Funding for the safe use of technology in care services:
Medium sized grants for local projects during 2019/20

Summary from the first phase of applications

1. Introduction

Digital Social Care[1] is working with the Local Government Association and the newly created NHSX[2] to help ensure that the benefits of digital technology can be achieved safely. The programme for 2019/20 includes the opportunity for local councils, care associations and other groups of providers to apply for grants to fund local projects which will develop practical solutions to some of the challenges that have been identified around data and cyber security.

The application window for the first phase of grants ran from 10th June 2019 to 12th July 2019. 37 applications were received, of which eight were successful. This report gives brief details of the projects which are being funded, and it gives summary feedback about why other applications were not successful.

It is hoped that this will be helpful for those who are considering applying for a grant in the second application window, which will run from 16th September 2019 to 11th October 2019.

2. Projects funded in the first phase

The projects being funded in the first phase of this programme are as follows.

Partners in Care (Dorset)	*"Grow Digital"*
This project will work with a group of providers who have little or no prior knowledge of digital applications. It will identify barriers and seek to enable the providers to become confident when selecting, implementing and managing information technology, with particular emphasis on the management of digital risks. It will consider whether current cyber security guidance adequately meets the needs of digital beginners, or whether it needs to be improved or supplemented, for example by linked training or other input.	

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[1] Digital Social Care is is a dedicated space to provide advice and support to the social care providers on technology and data protection. It is a joint project between six of the national trade associations and Skills for Care. Digital Social Care is funded by NHS Digital.

[2] NHSX brings teams from the Department of Health and Social Care, NHS England and NHS Improvement together into one unit to drive digital transformation and lead policy, implementation and change across health and social care.

West Midlands Care Association	*"NHS.NET for Care Providers (Black Country)"; and "NHS.NET for Care Providers (Birmingham and Solihull)"*
These two linked projects will seek to support a significant number of care providers across the two areas to complete the Data Security Protection Toolkit and to access NHSMail. It will do this via a series of intensive workshops, with additional 1:1 support available to a smaller number of providers who need additional support to complete the toolkit. The project will evaluate the workshop methodology and the feasibility of supporting providers through the process in this way, producing case studies and other information and resources to share with the sector.	

Wiltshire Care Partnership	*"Safe Use of Digital Assistant Platforms in Care Homes and Intermediate Care to Home Pathways"*
This project will explore the secure use in care services of the Amazon Echo voice-activated home speaker powered by Alexa software, with the aim that what is learnt will be transferable across other digital assistant platforms and scalable to the whole sector. It will work with care providers and with people the services support to explore the potential benefits and the information flows involved. It will also develop a specification for the work that would be needed to establish a comprehensive ethical and legal framework suitable for wider use in future.	

Nottinghamshire County Council	*"Improving resilience in systems and processes for safe exchange of information"*
This project will explore system resilience, and the ability of care providers to respond and recover if there is a problem with digital systems. It will include testing to mimic local/national disasters/cyber-attack scenarios, exploring existing back up and contingency arrangements. The results will be reviewed, resources will be developed, and further testing undertaken to assess how effective any changes that had been made had been. The overall learning will be captured, and legacy resources will be developed for use across the sector.	

Staffordshire County Council	*"Improving digital connectivity across the Health and Social Care system in Staffordshire: An integrated approach"*
This project will explore how to overcome barriers and challenges that local care providers report experiencing in completing the Data Security and Protection Toolkit. It will do this partly through supporting a group of nursing care homes to complete the toolkit, and partly through a wider market survey. It will assess technological (IT knowledge, equipment, connectivity of systems) and / or process-orientated (policies, procedures and practice) risks and challenges, and identify and share how local authorities can best support care providers to overcome these challenges.	

Lincolnshire Care Association	*"Sustainable support for digitally engaged care providers"*
This project reflects the need for the increased use of digital systems to be accompanied by the availability of accessible and affordable IT and cyber security support. It will identify the kind of support and advice that is needed by organisations who are rapid adopters of digital opportunities. It will create links with the providers of IT and cyber security support and advice, and it will explore the affordability of utilising existing support resources – for example developing a sector-wide offer from local authority or NHS IT departments.	

National Care Forum	*"Sheffield Cyber Security in Care"*
This project will work with a group of care providers who have already completed the Data Security Protection Toolkit at entry level, standards met or standards exceeded levels. It will seek to understand whether or how the providers' approaches to cybersecurity have been influenced through toolkit completion; what they learnt from the process and any changes or improvements it encouraged them to make. The project will also develop tools that prompt and assist care providers to use their completion of the toolkit as a process for cyber security improvement.	

3.   Feedback as to why other phase one applications were not successful

There were a number of reasons why other phase one applications were not successful.

Firstly, the panel concluded that some applications were outside the scope of this particular grant funding programme. The programme is specifically concerned with the safe use of digital technology, rather than digital technology more broadly, and

some applications did not have a sufficiently clear focus on the specific issues of data and cyber security. For example, several applications were for funding to develop or implement a new digital care management system, or some other type of new technology. While that may well be very helpful, these applications generally didn't demonstrate what would be learn from the process specifically in relation to data and cyber security.

Secondly, other applications were in scope but didn't score as highly as the successful applications. For example:

- Some applications contained a lot of very broad, general responses to the questions, and it wasn't always clear how far the proposed project had been worked through at a level of practical detail. It wasn't always clear who would do what or what the proposed project would look like from the perspective of the participating care providers.

- It may be helpful to note that successful applications tended to focus on one or at most two of the suggested project areas, rather than seeking to cover several. Applications that sought to cover a large number of topics tended to be those that gave more general responses to questions. Applications that focus on a limited and clearly defined issue, and which give good detail as to how the project would work, and what it would deliver, are more likely to receive higher scores than very broad applications.

- A key priority of the programme is to maximise what can be learnt from these projects for the benefit of the wider sector nationally. Some applications proposed activities that could be helpful locally but didn't focus on what could be learnt from undertaking the project.

- Some applications included very short answers. There was no requirement for the full word limit of 250 words per question to be used! However, responses that were only two or three lines long were unlikely to give the panel enough information to understand in any practical detail how the proposed project would work.

We hope that these points are helpful for those considering applying in the second phase. In the meantime, if any phase one applicants would like more specific individual feedback on their application, please contact cyberproject@rnha.co.uk

4. How to apply for a grant in the second phase

Full details about how to apply for a grant in the second phase will be available on the Digital Social Care website www.digitalsocialcare.co.uk from Monday 16th September 2019.

The closing date for applications will be midnight on Friday 11th October 2019.