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Declaration

I declare that this assignment is my own work and that all sources used have been appropriately acknowledged and referenced. I understand the University's regulations regarding academic integrity and plagiarism.

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Introduction

The adoption of large numbers of digital technologies in health and social care is called digital transformation, and it works to improve the quality, availability, efficiency and coordination of health and social care services (Singh et al., 2021). Telehealth is one of the key innovations implemented within the UK National Health Service (NHS) which allows the health care profession to provide consultations remotely via phone, video call, or digital platforms. In recent years, the shift towards telehealth technologies has increased in priority, especially since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, to ensure continuity of care, to lessen pressure on care facilities, and to enhance the ability of patients to access services (European Parliament, 2021). This report critically assesses the implementation of telehealth in the NHS, explores its effects on the workforce, service delivery, the patient and wider service user communities and recognises the advantages and disadvantages.

Overview of the Digital Innovation

The World Health Organisation (2022) reported that telehealth is defined as the process or practice of using digital communication technologies to provide health care services when they are not provided in person, allowing the patient and healthcare provider to be separated from each other. Virtual consultations are an essential service of telehealth, and are clinical interactions made via video calls, telephone or digital applications. Telehealth has seen growing integration in the NHS, offering greater access to services and improvements in efficiency and patient-centred care (NHS England, 2026).

There are a variety of technologies that can enable a telehealth delivery. Real-time visual access between patients and clinicians over video is done through video platforms like Attend Anywhere and Microsoft Teams (Byrne and Watkinson, 2021). Routine assessments and follow-up care can also be done conveniently over the telephone. NHS App allows patients to book appointments, view health records, request repeat prescriptions and digitally interact with health services. Furthermore, remote monitoring platforms enable the data collection and delivery of patient health information, such as BP, oxygen saturation, and blood sugar levels, enabling healthcare providers to follow patients from a distance (Gov.UK, 2022). Telehealth was increasingly adopted as an essential component of healthcare delivery and digital transformation across the NHS during and after the COVID-19 pandemic (NHS Digital, 2026).

Impact on Workforce



Figure 1: Telehealth Workflow and Balance Illustration

Source: Self-Made

The adoption of telehealth in the NHS has fundamentally changed the nature of the health care workforce, benefiting health care professionals, as well as presenting opportunities and challenges (Kayyali et al., 2017). It is one of the greatest advantages that one will receive with the flexible working practices. Virtual consultations allow clinicians to provide services from outside of the clinic environment and can be used as a way to reduce travel distance and support flexible / hybrid work options (Pickard Strange et al., 2023). This is a particular advantage for community nurses and allied health professions, as it saves them time travelling between appointments and allows them to devote more time to patient care.

In addition, telehealth has promoted collaboration between medical teams, as they can communicate with each other digitally. In care planning and decision making, virtual meetings and sharing of digital systems allow for communication between the different professions involved in a more efficient manner (Schwamm et al., 2020). In addition, tele-health has optimised operations by allowing healthcare organisations to increase inputs to the system and minimise missed appointments, which has increased the productivity of service (Illoanusi et al., 2026).

While the benefits of telehealth are present, there are some workforce challenges that have arisen. Healthcare professionals need to have a certain level of digital literacy and technical skills for successful utilisation of digital technologies (Tegegne et al., 2023). Staff need to continue learning and unlocking potential new digital technologies to use them effectively. Low levels of digital competency can reinforce negative attitudes toward technology and limit the ability to use it (Terp, Kayser and Lindhardt, 2021).

Moreover, telehealth also places additional strain on administrative workloads. In addition to clinical work, clinicians must often handle electronic documentation, oversee electronic records from a distance, and troubleshoot technical problems (Olakotan et al., 2025). When technology is disrupted, due to connection issues or software malfunctions, it can lead to stress and impact on workflow productivity. The regular face-to-face consultations can also lead to fatigue and burnout as a result of sitting in front of screens for long periods, as well as less interpersonal interaction and higher cognitive load for providing care in the virtual space (Nurmi and Pakarinen, 2023).

As an organisational change, Telehealth will need to be managed effectively as a change management process, from a workforce transformation perspective. To achieve success implementation must include staff engagement, leadership support, sufficient training, and ongoing evaluation. Telehealth has improved workforce flexibility and efficiency, but over time it depends on overcoming digital literacy issues, on supporting staff wellbeing, and ensuring that technological advancements serve to augment the work of health care professionals, rather than replacing them.

Impact on Service Delivery



Figure 2: Telemedicine Support System

Source: Self-Made

Telehealth has radically changed the nature of service provision across the NHS, making services more accessible, efficient and continuous. The big advantage is quick access to health care services. Virtual consultations enable patients to get medical advice and treatment without having to travel to health care facilities, which helps cut down on delays of in-person consultations (NHS England, 2026). This has helped to reduce waiting times and increased responsiveness of services, especially for routine consultations and future appointments, as well as reviews of medication.

There is also a strong emphasis on the continuity of care through telehealth, which helps to keep patients and health care providers in regular, continuous communication (Khatri et al., 2023). Digital platforms allow clinicians to stay engaged with patients, regularly follow them up and intervene at any point when needed. Technology for remote monitoring has proved to be particularly beneficial for people with chronic diseases, like diabetes, hypertension, and chronic respiratory diseases, enabling constant tracking of health status and early signs of deterioration (Peyroeto et al., 2021). As a result, telehealth helps to promote proactive disease management and can lower non-urgent admissions.

Though these benefits are present, there are a number of issues that impact service delivery. Technical issues such as software bugs, hardware failures, or crashes can interrupt consultations and cause delays in patient services. Effective communication and service reliability can be associated with connectivity problems in cases of weak internet connectivity infrastructure (El Khaled and Mcheick, 2019). Further, with the growing adoption of digital technologies, the security and privacy concerns of patient information and patient confidentiality are a concern. Therefore, healthcare organisations can only do so with powerful cybersecurity measures and adherence to data protection laws to enable patients to remain confident in their firms (Nifakos et al., 2021).

Another constraint is that not all consultations can be carried out remotely. Some clinical evaluations are physical exams, tests, etc., that will need to be done in person that cannot be done virtually. Therefore, individual patients with complex symptoms or acute conditions may need a face-to-face assessment in order to ensure accurate diagnosis and safe treatment decisions (Alharbi et al., 2025).

At the same time, correlation between the accessibility and reliability of telehealth with clinical assessment and technological reliability is a critical point that must be taken into account, as it makes telehealth more efficient and increases accessibility and decreases waiting times. Service delivery needs a hybrid approach that merges digital and in-person services to ensure that telehealth improves, rather than detracts from, the quality and safety of healthcare delivery.

Impact on Patients/Service Users

Telehealth has had a profound impact on patient journeys in the NHS by making it easier to access care. Some of the advantages are that the patient can receive health-care from home, without requiring travel, which means there are lower costs, for the NHS, for the patient and for the family to be away from work and needed responsibilities (NHS England, 2026). This convenience has been known to lead to high level of patient satisfaction including for regular consultations, medicine reviews and after checking visits. Studies suggest that virtual consulting can often be valuable to many patients in terms of convenience and time-saving, especially in the management of chronic conditions (Kjeldsen and Kristensen, 2025).

Additionally, telehealth has helped to empower patients by giving them more autonomy in managing their health. Access to digital services like the NHS App offer patients a window into health records, appointment availability, and prescription management, fostering improved patient engagement (NHS England, 2026). Additionally, the remote monitoring technologies

help with self-management by allowing patients to monitor health aspects and provide those aspects to health care workers. Telehealth has proven to be especially helpful for those who live in rural or geographically isolated communities, where residents may have access to less healthcare services because of distance and transportation shortages (Kolluri et al., 2022).

While there are upsides to telehealth, it can also be a potential source of digital exclusion. Not all patients possess the digital skills, internet access or technological resources required to engage effectively with online healthcare services. UK Parliament (2023) found that older people, with disabilities and those on low incomes and from socially disadvantaged groups are at higher risk of facing barriers to digital access of healthcare. This is relevant because there are concerns that telehealth could end up exacerbating current health inequities, instead of addressing them or improving them.

One challenge has been the decrease in the in-person patient and provider interaction. Patients may feel disconnected to clinicians at a virtual consultation, which could impact how the patient communicates, feels supported and satisfied and build trust in the clinical setting. (Walthall et al., 2022). Some people may be reluctant to engage with digital services because of privacy, confidentiality and data security concerns.

Importantly, results indicate that patient satisfaction can reach high rates with telehealth, as long as it is implemented in the right way, but that this is by no means evenly distributed (Drerup et al., 2021). Although telehealth enhances convenience and accessibility, digital inequalities and inequities must be tackled through inclusive design in telehealth, digital literacy supports, and alternative care pathways to make health services available for those who cannot access them.

Impact on Communities

Telehealth's implementation has had substantial community impacts such as improving access to health care services and enhancing and supporting public health goals (Chen, Spencer and Buchongo, 2022). This is one of the main advantages because those who reside in rural and remote locations can gain more access to care, as the availability of healthcare facilities and specialists may be restricted. With virtual consultations eliminating the distance for some at least, local communities will be able to receive timely care without the requirement to travel great distances (NHS England, 2026). This can help advance health and enhance health equity at the national and sub-national levels.

In addition, telehealth has helped offload services like hospitals and doctors' offices by lowering the number of unnecessary in-person visits and helping to monitor patients from home

(Baum, Kaboli and Schwartz, 2021). Remote monitoring makes it easier for health care staff to keep an eye on patients' condition and act quickly if it gets worse, cutting down the number of hospital admissions and help required from primary care services. In addition, digital platforms can contribute to the monitoring of public health by gathering and processing health information, allowing healthcare providers to gain a deeper understanding of population health patterns, and therefore improve their capability to address new health issues (Hu et al., 2025).

One result of that is greater engagement with families in planning for care. Virtual consultations enable family members and/or carers to join health consultations virtually for collaborative decision making and to help maintain continuity of care, especially for individuals with long-term conditions or complex health care needs (Mann, Turner and Salisbury, 2021).

But telehealth can also exacerbate existing health disparities. The challenge of digital divide, including the lack of internet access, digital literacy and digital devices access is one of the biggest problems in disadvantaged communities' existence. Socio-economic factors may then limit access to these telehealth services, potentially exacerbating inequalities in access to and experiences of care (UK Parliament, 2023). Critically, telehealth can help to improve community engagement and ensure positive public health impacts and outcomes, but the benefits are not equitable. To prevent that digital transformation exacerbates health inequalities, it is crucial to invest specifically in eliminating digital exclusion through digital education and in upgrading digital infrastructure.

Conclusion

Telehealth has become a key digital transformation in the NHS, transforming the way staff work, services are delivered, patient experiences and the way community-based care is accessed. The technology is bringing greater flexibility for healthcare workers, better efficiency of services, greater convenience for patients, and more access to healthcare, especially for rural residents. Despite the presence of challenges like digital exclusion, technological constraints, privacy issues, and work-related stresses. In sum, telehealth outweighs its disadvantages, especially in combination with a face-to-face service and when the service is offered within a community's traditional health system. Looking forward, there is a need to support them in strengthening digital literacy, mitigating health inequalities and improving cyber security to enable supportive environment for equitable and sustainable provision of health services through digital means.

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