



ASSESSMENT TITLE

Component 2: Assignment (Report)

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Module Name: Changemakers: Creativity and Value Creation

Module code: BMHP5014

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**I acknowledge that this portfolio is mine, and I have use Microsoft Editor for
Spelling and grammar**

POSTER



Department
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Social Care



"Connect & Care: Bridging the Digital Divide in UK Health & Social Care"

The "Connect & Care" Digital Inclusion Hubs



AI and Digital Regulations
Service for
health and social care

Innovative Solution: The proposed innovative solution is the establishment of "Connect & Care" Digital Inclusion Hubs within existing community centres, libraries, and GP practices across the UK. These hubs will serve as accessible, supportive environments where individuals can gain the necessary digital skills and access reliable internet connectivity to engage fully with modern health and social care services. Each hub will be equipped with user-friendly devices (tablets, laptops), high-speed internet, and dedicated digital navigators – trained staff or volunteers – who can provide one-on-one or group support.

The problem: The UK's health and social care sector faces persistent challenges in ensuring equitable access to services and improving the overall experience for patients, users, and professionals. A major obstacle is the digital divide, which disproportionately affects older people, those with lower socioeconomic status, and those living in rural areas. This divide limits access to essential online health information, virtual consultations, and digital social care platforms, exacerbating health inequalities and increasing the administrative burden on staff.



Target audience and impact: This proposal has a great impact on older people, those with lower income levels, and residents of rural areas

Innovation and the digital divide: Technological innovation in healthcare can greatly improve the health and well-being of older adults by bridging the digital divide, improving access to health information, facilitating communication with healthcare professionals, and fostering self-efficacy in health management (NHS England, 2024).

Implementation

Where: rural and remote areas, Low-income communities, Public spaces, Nursing homes, Community centres

By Whom: NHS ENGLAND/ NHS Digital, Governments, Hospitals, GPs, Public and private sector companies providing healthcare services, Local authorities

How: Affordable Connectivity, Access to Devices, Accessible Services, Infrastructure, Digital Literacy and Skills Training, Public-Private Partnerships, Digital Health Hubs (Local Government Association, 2025).

Timeline: Early Stages of Implementation (2026-2028)

Phase 1: Foundation (2026)

Q1: Creation of the National Digital Inclusion Task Force

Q2: Launch of the pilot program "Connect & Care: Bridging the Digital Divide in UK Health & Social Care"

Q3: Development of a standardized digital health literacy program

Phase 2: Expansion and Integration (2027)

Q1: Expansion of Digital Health Centres to 50 additional locations

Q2: Integration of digital literacy training into existing social prescribing processes.

Q3: Launch of the national awareness campaign "Digital Inclusion for All"

Phase 3: National Implementation and Evaluation (2028)

Q1: National implementation of the "Digital Health Hubs" model

Q2: Establishment of a national digital inclusion helpline and online portal

Q3: Comprehensive national evaluation of the "Connect & Care: Bridging the Digital Divide in UK Health & Social Care" initiative (GOV.UK 2025).

Dissemination and Promotion: Promoting the UK's digital divide program in health and social care necessitates a multifaceted communications strategy. This involves creating tailored training programs for healthcare professionals and integrating digital technology into their ongoing development. For the public, national campaigns and partnerships with local organizations are essential to overcome access barriers. Local authorities and NHS trusts will engage through workshops and policy briefings to bolster initiatives aimed at addressing the digital divide (

Development and regulations: The UK government must comply with several regulations and strategic frameworks to address the digital divide in healthcare and social care, primarily rooted in equality legislation and statutory duties to reduce health inequalities (Legislation.gov.uk, N/D).

• Primary Legislation and Statutory Duties

- ✓ The Equality Act 2010
- ✓ Health and Care Act 2022
- ✓ NHS Act 2006
- ✓ NICE and MHRA Policies for Digital Health Technologies
- ✓ Government Service Standard and "Assisted Digital" Support

Technology Integration: Ensuring adequate digital infrastructure with NHS support is crucial for implementing AI, which will enhance care quality, workforce support, safety, patient-centered care, and staff productivity (Local Government Association, 2025).



(NHS, 2025).

In conclusion, the digital divide in the UK NHS poses a major challenge to equitable access and outcomes. Despite innovations aimed at addressing demands, issues like lack of skills, access, and cost may exclude vulnerable patients and worsen inequalities. Effective implementation and adoption of digital innovations can transform healthcare, benefit vulnerable individuals and facilitate integration between health and social care

Pitch

Digital Divide in UK Health & Social Care

Currently, the digital divide in the UK Healthcare sector disproportionately affects older people, creating significant barriers to accessing essential services and information. This exclusion is growing concern, specifically as healthcare services increasingly move into the digital age. The digital divide refers to the gap between people who have access to digital technologies, such as the internet and computers, and those who do not. In the UK healthcare sector, this gap is particularly pronounced among older people, making it difficult for them to access medical appointments, health advice, and other essential services (NHS England, 2024).

Several factors contributed to the digital exclusion of older people in the UK healthcare system. Examples include a lack of digital skills and confidence; many older people have not had the opportunity to develop the skill needed to navigate the digital world; this lack of familiarity can lead to low confidence and motivation to learn new technologies. Economic barriers also play a role, the cost of internet access and the digital devices can be prohibitively for older people, specifically those on fixed incomes. The vast majority of UK households still lack internet access at home, and many others have cancelled their broadband packages due to rising costs. Other barriers include accessibility issues. Physical disabilities, health problems, or age-related impairments can make using digital devices difficult. Most digital platforms were not designed with the needs of older users in mind, and the disparity suggests a possible bias or lack of awareness regarding the digital capabilities and need for older users (Mohan, R. et al. 2024).

Bridging the digital divide allows older people to use online platforms to research health topics, understand medical conditions, and access telehealth services. This is particularly crucial for those living in rural areas or with limited mobility, as digital tools can overcome geographical barriers to accessing healthcare. Reducing the digital divide offers several benefits for the common good, particularly by fostering social equity, economic growth and improved public services (NHS, 2020).

Implementation

The innovation program to address the digital divide in the UK healthcare sector can be implemented at national, regional and local levels through collaboration between government agencies, NHS organisations, academic institutions, industry partners, and community groups. This innovative approach should focus on improving access to devices and connectivity, enhancing digital skills and capabilities, designing accessible and user-centred technologies, building trust, and fostering strong leadership and collaboration (NHS England, N/D).

Innovation programs to bridge the digital divide must be implemented at various geographical and organisational levels within the UK healthcare system. At the

national level: The NHS in England and the Department of Health and Social Care play a crucial role in stabilising national strategies, policies and funding frameworks. The Department of Science innovation and Technology also contributes to national digital inclusion efforts. At the regional level: integrated Care Boards and Health Innovation Networks are vital for coordinating efforts. At the local/community level: Community, and social entrepreneurship organizations are essential for direct engagement with digital exclude individuals (UK Parliament, 2024).

Dissemination

This innovation, which helps reduce the digital divide for older adults in the UK health care sector, can be promoted through various strategies, including national policies, community-led initiatives, strategic collaborations between volunteers and the NHS, even by leveraging traditional media such as TV, local radio, and advertising leaflets (Health Innovation Network, 2023).

Examples

A scalable NHS strategy that scales over time, for example, for examples, every 3,5 or 10 years, promoting the transition from analogy to digital, positioning the NHS App as the gateway to healthcare, and including the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) to provide more personalized community support. Another example could be a digital inclusion action plan, supported by the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, which helps promote inclusion through key methods or points such as building trust among older adults, addressing device upgrades, removing services barriers, and fostering user skills

Spaces that act as digital health hubs, libraries, pharmacies, and community centres can serve as trusted physical centres that can promote inclusion through different areas of focus: skills development. Addressing device and data poverty, removing service barriers, and building user trust

Other effective advertising and communications strategies

Multichannel approach, combining printed materials such as brochures, poster in community centres, and doctors office with simple digital displays, ensuring accessibility for users. A volunteer program to act as primary points of contact to build trust. A more accessible design for the NHS app, allowing access to simple and clear visuals, short videos, and easy-to-understand touch materials, making it easier to book appointments, manage prescriptions, connect with your doctor, and access vital information. This strategy should also respect the opinions for some older people who prefer to continue with non-digital methods without forcing them to abandon available preferred and reliable methods, ensuring that these options remain available and promoted, such a traditional telephone lines, with the intention of guaranteeing the well-being of these users

Conclusion

In summaries, the digital divide in UK healthcare is a significant problem where socioeconomic factors such as income, age, and location exacerbate health inequalities, as millions lack the skills, devices, or connectivity for digital services, risking exclusion despite NHS efforts to achieve inclusion. Solutions require the implementation of such innovations and the promoting of multifaced strategies to ensure the benefits of older adults

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