

Assistive Technology Strategy



Assistive Technology Strategy - One Page Summary

Our vision for Hertfordshire is to embed the vital role of technology and work with our partners to support people to live independent lives in their own homes, stay connected to their local communities and stay fit and active for longer.

What is Assistive Technology?

Telecare

Aids independent living by the use of technology such as monitors, alarms and sensors

Digital participation services

Services that educate, entertain and engage people – linking them to networks and combatting social isolation

Wellness services

Technologies, gadgets and devices like health apps and fitness trackers which promote healthy lifestyles

Wellbeing

Achieving the strategic aims

Prevention and independence

- Building in opportunities when we design services
- Using technology in care and support planning
- Developing our responder and enablement Telecare offer
- Researching new and innovative ways to support different groups of people

Information and choice

- Promoting apps, kits and technology to our residents
- Equipping our staff with the skills they need to inform and advise
- Supporting people to use technology with their direct payments

Future proof

- Understanding, testing and using new technology
- Using data and evaluating effectiveness to inform future direction

Value

- Understanding the economic costs and benefits and using our resources to achieve the greatest impact.
- Invest in assistive technology for prevention to save money in the future

STRATEGIC AIMS

Future proof

Information and choice

Prevention and independence

Partnership

Value

Operational priorities

- Support hospital discharge
- Independent living
- Support to older and frail people
- Carer support
- Befriending
- Wellness
- Community safety

Key client groups

- Frail, older people
- People with dementia
- People with physical disabilities
- People with a learning disability
- People with mental ill health
- People with a sensory need

Introduction

People are increasingly comfortable in operating in our digital world and able to choose how they want to use digital technology in their lives. These developments have the power to transform our world.

Assistive Technology: A vision for our future:

'Hertfordshire in 2030: an ageing population is able to access health care services from home in all areas of the county, as widespread access to telecommunications and mobile phone internet enables people to be more in control of their own care. This makes providers more aware of who to contact, with effective data sharing and sensors revealing 'invisible' needs to effectively predict and prevent problems.

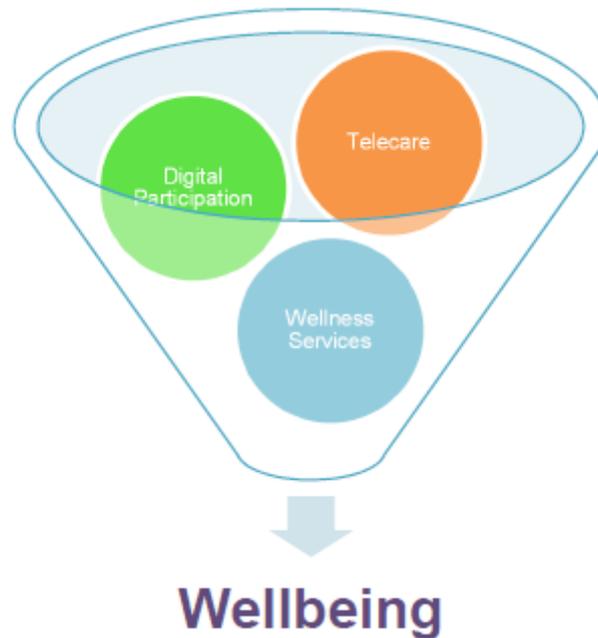
Preventative medicine soars, as sensors installed in people's smartphones allow them to detect the signs of illness before they present in full and diagnose conditions at home. Responding to advances in the field of genetics and drawing on rich data collected about each individual's life, medicine will become more personalised. Robots will deliver medicines to people at the touch of a button.

Public spaces enable people to better log and monitor their own physical activity, with parks and public bicycles offering users the chance to upload their activity to an individual user profile which monitors their wellbeing and fitness.

Linked to the proliferation of smart health technology is a shift towards personal health records. Every citizen has a single record of health-related information that conforms to nationally-recognised open standards and can be drawn from multiple sources while being managed, shared and controlled by the individual. Data accrued from public, private and individual sources are used to develop more targeted public health interventions, reducing the burden on the health and social care system.'

Assistive Technology

Assistive Technology (AT) describes a range of technology which is increasingly relevant to overall wellbeing strategies:



- **‘Telecare’** – the use of technology, including monitors and sensors, to sustain and enable independent living. This includes remote monitoring or selfmonitoring. A ‘responder service’ is usually included providing support to the service user when needed. ‘Telehealth’ is an associated area, concerning using technology to monitor health conditions;

- **Digital Participation Services** – services which educate, entertain and stimulate social interaction to enrich the lives of people linking them to networks and communities, combatting loneliness and social isolation;

- **Wellness Services** – technologies, gadgets and devices which encourage people to adopt and maintain a healthy lifestyle, to prevent or delay the need for support. For example, activity tracking and health monitoring apps linked to mobile phones or watches.

In Hertfordshire we see a vital role for new digital technology in helping meet the challenges of the future. Across the health, social care and housing system in Hertfordshire our strategy is to find the best and most effective ways to support people to live independently and prevent the need for more intensive and long-term support. We see a clear role for assistive technology in preventing admission to and facilitating discharge from hospital. We want people to be well connected to their communities and we see an opportunity for technology to help establish networks that reduce isolation and loneliness.

A transition to modern assistive technologies, those which are digitally based and which offer the opportunity to connect to the 'Internet of Things', offers even greater opportunity to help achieve these ambitions.

Current Situation

There are a number of commissioned assistive technology (AT) offers available across Hertfordshire, delivered by different providers and commissioned by various partner organisations¹, such as District Councils, the County Council, housing providers and the Constabulary. Private providers also offer an increasingly vast array of alarm technology.

Public provision in the county is largely analogue based e.g. 'pendants' and funded through a range of different sources, including directly commissioned via public funds and full and joint service user contribution. Additionally, Hertfordshire County Council has three specific AT services:

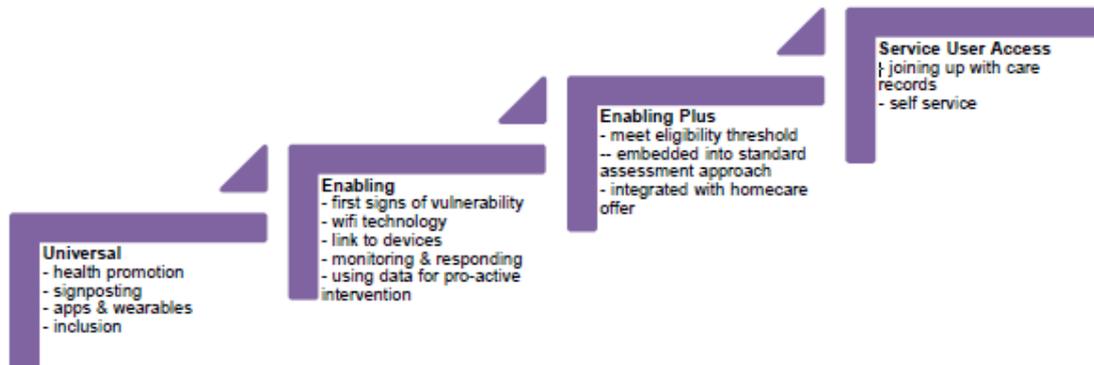
Provider	Offer
Serco Tunstall	A range of telecare for service users with existing care needs and as a preventative measure; 4000 users
North Herts Careline	A community alarm and telecare service; 3,635 users and rising
Herts Fire and Rescue	Preventative home safety visits to vulnerable adults; specialist smoke detectors for people with disabilities

The services provided across the public sector in Hertfordshire are generally seen as successful arrangements with well-established, tried and tested approaches. The county council wants to build on this success whilst harnessing the benefits of the newer forms of technology.

Ambition

Our ambition is to connect modern assistive technology into the heart of our adult social care and support services rather than see it as an 'add-on'; we want to see a role for assistive technology whenever we design and develop services. The intention will be to use the benefits of modern technology to create a service user experience which is flexible, enabling, responsive and re-assuring. We also want to put technology to use to make it possible to deliver our services in the most efficient and effective way.

We envisage a continuum of approaches:



All types of service users should be able to benefit from the opportunities offered by digital technologies but whilst assistive technology may well provide an entire solution for some individuals it may not be the answer for everybody. People have different needs, abilities and preferences which may mean that assistive technology solutions are not appropriate for them. Neither can technology alone provide human contact and personal care.

At an individual service user level the strategy therefore sees assistive technology as a tool to support and complement, working within our overall assessment approach, and that this is considered in the round, embedded as a standard part of the information and advice offer, and assessment and care processes.

Vision for Assistive Technology

Our vision for assistive technology is:

To maximise the benefits and opportunities provided by assistive technology, bringing these to the heart of our social care offer as we work with services, carers and communities to support healthy, fulfilled, and independent lives.

The strategic aims which flow from this are:

Prevention & Independence	'Designing-in' technology to our service offer. Assistive technology helping to defer or avoid completely the need for more intensive forms of care, and avoid 'crisis management' so service users feel safer and carers have the reassurance they need
Information & Choice	informing individuals, families and carers; understanding how assistive technology supports outcomes; choosing assistive technology as an alternative to, or to complement other forms of care
Future proof	Understanding, testing and deploying new technology; using data and information innovatively, appropriately and ethically to support this
Partnership	Taking opportunities to co-ordinate with other agencies to design seamless approaches
Value	understanding the social and economic costs and benefits of assistive technology and targeting resources accordingly; using assistive technology to meet the challenges of rising demography and increasing complexity

Achieving the Strategic Aims

Prevention and Independence

'Designing-in' modern technology to our service offer. Assistive technology helping to defer the need for or avoid completely more intensive forms of care, and avoid 'crisis management' so service users feel safer and carers have the reassurance they need

When designing new services we will look at the opportunities available from technology and seek to build these in to our offer. This could include looking at how we can use assistive technology to prevent need from arising or escalating or to enrich service users' experience. When re-procuring home care contracts we will seek solutions which integrate technology and care.

Assistive technology will always be an option when considering how best to meet a person's social care needs; we will use assistive technology to provide the most appropriate support throughout the life journey, providing this at the optimal point that ensures continue well-being and minimises crisis.

There is a key role for assistive technology in enabling people to live independently, and to re-able and support people when coming out of hospital. Assistive technology needs to be to be reliable so that it supports both service users and offers strong reassurance to carers so that they can continue in their caring role.

Responder services are a fundamental part of the assistive technology offer. This is the immediate response and aftercare that people need, rebuilding their confidence and helping them stay at home rather than needing to recover elsewhere. To achieve these aims our response needs to be of high quality and reliability, well linked in to communities.

The specific requirements or interventions that can support specific service user groups need to be identified, for example how assistive technology can be used in learning disability settings to support independent living, or how technologies can be used to connect people who feel lonely and isolated.

Assistive technology opportunities will be considered across four perspectives:

A) The Client Group Perspective	B) The Application Perspective
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Frail elderly• Dementia• Learning Disability• Physical disability• Mental health	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support of hospital/residential care discharge• Continued independent living• Frail/elderly service user reassurance• Carer support• Befriending• Wellness

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sensory impairment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community safety • Identifying signs of deterioration and preventing crises
<p>C) The Location Perspective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domestic dwellings • Schemes (including flexi-care, retirement living accommodation, and care homes) 	<p>D) The Equipment Perspective</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modern and reliable • Connected (i.e. to a monitoring centre) e.g. community alarms and responder service • Standalone (i.e. unconnected to a monitoring centre) e.g. pagers, LED lighting, etc. • Use of the existing equipment (i.e. telephones, televisions, etc.); transitioning to more modern approaches

Information and Choice

Informing individuals, families and carers; understanding how assistive technology supports outcomes; choosing assistive technology as an alternative to, or to complement other forms of care

There are a wealth of apps, kit and technologies designed to make home life more manageable or to provide reassurance to family and carers. People need good information and advice about the range of assistive technology that can support independent living at home.

Activity in this area will work towards providing simple, clear and straightforward guidance and advice about what assistive technology support is available and to promote and signpost appropriate apps which promote wellbeing, social inclusion, prevention and facilitate care and support. We will link in with Libraries, Public Health and the Herts Direct website to do this.

All relevant members of staff including social workers, occupational therapists and front care workers should have the knowledge and digital skills they need to understand how assistive technology can best support people and how to help them access assistive technology services.

Those with Direct Payments or Personal Budgets will be supported to purchase appropriate personalised support and equipment.

Future Proof

Understanding, testing and deploying new technology; using data and information appropriately and ethically to support this

From 'wearables', voice-activated technology, automation, and robotics, to artificial intelligence and beyond, technology regularly offers new opportunities to improve or transform provision and the aim is to be well placed to understand the opportunities and implement them where the case to do so is strong.

A wealth of data and information can be produced by assistive technology systems and from wearables and devices. We want to put systems in place to pick up when a trend might be starting that should trigger a short intervention to prevent someone's condition from deteriorating.

Assistive technology related risks and ethical issues need to be understood and mitigated, but not become a barrier to action.

Partnership

Taking opportunities to co-ordinate with other agencies to design seamless approaches

We are committed to driving forward our own strategy and when opportunities arise we want to do this in a co-ordinated way. We will support joint working in this area with partners including the NHS, Public Health, Community Protection, the Voluntary and Community Sector, Carers Groups and housing authorities.

Value

Understanding the social and economic costs and benefits of assistive technology and targeting resources accordingly; using assistive technology to meet the challenges of rising demography and increasing complexity

There is a strong case for investing in assistive technology to prevent or defer the need for costlier forms of intervention. This will help to manage the challenge of future funding pressures.

There is a link into existing work that is assessing the value of preventative activity to build a well informed and convincing case that can support future ambitions and indicate where best to target resource. The assessment of value will encompass both social and economic perspectives.

Clear and consistent charging arrangements for assistive technology services which are commissioned by the County Council will be introduced.