

Kent innovation project

NHS 10-year plan shift: analogue to digital

Problem

Unpaid carers play an essential role in our society, often stepping into their caregiving roles suddenly and without formal preparation. In Kent, there are around 182,000 adults providing many hours of unpaid care every week. Traditional methods of carers assessments and support signposting have not always been accessible and user-friendly, leaving many carers without the help they require.

Innovation

Kent County Council has collaborated with partners to co-design and launch a new digital self-assessment tool. This provides carers with a simple and personalised method to assess their own needs and connect with appropriate support services.

Project overview

Kent County Council has partnered with multiple local carers' organisations and technological provider Infoshare+ to co-design and launch the BetterCare Support: Carers digital self-assessment tool. It supports a self-led approach to care planning while preserving confidentiality and encouraging engagement with support systems. The tool is built on the strong foundations of the existing BetterCare Support platform, which has already demonstrated success in improving care and support assessments for those being cared for.

This initiative built on joint working between Kent County Council and Kirklees Council, who worked together to co-develop the BetterCare Support: Carers tool.

The project has focused on creating a digital platform that empowers carers from all backgrounds to identify their needs, understand their rights under the Care Act 2014, and seek guidance, support or a formal carers assessment if necessary.

"This project not only improves the efficiency and accessibility of carers' assessments but also empowers carers to take greater control of their own care and wellbeing. It serves as a powerful example of the positive impact that the ARF can have on adult social care services, fostering innovation, person-centred practice, and digital inclusion."

Renu Purvis, Innovation and Partnership Manager, Kent County Council

Key features of the platform include:

- user-friendly, easy to navigate design that was built with and for carers
- tailored recommendations based on individual responses
- robust data protection that is GDPR compliant
- availability on smartphones, tablets, and computers
- short videos explaining each area of the assessment process, with transcripts for full accessibility.

Key project activity

- Collaboration between local authority (LA) teams to define structure of carers' assessments, considering the Care Act
- Medway Council included in engagement and programme updates, so learning and local information is shared across the Kent and Medway ICS area
- Working group that includes local carers' organisations involved to ensure the self-assessment meets local needs
- Co-production with carers to inform and feedback on design, language and usability
- Procurement of tech partner to build and test the tool
- Development of animations and transcripts for enhanced user experience
- Preparation for project launch during Carers Week to maximise visibility
- Real-time feedback mechanisms incorporated into tool as part of evaluation framework, allowing for continuous improvement

Emerging learnings and insights

- Collaborating with experts and taking a partnership approach reaches successful outcomes.
- By embracing technology, LAs can improve existing services.
- Digital inclusion and accessibility should be considered from the outset when building digital tools.

Emerging impact

Kent County Council are preparing to launch BetterCare Support: Carers during Carers Week 2025.

From testing phases, positive outcomes such as enhanced communication and process simplification are expected. This platform also promotes early intervention, giving carers quick and simple access to important information or support when they need it.