

Self-Directed Support - The New Multi-Channel Reality

Empowering citizens to direct their care support in the way that suits them best



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Introduction

The move towards personalisation is having a profound impact on the nature of social care information systems.

Social care case management is no longer based solely on the input of those responsible for delivering services. The focus is now on a much more collaborative approach, responding to social care users as customers who are in control of their own social care needs, deciding how they access services and how available funding should be spent.

Tech-savvy customers will be able to find the information they need and confidently self-direct their support using a web portal. However, it is essential that those without access to the internet, often the oldest and most vulnerable members of society, are able to live independent lives. Case management systems must provide a choice of communication channels for accessing services, including automated telephone services and in person contact with named care workers.

Of course, case management is about helping local authorities to be more efficient and effective, enabling them to streamline processes and better manage care provision. Personalisation adds another dimension in terms of meeting customer needs by giving service users the ability to find information for themselves and direct their support they require using the communication channels that suit them best.

By extending the ways in which service users are able to interact with them, local authorities can reduce the cost and improve the targeting of service delivery.

Key messages

- The UK has 40 million adult internet users, with 30 million people using the web every day. The online audience is maturing with internet take-up among older people rising faster than among other age groups.
- Web technology allows 'self-service' transactions in an environment that the service user can personalise to his or her own needs and preferences. It gives individuals real flexibility in how, when and where they direct their own care and delivers significant efficiency savings for local authorities.
- There are still 10 million adults in the UK who do not use the internet. The demand for social services from this section of the community, often the oldest and most vulnerable members of society, can be significant. As social services move online, local authorities need to ensure that this group is not excluded and that all citizens benefit from greater choice and control.
- The objective is to offer a choice of access possibilities for senior and vulnerable citizens so that they can use whatever communication channel is most appropriate for them to direct their own care (online, over the phone or in person)...
- ...and to implement a technology model that has the ability to handle a variety of requirements – with a single and comprehensive source of client information whatever delivery model and communication channel is used.



In the move to personalisation, effective IT systems must be able to accommodate the requirements of all service users - holding a single and comprehensive source of client information that can be accessed by service users and care professionals whatever delivery model and communication channel is used to control care.

Growth in internet use suggests that many adults and older people will embrace online self-directed support

The UK is well placed in technical terms to make rapid progress towards online self-directed support. Internet use in the UK is widespread and growing, including among the over 50s. This creates new opportunities for online self-service, giving individuals real flexibility in how, when and where they direct their own care, delivering significant efficiency savings for local authorities.

Internet take-up among older people is rising faster than among other age groups

In 2009, 18.31 million UK households had Internet access (Office for National Statistics – Statistical bulletin 2009). This represents 70 per cent of households and an increase of 1.85 million households over 2008. Of all UK households, 63 per cent had a broadband connection. Data from Nielsen reveals that the size of the UK Internet audience grew by a further five percent from 36.9 million people in May 2009 to 38.8 million people in May 2010.

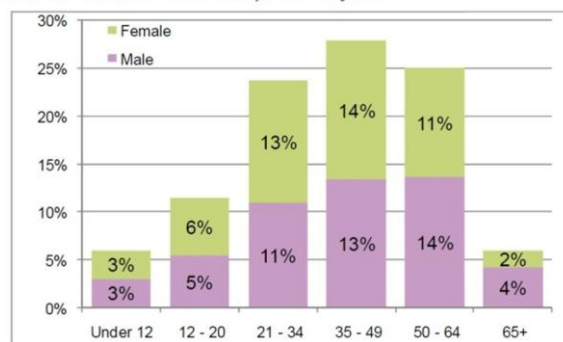
People over 50 are the internet's fastest-growing group accounting for half of last year's new web users. Almost a third of the online population is aged over 50, according to UKOM, the British online audience measurement service operated by Nielsen, with 1m new people in that age group coming online in the year to May 2010.

"The Internet is getting older in more ways than one. Not only is the medium itself maturing but the audience is shifting towards older age groups. This growth is a reminder, if one was still needed, that it is very much a form of media utilised by all age groups. The fact that one in four Britons who use the Internet today are 50 to 64 years old proves it is no longer the sole preserve of the young and technical literati." said Alex Burmaster from UKOM/Nielsen.

...Maximising the opportunities for online self-service

According to RaceOnline 2012, it is estimated that each contact and transaction with government that is moved online could generate savings of between £3.30 and £12. If one considers that there are an estimated 1.8 billion contacts with public services every year, of which only about 20% are online, the potential cost savings are huge.

Chart 1: How UK Internet Audience is composed – May 2010



Source: UKOM/Nielsen
E.g. Boys under 12 accounted for 3% of UK Internet users in May 2010

If all adults who are currently not interacting with public services online began using the internet and made just one online contact each month, instead of telephone or face-to-face contact, it would save an estimated £900m per annum.

Online self-directed support requires web technology that many people already use in their everyday lives in areas such as internet banking, online retail and social networking. This technology allows 'self-service' transactions in an environment that the service user can personalise to his or her own needs and preferences. As people experience the benefits of online self-directed care usage levels will increase at the expense of traditional channels. In turn, increased use of the Internet to deliver services will free up resources, allowing traditional face-to-face services to be targeted at those who need them most.

Despite these positive trends and the sound technical base, significant cultural obstacles remain.

A significant minority does not use the internet and needs to be able to use other communication channels to direct their care

There are still 10 million adults in the UK who do not use the internet: more than a fifth of the population (RaceOnline 2012). The demand for social services from this group can be significant. As social services move online, local authorities need to ensure that this group benefits equally from having greater choice and control.

Internet use decreases with age and increases with education

"It is estimated that 6.4 million people over 65 have never been online, meaning these people are missing out on the many opportunities that technology has to offer - from saving money to keeping in touch with family and friends. As the internet rapidly becomes a tool for everyday life, those without the access, skills or motivation to use the web are increasingly left behind" said Martha Lane Fox, founder of LastMinute.com and newly-appointed Government Digital Champion.

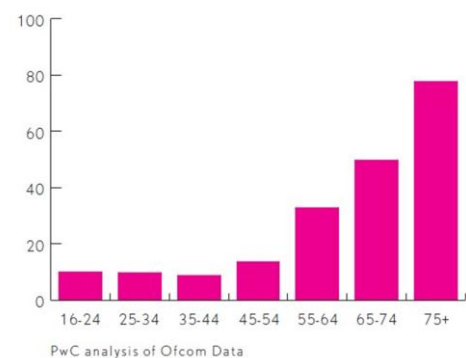
While only one in ten people aged between 16 and 24 do not use the internet, this rises to one in two of those aged 65-74 and three in four of those over 75. Household income is also a significant factor with nearly 50% of adults living in households earning less than £11.5k not using the internet anywhere — at home, work or in the community — compared with only 4% of those living in households earning over £30k a year.

Other characteristics of non-internet users are:

- 48% of disabled people are offline, more than twice the national average
- The North of England, urban areas of Scotland and South Wales have the highest concentrations of working-age people who are offline
- Rural and coastal areas have the highest concentrations of older residents who don't use the internet

- The links between social disadvantage and lack of internet access are strong. It is estimated that around four million non-internet users are among the most socially disadvantaged people in the UK, of whom 39% are over 65 and 38% are unemployed.

GRAPH 1
PERCENTAGE OF INTERNET NON-USERS BY AGE



These figures suggest that the very people who are most likely to be in need of social services are also the most likely to be digitally excluded; in particular, older people (over 65 years), disabled people and the socially disadvantaged.

Helping non-internet users take greater control of their lives

There are a number of reasons why older people often do not use the internet, these can include; fear of the unknown, security concerns, lack of access, poor knowledge, no technical skills, simple disinterest and not seeing how it is relevant to their lives. There are also issues of confidence and accessibility of websites. *"Getting elders to experience the Internet, when they distrust it, is the main challenge"* said Bill Dutton from the Oxford Internet Institute (OII). *"While some older people regularly use the internet, many ignore the potential for researching healthcare options or simply distrust the web as a resource"*.

Closing the age related divide is one of the tasks of the Digital Inclusion Taskforce in the UK. BT Internet has also launched a programme to encourage younger people to help get older people online. Age UK has also been working to help older people to use the Internet. Research shows that older non-internet users, including some who initially appear to be dismissive, can be encouraged to take up the internet with appropriate intervention, including awareness-raising and training.

A tech-savvy audience is more likely to embrace online self-directed support – but what about the other ones. Although senior citizens have the highest growth rates in Internet usage, their participation rates are still lower than those of other age groups. The people who are often most in need of social services are the least likely to have access to ICT. One size doesn't fit all in web-based self-directed support. The same approach to self-directed support will not work for every type of service user, every type of inquiry, or every stage of the social care process.

Self-Directed Support – Towards a new multi-channel model

It is essential to offer a range of access possibilities for senior and vulnerable citizens, so that each can use whatever channel is most appropriate for them to direct their own care (online, over the phone or in person). It is also important that IT systems are able to accommodate a gradual transition to personalisation by having the ability to handle a variety of requirements whatever the delivery model (traditional or self-directed) and communication channel is used to control the care.

How much can and should be done online?

Providing signposting and guidance

Websites are the first step in providing universal services. Universal services are most effective when everyone can easily access the information, advice and support they need regardless of their age or ability. The aim is to enable people to make informed decisions based on accurate, up-to-date and reliable information. Universal Services are not just about the internet though, and local authorities need to provide easy access to the right advice and information through face-to-face and over the telephone contact.

Getting the user to self-serve

Self-Directed Support web portals give the public the self-services tools and capabilities needed to direct their own support in a user-friendly, efficient and effective environment. Social service users are able to engage with more tailored, responsive public services using web-based technologies as and when they need them.

The resources saved as a result of the move to online channels can be re-directed to providing 'physical' support to those most in need.

Self-service transactions can include:

- Online tools that assesses eligibility for social care support
- The ability to purchase services through online marketplaces
- Social networking sites enabling people to interact with others who have similar social care needs
- The ability to monitor outcomes
- Greater use of e-learning and video conferencing for education or training purposes

Ensuring that online services are accessible

Citizen access solutions need to be accessible to all people who need to use them. If the information on your site or portal is not presented correctly, those with certain accessibility requirements could have difficulty accessing, navigating or reading the content of your web page. It is also a legal requirement for any organisation's website and intranet to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). CareWorks has been working with Shaw Trust to ensure that its CareDirector citizen portal can be accessed by people of all abilities.

What about those resistant to change?

There will always be service users who feel very strongly that the internet is not for them and those with higher needs who require a more traditional model of delivery. These people will prefer to interact in person or over the phone. The underlying technology model needs to ensure that the most disadvantaged and vulnerable people are fully supported through appropriate channels of access as social services move online (e.g. through face-to-face or phone contact). The potential cost-benefits of self-service delivery need to be properly balanced against the needs and preferences of service users. Self-service delivery should be introduced not simply because it reduces cost, but also because it will clearly improve the accessibility and responsiveness of services for all service users.

The need for flexible and open ICT architecture

The provision of self-directed support services through a multi-channel environment requires a more flexible, open ICT architecture. Information systems have to be more agile and sophisticated and allow service users to interact more effectively with their social care network using the communication channel of their choice. It requires systems that not only harness the power of the web but also offer choice in delivery, holding a single and comprehensive source of client information whatever the communication channel or delivery model is used.

CareDirector is a case management system that allows local authorities to manage service delivery in a multi-channel environment and offer tailored support over the web, by telephone and in person.

About CareWorks

CareWorks is a specialist provider of social care management software with 13 years experience, 71 local authority customers and unrivalled understanding of the revolution taking place in the delivery and management of social care. It has delivered solutions for adult and children's social care, criminal justice, youth justice and community health.

In response to the move towards personalised and self-directed care, CareWorks has developed CareDirector, a social care management system that enables the public to be in control of their own support needs.

CareWorks has taken a different approach, moving away from the proprietary systems that have traditionally been used in social care management to one built on an industry-standard customer service platform, Microsoft Dynamics CRM. The result is a higher quality, more flexible system that can be quickly adapted to changing social care demands.

CareWorks is the only social care software company to offer a social care solution based on world leading customer relationship technology from Microsoft.

More information

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or visit: www.careworks.co.uk to see a demonstration