TECH

Technology Enabled Care in Housing

Perth and Kinross Council
TEC Strategy and Implementation

TEC Strategy and Implementation

One of Perth and Kinross Council's priorities is to ensure that people have access to the housing and support services they need to allow them to live as independently as possible, at home or in a homely setting. The housing service works closely with the Perth and Kinross Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) to help support this and other health and social care priorities.

In 2016, the Council created a TEC development post to implement its TEC strategy and raise awareness of the importance of TEC across the partnership. This resource has been used for a wide range of development and engagement activities across the HSCP.

Housing's Role

The TEC team in Perth and Kinross Council works closely with housing colleagues. One example of this is the SMART flat, made available by housing, which is used to showcase TEC products and for delivering training. Here, housing, health and social work professionals, as well as carers, can see the TEC products displayed in a home setting and get a feel for how they work, which helps them in meetings and assessments with customers and clients.

The TEC team also knows how well-placed their housing colleagues are to make referrals to TEC services, realising that housing staff may be the first port of call for someone or the first professional to see a need that can be fully or partially met with technology.

Support from the Integrated Joint Board (IJB)

The support of senior leaders has played a crucial part in the development of TEC services across the Council, with the TEC team being invited to present the strategy to the IJB for its agreement, and to keep it updated on progress. Support at this level has made it easier for the team to engage with managers and team leaders, and to bring them and others on board with the various TEC projects.

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Community Engagement

One of the TEC team's key workstreams has been community engagement, so they've been out talking to people in the community, raising awareness of the TEC available within the HSCP and how it can help. This includes making contact with community groups and forums across the Perth and Kinross Council area.

The team has also promoted TEC at conferences, including the Carers' Conference and Housing Tenants' Conference, as well as taking part in home safety visits with the Fire Service.

Community groups and members of the public are also welcome at the SMART flat. Anyone can book a time to come and see the TEC products on show.

Workforce Development

Workforce development has been a key part of the TEC strategy. Here, the focus has been on upskilling staff by increasing their awareness and developing their abilities to assess customers and clients, so that they can recommend the appropriate technology. While staff often know the basics, like how community alarms work, they're less familiar with some of the more sophisticated devices the TEC team can recommend, such as those using GPS technology to improve TEC and monitoring equipment.

TEC Engagement Training is another strand of workforce development. Directed at frontline staff, occupational therapists, nurses, healthcare professionals, social workers, housing officers and others, training is provided in the SMART flat on how to assess customer needs and which TEC products may be appropriate.

Technology Enabled Care Conferences

Once a year, the team organises a day-long TEC conference and exhibition. This is an opportunity to bring stakeholders together and update them on key developments, as well as for suppliers to meet interested parties and demonstrate their products. In the afternoon, the exhibition is opened to the public, further raising awareness of the TEC available.

With around 90 people attending in 2017 and over 100 in 2018, the conference feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, leading to lots of follow-up activity around TEC.

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Web Resources

Complementing its other activities, the Council's website is equipped with a variety of TEC-related resources. These include a self-assessment tool that lets people see for themselves if they're suitable for Telecare, a series of short films on the kinds of technology available and how they're used, presentations from the TEC conferences and other useful material.

The Perth and Kinross Council community Twitter feed is also used to get the Telecare message out, as well as to publicise other TEC-related news.

Introducing TEC and Overcoming Barriers

Despite its advantages, some people are still wary of new technology. Perth and Kinross Council provides a good example of how to overcome this hurdle by evidencing the benefits.

To begin with, the uptake of i-care – a set of Telecare devices that monitor and record activity in the home, allowing an informed assessment of how well someone is coping in an independent living situation – had been disappointingly slow. The team found that simply telling staff about the kit and how it could be used wasn't generating sufficient interest, so they decided to work with the social work team at Blairgowrie to identify cases where i-care could be used.

After identifying a suitable case and supporting i-care's introduction, the 'light bulb' moment came when the TEC team sat down with the social worker, district nurse and the customer's family at the end of the four-week assessment period to go through the results. Based on concrete facts, rather than guesswork and assumptions, the customer was able to stay safely at home for six months longer than originally thought, which was of real value both to them and their family.

Judged on these results, referrals for i-care increased dramatically.

Proven Successes

The sharp rise in i-care referrals has been replicated in other areas of the TEC team's work. Almost 4,000 people are benefiting from its Telecare service, helping them to remain independent and at home, and a further 1,000 people have taken part in some kind of engagement or training.

Both the general awareness of technology and Perth and Kinross Council's position within local authorities have improved. The Council is now seen as a forward-thinking, proactive authority in terms of how it uses and engages with technology, which maybe wasn't always the case.

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▶ About Perth and Kinross Council

www.pkc.gov.uk

Perth and Kinross Council covers an area of 5,286 square kilometres, which includes parts of both of Scotland's national parks. The fifth largest local authority in Scotland, its population is almost evenly divided between urban and rural settings. Figures from the Census of 2011 show that, at that point, 29.8% of the population of Perth and Kinross had one or more long-term health condition. 'Ensuring people can live independently at home for as long as possible with help from the community and local support networks' is one of the Council's four investment priorities for 2016-2021.

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