact of **targets** and **short-term timescales** for funded pilots

Enablers

- **Leadership at all levels** to manage change, support staff engagement, fully embed new processes with existing practice
- Recognition of **staff skills** – build trust, meet need and integrate with existing tools
- **Training and engagement** to manage perception and readiness
- **Data sharing and shared governance** across organisations/health and social care
- A **longer-term partnership approach** – support from the wider system to embed and evaluate (UoH and Health Innovation Network)
- **Evidence of benefits** – individual, family, system, business

Recommendations

1

Build evidence-base to make strong business case for investment

2

Wider system engagement to support change, understand benefits and drive improvement (e.g. GPs, regulators)

3

Use data-led targeting and ensure tech is driven by and tailored to suit need – no one size fits all approach to scaling

4

Introduce tech earlier over a longer period to show greater preventative impact

5

Pooled budget approach across health and social care (overcoming historic budget siloes and parity of investment and benefits)

6

Develop strong supporting materials for all audiences to foster trust – tech as enabler, not replacement

Children and Young People

Digital Inclusion Framework



Digital Inclusion for children and young people (CYP) – Why it matters

- NHS Ten Year Plan – Analogue to Digital
- Large population group in the EoE
- Reducing health inequalities
- CYP specific risks and challenges
- Opportunity to empower and educate
 - CYP
 - Families and carers
 - Life-long benefits



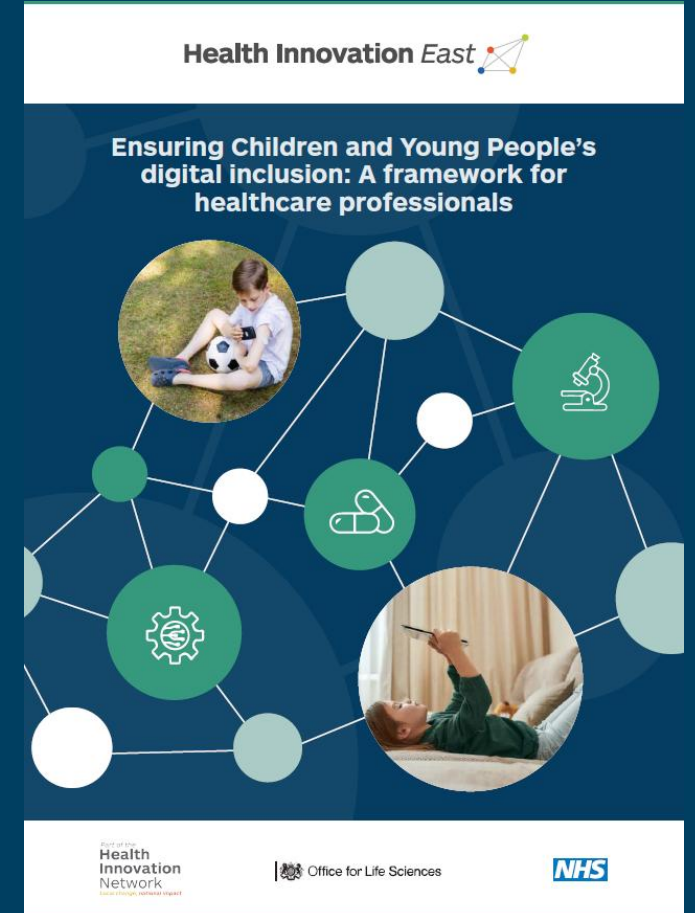
The Gap: Aspiration and reality

- **NHS digital inclusion framework published in 2023**
- **General Practice Guidance recognises the need for specific protocols for CYP**
- **No national guidance on how to develop and implement these protocols available**
 - Further supported by findings from Health Innovation Easts Rapid Evidence Review
 - <https://healthinnovationeast.co.uk/are-we-considering-our-children-and-young-people-when-adopting-digital-healthcare-technologies/>



How the framework was developed

- **Rapid Evidence Review (2024)**
- **Grey Literature Search (2025)**
- **Diverse steering group**
- **Key informant interviews**
- **Meetings with stakeholders across the East of England to identify the best way to close the gap**
- **Consensus reached that a framework or “how-to” guide would be the most practical**



Five Thematic Areas

Five Thematic Areas aligning with the NHS England general guidance



Leaderships and Partnerships



Skills and Capabilities



Beliefs and Trust

Access to Devices and Data



Accessibility and Ease of Use



Contents of the Guide

Each theme contains



Context and challenges



Service delivery flowchart



Where to start

Recommended actions



Case study



Leadership and Partnerships

Without leadership digital inclusion becomes optional. Leadership enables organisation culture to reduce digital exclusion

Recommendations:

- *Digital inclusion Champions or Local Digital Inclusion Boards*
- *Data collection tools: Digital access, digital skills, preferred communication methods*
- *Digital exclusion data*
- *Accessible documentation and guidance for staff and patients*



Access to Devices and Data

Nearly 15% of CYP do not have adequate access to a device and 7% of households do not have internet at home – how will this change in the future?

- **Physical access – home and school**
- **Supervision of access**
- **Device capabilities and compatibilities**
- **Data and power access**

Recommendations:

- **Document and maintain guidance on local device donation schemes**
- **Document and maintain guidance on public Wi-Fi options**
- **Ensure all digital solutions in your organisation have technical specifications required documented and available**



Skills and Capability

The consumer digital index distinguishes 7 foundational skills (such as connecting to Wi-Fi or changing passwords) and 5 essential skills (such as creating email accounts or using the internet to problem solve).

A 2020 review identified that 16% of 15+ did not have those foundational skills and 24% lacked the essential skills – including managing on-line risk

Recommendations:

- **Ensure systems are available and routinely used to record digital skills levels**
- **Ensure staff have the skills to use and support with digital solutions**
- **Document training opportunities for CYP and parents/carers**



Accessibility and ease of using technology

It is important to consider the accessibility of digital solutions and pathways.

1.7 million school aged children have special education needs

20% have English as an additional language

1/6 16-65 years old have very poor literacy skills, which may result in parental support of the CYP being limited

Practical aspects

Wearables – skin colour, CYP activity levels, evolving needs

Recommendations:

- **Update EHIAAs to include digital inclusion**
- **Include digital inclusion as prompts in existing processes and document templates**
- **Varied communication avenues – seek out the hard to hear voice**



Beliefs and Trust

Building trust is an ongoing process that can help to tackle health inequalities and increase engagement. CYP can be increasingly aware and cautious about their data being online.

Recommendations:

- **Accessible guidance for CYP/Parents/Carers on how health data is stored and used**
- **Internal guidance documents in line with national and governmental policies**
- **Explore incorporating CYP and parents/carers feedback into design and commissioning with digitally inclusive methods.**
- **Guidance on benefits and comparisons between digital solutions**
- **Support and respect those who cannot or do not choose digital solutions**



Please download the framework here:



<https://healthinnovationeast.co.uk/impact-story/bridging-the-digital-divide-to-support-children-and-young-people/>

Thank you and Questions

Connect with us



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