New research reveals technology keeping older people independent for longer

Jun 11, 2020

New research has revealed how potentially life-saving technology is helping older people stay independent at home for longer – delaying a move to a care home by nearly nine months and enabling hard-pressed local authorities to redeploy millions in social care funding.

The results are released as the social care sector continues to come under unprecedented pressure during the Covid-19 outbreak, with health and social care services globally rapidly adapting to support vulnerable people living alone.

Involving three separate studies, the independent research[1] includes analysis by health economists and academic researchers in York and Barcelona. It considers the benefits of proactive, reactive, and personalised use of technology to support people in their own homes, in the UK and Spain.

Gavin Bashar, Managing Director UK & Ireland of Tunstall said: "Until now there has been lack of independent analysis on the impact telecare is having on health and social care systems – and this is the first time the socio-economic value has been studied in this way. It proves the benefits that can be realised, and that when technology is deployed in a person-centred way, it can create a more sustainable and resilient health and care system."

Health economist Nick Hex of the York Health Economics Consortium, who studied Lancashire's Telecare service, said: "We are now doing further analysis to find out whether telecare makes a difference in the use of NHS resources, for example visits to A&E and admission and readmission to hospital."

This is the first time the socio-economic value of telecare has been studied in this way – and features analysis of Lancashire County Council's advanced reactive (emergency response) telecare programme as well as the benefits of proactive (preventative) telecare in Spain between 2011 and 2018 of over 250.000 service users of Tunstall Televida at the time.

Abel Delgado, Managing Director for Tunstall Healthcare in Spain said: "It's not all about the tech, it's about how tech is used. Spain is recognised as a world leader in technology supported care, and first introduced proactive telecare in the 90s. It has become more sophisticated over recent years – with greater levels of personalisation enabling local authorities across the country to provide the tailored support people need in their own homes. Technology is playing a crucial role in Spain's response to Covid-19 – providing extra support to those who need it in their own homes. Where home care, day centres and physical contact were not possible during the lockdown, we have been able to rapidly deploy technology, outbound calls and support services to help vulnerable people who live alone."

Main research findings:

- In the UK, with the Lancashire Telecare Service, **£4,500** per person per annum was avoided in home care and other social care costs when reactive telecare was included as part of the care services. Based on the 6,000 service user numbers at the time (which has since doubled) this equated to £13.3m per annum.
- In Spain - a global leader in Independent Living – older people offered proactive and personalised technology (preventative) were able to stay independent at home for on average **6 months (262 days)** longer, before moving to a care home.
- Proactive and personalised telecare also reduced pressure on emergency services. Emergency calls for help were **reduced by 54%** and ambulance mobilisations **by 36%.** There were 256,000 service users in Spain at the time of the study (which has since increased to 320,000).
- Proactive telecare service users reported feeling **significantly safer (96%)** and **more self-sufficient (78%)** – with **98% feeling it gave peace of mind** to their family, including family members caring for them.

Commissioned by leading telecare provider Tunstall for as part of a new White Paper report, it is the first independently-evaluated international research of its kind.

Wendy Hugoosgift Contreras, Global Proposition Director for Tunstall Healthcare Group said: "Being connected, from person to person, has proven to be the true value of our service delivery. Although our healthcare systems might be different in each of our territories, service users' needs to live life to the full in a place of their choice are universal. And we are proud to be able to support our customers on a global scale with the positive impact the transition to advanced levels of telecare has proven to have. Not only in avoiding costs but also in providing better support for users and their family to live safely and independently for longer."

Click here to download the full report.

At all times the use of anonymized data of both services users, professional and family carers has been guaranteed following current data protection regulations.

[1] About the research

The Transformational Potential of Telecare white paper was commissioned by Tunstall with independent analysis and compilation by

Ignetica Ltd.

Involving three separate studies, it includes analysis by:

- **University of York's York Health Economics Consortium (YHEC)** – which evaluated of the impact of Lancashire County Council's telecare service on other social care services, in the period 2016-17.
- **Strategy and transformation consultancy, Ingnetica** – which evaluated of the operational and economic benefits of proactive and personalised telecare based on all Tunstall Televida (Spain) service users between 2011 and 2018.
- **Foundation for Health and Ageing at the Universitat Autonoma de Barcelona** - which studied user/family improvements in safety, self-sufficiency, and peace of mind. PROMS study from 2016.