

## Care Home iPad case study

### Introduction

As part of their Coronavirus response, several regions across England provided care homes with iPads or other tablets to help them access secure email and video conferencing. In areas with low internet connectivity, these tablets often had data enabled sim cards so that the care home was not reliant on their own internet.

### Project Description

As this happened over many different areas of the country, each region had slight differences in approach. Herefordshire and Worcestershire CCG distributed iPads so that care homes could use secure email ([NHSmail](#)) to receive test results and confidential health and care information on their residents quickly and safely. They also facilitated the use of [MS Teams](#) so that care homes could use video conferencing to do virtual consultations with GPs and Allied Health Professionals when they were unable to visit the home in person.

In order to support this project, the CCG had a dedicated project team and partnered with Digital Social Care to provide virtual support and guidance for any care home staff who wanted help. Care homes received support on how to set up iPads, how to create and NHSmail account and use MS Teams.

### Benefits of Using NHSmail

Care homes across England found that using NHSmail helped them to have better communication with GPs, hospitals and pharmacists. This made communication quicker and reduced the amount of time on the phone or waiting for test results to be sent back.

This especially helped when residents were being discharged from hospital to the care home. Many care homes found that they were receiving more timely and fuller information from hospitals and GPs which ensured more co-ordinated care. This was particularly helpful with ensuring that residents had access to the right medication in the right dosage at the right time and saved staff time in chasing up medication related issues.

All individuals with an NHSmail email address, can also access the NHS Directory through “People Finder”. This means that NHSmail users can look up other health and care professionals and find their email address or contact details. Many care homes found this really useful.

NHSmail is not only secure when emailing other NHS email addresses. The accounts can also be used to securely email local authorities [and the friends and families of residents](#).

A member of staff at [Buttercup House, Southampton](#) said,

*“I have confidence in sending confidential information knowing it is protected.”*

There are more case studies on how people found using NHSmail:

- [Redmond Lodge](#)
- [The Lodge, Romford](#)

### **Benefits of Using Video Conferencing**

Care home staff are now using iPads to hold video conferences with GPs, pharmacists and other health and care professionals for virtual consultations and MDTs. They found that this improved the speed of communication with Allied Health Professionals and improved the quality of information they were receiving. A residential care home manager in Worcestershire said,

*“It is really important to continue the relationship with GP’s to ensure residents receive the best care available and in these challenging times the provision of an iPad and NHS Email addresses has enabled GP visits to continue via video consultations. This has helped to re-assure residents, their families and staff”*

Many care homes were also using video conferencing to facilitate GP ward rounds through the use of virtual consultations, which provided reassurance and certainty that care home residents were still seeing their GPs. This also helped with infection control, as fewer people were visiting the home during Covid-19.

Many care homes were incredibly concerned about residents being isolated from friends and family during the pandemic. They used the iPads and video conferencing so that residents could still see and speak to their loved ones.

As well as using MS Teams and other video conferencing software (such as Skype, AccuRx and Zoom) to communicate with health care professionals and residents’ loved ones, some care homes also used these apps to help with staff training and development. Care homes could use MS Teams to host webinars and training online and to remotely conduct interviews to help with recruitment.

[Manor Community in Bristol](#) have been using MS Teams to help with communication between different members of staff. One of their team leaders said,

*“I only said earlier today, how good I feel Teams is for staff. It’s great, I can see what’s happening in work, even when I’m not there. It keeps me up to date and allows us to communicate with each other, across the houses, from one place, like WhatsApp for work.”*

### Other uses for iPads

As well as email and video conferencing, many care homes have used iPads and tablets in a variety of different ways during the pandemic:

- [Love2MeetU](#), a friendship and dating service in Newcastle which supports adults with learning difficulties and autism have been virtual meet ups.
- [Music](#) can be very beneficial for people with dementia and using music apps on iPads can help residents.