

Writing a Specification for a Digital Social Care Record System



Purpose of this guide

This guide has been developed to provide advice and support on how to write a specification for a digital social care record solution.

If you are planning to introduce or replace a digital social care record system, you should invite potential suppliers to show you their systems and quote for their software and services. To ensure that suppliers are able to meet your needs you can prepare an initial specification which details who you are and what you are looking for, what features of the system are essential and you may want to include your budget range. This guide will help you understand how to write that specification.

What is a Specification?

In a procurement context, a Specification can be defined as a 'statement of needs'. It describes what you want to buy and consequently, what the successful supplier is required to supply.

Specifications can be simple or complex depending on the need. Importantly, they need to be a clear, complete statement of functional or technical capabilities and requirements of your potential solution. Capabilities are actions or functions that the solution is capable of doing, for example downloading reports into Excel. Specifications need to be written with sufficient detail to ensure that suppliers understand your requirements in order to quote for the solution and implementation.

Accurate specifications play a crucial role in contracting the right supplier, ensuring that needs are met, and implementing the system successfully as it clarifies and shares all of the details with all parties. Apart from being a means of identifying the goods / services required, a specification will form part of the final contract you agree with a supplier.

How do I write a specification?

When writing your specification make sure to include your team and gather their views and opinions. Who will be using the software? What do they need from the software? A collaborative approach when writing your specification will ensure that any solution procured will work for all system users.

When writing your specification ensure you;

- Are familiar with the project, its ambitions, objectives and how the solution will be used
- Understand the needs of the organisation: you may want to bring in expert advice to help write the specification. You could consider asking other care providers who have introduced similar systems if they would be willing to share their specification or insights.
- Understand how the tech may need to integrate with existing or future systems if this is something you are interested in.

Consider your key priorities, requirements and capabilities. Consider what is required (e.g. certain reporting capabilities) and what is desirable but you can be flexible on (e.g. body maps). It may be helpful to review the list of core capabilities (functions or features that all assured suppliers are capable of) and optional capabilities (functions or features that some supplier solutions offer.)

Core (Required) Capability
<p>Capability</p> <p>The solution must support inclusive care planning and needs assessment and include the capability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To capture a person-centred care plan • To undertake and capture care needs assessments using templates / pre-built criteria • To create care plans using templates / pre-built care plans • For a social care provider to add to care plan templates / pre-built care plans • To involve an individual in the process of planning their own care • To set a target outcome/goal for the individual receiving care and an associated list of tasks/action
<p>The system must capture real-time, auditable, records, notes and observations that can be accessed at the point of care and include the capability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To capture structured data for routine tasks, for example when tasks have been completed, that is linked to the care plan, including for plans a carer did not create • To capture unstructured data, for example, information about activities, patient comments etc., that is linked to the care plan, including for plans a carer did not create • For data to be captured and displayed consistently throughout the system so that it is easy to absorb • To provide a longitudinal picture of the care provided to an individual over time • To capture written notes • To capture verbal notes that are converted to unstructured text

- To upload existing third party documents and images

The system must support task planning, allocation, management and completion and include the capability:

- To allocate tasks to the most appropriate staff members
- To provide information about the status of tasks in real-time
- To provide a list of the tasks assigned to an individual care worker showing clearly which are outstanding and which have been completed
- To manually identify priority tasks that require action
- To automatically flag overdue tasks
- To actively calculate an individual's risk and flag the need for a care plan/activity to be reviewed as a result of rising risk
- To generate handover information for shift changes etc. to ensure continuity of care
- To provide an aggregated dashboard view of the status of tasks for a care manager to view

The system must provide controlled access to data and include the capability:

- For an individual to view their own care plan and record
- For an authorised care worker to view care plans, assessments and records, including ones they did not create
- For an authorised care worker to edit and update care plans, assessments and records, including ones they did not create
- For authorised health professionals to view care plans, assessments and records, including ones they did not create
- For authorised health professionals to edit care plans, assessments and records, including ones they did not create
- For a version of the care record and plan to be viewable on third party devices – e.g. devices owned by health professionals or individuals
- For a social care provider to set appropriate access controls for who can create, view and edit care plans and records
- To maintain an audit log of all changes to a care record including who accessed the record, the date and what changes were made

The system must be able to share data with other systems and care settings and include the capability:

- To export data, including data from locally generated reports, in a flat-file format (e.g. PDF)
- To export data, including data from locally generated reports, in an interrogatable and importable file format (e.g. CSV)
- For documents to be uploaded into an individual's care record
- To produce key information for emergency hospital admissions in a format that is compliant with standards

The system must support the operation and management of a care setting and include the capability:

- For social care providers to generate, save and amend prebuilt summary reports for individual recipients of care. Please demonstrate your five most frequently used reports in your video
- For social care providers to generate, save and amend prebuilt summary reports at a site and service level. Please demonstrate your five most frequently used reports in your video

- To see a chronology of interactions and activities for auditing/inspection purposes and to manage incidents
- To provide reports that support a care provider to meet the Key Lines of Enquiry of the CQC inspection regime

Optional Capabilities

The solution must support inclusive care planning and needs assessment and include the capability:

- For a social care provider to add to assessment templates / pre built care plans
- To measure progress against a target outcome / goal for the individual receiving care

The system must capture real time, auditable, records, notes and observations that can be accessed at the point of care and include the capability:

- To capture verbal notes that are converted to structured, interrogatable format such as ICD11 or Snomed
- To use body maps to capture treatment information
- To store video information about the care provided
- To store photographic information about the care provided
- To read the contents of the record back to the user
- To provide access to required information about an individual even when offline
- To automatically update changes to an individual's care record / plan / tasks when a user goes back online
- To flag where offline and online changes made to an individual's care record / plan / task are contradictory / conflict and require manual resolution

The system must support task planning, allocation, management and completion and include the capability:

- To record information about the skills, experience and training of staff
- To enable a social care provider to define a template list of the skills, experience and training of their staff
- For a care worker to view care recipient generated information related to specific tasks
- To flag priority tasks as a result of information from third party remote care solutions in a way that supplements but does not duplicate existing alerts and alarms generated by your solution
- To send notifications / messages to other care workers

The system must provide controlled access to data and include the capability:

- For an individual to write to and update their own care plan and record
- For authorised third parties (including family members) to view care plans and records, including ones they did not create
- For authorised third parties (including family members) to write to care plans and records, including ones they did not create

The system must be able to share data with other systems and care settings and include the capability:

- To provide read only access to live data held in primary care systems (e.g. through GP Connect)
- To display other live NHS data (e.g. the summary care record)
- To provide access to Electronic Medications Administration and Recording systems (either natively or through integration with a third party solution)
- To electronically transfer key information for emergency hospital admissions in a format that is compliant with standards

- To capture hospital discharge information in a format that is compliant with standards

The system must support the operation and management of a care setting and include the capability:

- For social care providers to build, save and amend their own summary reports for individual recipients of care.
- For social care providers to build, save and amend their own summary reports at a site and service level.
- To provide reports, which can be adapted by a social care provider (for example by changing data fields that are included), that aggregate the specific care needs of individuals in comparison to the skills and capacity of staff to enable effective resourcing
- To provide reports, which can be adapted by a social care provider (for example by changing data fields that are included), that show how much time and / or resources have been allocated delivering care to enable business management

How should I structure my specification?

About the Buyer- Who are you?

Provide information about your organisation. Things to include;

- Care setting i.e Care Home with Nursing, Shared Lives, Domiciliary care etc.
- Size of organisation - number of staff, number of beds, number of individuals in receipt of care
- Information about the services you provide such as your Statement of Purpose if you are a regulated provider
- What type of technology do you already use - if any?
- Why are you adopting a digital social care record system?

Buyer Requirements - What are you looking for in a system? What do you want to achieve?

Provide information on what you require from a solution. Things to include;

Solution Requirements

- Detailed product requirements
 - What do you want the system to achieve?
 - How should it be used?
 - What outputs are required?
 - What specific capabilities are essential and what capabilities are desired?
You can include your table essential / desirable table in this section.
- Report requirements
 - What type of reporting do you want to do? (eg. direct care, management information, regulatory and contract compliance)
 - What is essential and what is desirable?
- Performance requirements
 - What are your key hours of operation where the system must not have scheduled maintenance?
 - Do you have specific performance requirements?
- Budget - you may want to advise potential suppliers of your budget parameters. They should supply full details of costs in their quote.

Installation Requirements

- Training requirements and approach during installation
 - What type of training approach are you looking for? For example on site training, webex training, video user guides, written user guides, train the trainer.
- Planned timeframes for installation
 - When are you looking to install the solution and what date do you want it

fully operational by?

- In house resource within your organisation to manage delivery
 - What type of resource do you have in house to manage the installation of the system, for example a project manager dedicating two days a week towards the project.
- Delivery milestones - detail any key milestones for delivery such as potential 'go live' dates and training dates

Support and Maintenance Requirements

- Support and maintenance during and after installation
 - What type of ongoing support do you require - for example 24hour help desk phone line, warranty on hardware, follow up training options, account management requirements

*If you are not sure what you may be looking for you may want to; (1) use the NHSX decision tree tool which will guide you through key questions to identify which solutions from the [Assured Supplier List](#) meet your needs and what capabilities are required for your organisation (2) invite a range of suppliers to demonstrate their solutions to see what they are capable of and decide what features match your needs. You will also be able to ask the suppliers how they install the solution and what a standard installation looks like; (2) change some of the points above to ask what the supplier can offer - for example what training plan would they recommend for your type of organisation? Compare your suppliers' responses to find the one that best works for you that is within your budget.