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Programme: BSc (Hons) Health and Social Care

Module: Introduction to independent Research Skills

Module Code: BMHP5019

Research Proposal: Digital Technology Supporting Independent Living Among Older Adults in the UK

Introduction and Review Question

Digital technology, such as online health services, wearable devices and smart-home systems, can help older people live safely and independently in their own homes. This proposal will review published research on how digital technology supports independent living among older adults in the UK.

Review question: How does digital technology support independent living among older adults in the UK, and what barriers affect its use?

Aim and Objectives

The aim is to explore existing research on how digital technology supports independent living among older adults.

The objectives are to:

Identify technologies used to support independent living.

Explore benefits for safety, wellbeing and independence.

Identify barriers to accessing and using technology.

Highlight gaps in existing research.

Rationale

This topic is important because health and social care services increasingly use digital technology to support people living at home. The UK Government's Digital Inclusion Action Plan identifies older people as a group needing extra support. It highlights barriers such as high costs, limited access to devices and a lack of digital skills (Department for Science, Innovation and Technology et al., 2025). De Santis et al. (2023) found that digital technology can support health and independent living. However, difficulties with using technology and the need for human support remain challenges. Understanding these issues may help health and social care professionals provide suitable support that meets older people's needs.

Methodology

A scoping review will follow the framework developed by Arksey and O'Malley (2005). Searches will be carried out in CINAHL, MEDLINE, PubMed and Google Scholar. Keywords

will include “older adults”, “digital technology”, “independent living”, “assistive technology” and “United Kingdom”, combined using AND and OR.

Studies published in English between 2016 and 2026 will be included if they examine digital technology supporting independent living among older adults in UK community settings. Studies from outside the UK or unrelated to the review question will be excluded. Duplicate records will be removed, and titles and abstracts will be screened. Full-text articles will then be checked to confirm eligibility.

Information from selected studies will be recorded in a table, including publication year, research design, technology type, benefits and barriers. Findings will be summarised and analysed to identify common themes, differences and gaps in the available research.

Ethical Considerations

As this review uses published research, participant recruitment and consent are not required. Ethical practice will involve accurate reporting, Harvard referencing, avoiding plagiarism and acknowledging research limitations. Findings will be presented fairly without misrepresenting the original studies.

References:

1. Arksey, H. and O'Malley, L. (2005) 'Scoping studies: towards a methodological framework', *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 8(1), pp. 19–32. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1364557032000119616> .
2. De Santis, K.K., Mergenthal, L., Christianson, L., Busskamp, A., Vonstein, C. and Zeeb, H. (2023) 'Digital technologies for health promotion and disease prevention in older people: scoping review', *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 25, e43542. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.2196/43542> .
3. Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, Department of Health and Social Care, Department for Education, Department for Work and Pensions and Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2025) *Digital Inclusion Action Plan: First Steps*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/digital-inclusion-action-plan-first-steps> (Accessed: 23 October 2026).