ONE VIEW

Keeping people at the heart of services while driving down costs

IBM Watson Care Manager enables citizens to manage their personal budget for all their health and social care needs. It has the potential to transform health and well-being by providing a single, holistic view of the person, enabling citizens to have greater choice while informing professional decision-making, and reducing commissioning and provision costs through greater efficiency.
The public sector is facing unprecedented challenges from a rapidly-growing population in need of support. People are living longer with more complex health needs against the background of a pressured, conventional care provider market and an NHS operating under considerable strain.

With local authorities having to deliver services under increasing financial pressure and the NHS expected to implement up to 100,000 personal health budgets by FY 2021, it’s fair to say a solution to this unsustainable model is urgently required.¹

The challenges facing health and adult social care commissioners, professionals and government to deliver services are highly complex. The pressure is on to innovate and integrate across the sectors to deliver a holistic approach, enabling citizens to have more control and choice over their care while delivering efficiencies. There is now increasing recognition that a seamless solution is needed in the UK to integrate health and social care; stop expensive bed-blocking in acute hospitals; avoid duplication of administration and provide more ‘joined-up’, holistic, personalised care.

Fortunately, innovation is driving a new approach. Proven digital personal budget management tools can provide a person-centred, single view to health and social care leading to planned benefits including: empowering citizens; integrating care and reducing costs.
The Harrow Council story

In 2013, building on the success of its award-winning digital portal for personal budget-holders and, after involving service users to help design the services they need, Harrow Council’s adult social services team headed up by Director, Bernie Flaherty, launched ‘My Community ePurse’ (MCeP) – a digital platform enabling eligible citizens and their care managers to browse; choose and pay for care services online safely and securely from a growing, more diverse supplier market.

By 2014 Harrow was ranked 2nd out of 152 councils for delivering cash personal budgets to eligible citizens.

The council worked with service users to find out what they wanted. Harrow also worked with the voluntary sector to develop alternatives to traditional packages and to create holistic support plans.

Harrow now has more than 1,000 support plans on MCeP, empowering eligible citizens to make decisions about their own care, coupled with appropriate advice, support and accountability. Now, instead of choosing from 30 providers, Harrow has developed a market place of 750 providers. They include everything from day centres, dance classes and befriending services, to independent businesses and third sector groups.

Harrow still provides stewardship of this expanded provider market and uses real-time information from the Care Quality Commission (CQC) enabling citizens to check the quality rating of any provider. The authority also supports people to navigate the digital marketplace and find the most appropriate services.

All the payments are made online via PayPal, so no need for receipts and invoices and there is built-in, real-time auditing.

At the same time Harrow has managed to negotiate discounts saving approximately £1 million a year.

How a personal budget using MCeP changed Robert’s life*

Robert: a Harrow citizen who suffered from Parkinson’s disease and diabetes and was confined to a wheelchair.

In his youth, Robert was an active, outdoors person who made his living as a fisherman. However, his health had forced him to rely on a home care service that operated on its own schedule, not his, and allowed little support for outdoor recreation. He was extremely unhappy and frequently hospitalised as a result.

Using MCeP, Robert could spend part of his budget on a personal assistant who took him fishing regularly. This simple change brought joy back to Robert’s life, helping to reduce his hospital admissions and improve his mental and physical wellbeing.

2 https://www.centreforpublicimpact.org/getting-personal-one-london-borough-hoping-change-face-health-social-care/
* Name changed to protect anonymity
The future is now

Harrow’s bold new tech solutions for health and social care started with MCeP but will expand beyond personal budgets. The next phase of the solution will provide a digital marketplace for people self-funding their social care. The aim is to attract the estimated 169,000\(^3\) home care self-funders and the 170,000\(^4\) self-funders in residential or nursing home care across England and enable them or their friends or family to find and buy the right care and support. The third phase of the solution will enable management of both health and care personal budgets in one place.

In September 2016 Harrow signed a 10-year partnership with IBM Watson Health to integrate Harrow’s experience and expertise in implementing personal budgets and their future solution developments with IBM Watson Care Manager. This relationship will bring depth and breadth to the UK health and social care market. It is the first partnership of its kind in UK local government and the first implementation of Watson Care Manager outside the US.

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How care management can help GPs

Watson Care Manager can support time-pushed general practitioners (GPs) by providing a dashboard view of the social care services a patient is receiving in addition to their traditional medical records. Plus, Watson’s cognitive computing can highlight key terms written in natural language within clinical notes, aiding in the challenging task for the GP to read all of the patient’s historical records. Having all relevant information in one place can help the GP gain a holistic view of the person, contributing to more informed decisions about their health care.

What is Watson Care Manager?

Often, a care professional’s heavy caseload does not enable them to gain a full understanding of the complex and unique situation of each citizen. To address this challenge, Watson Care Manager uses cognitive computing to aid care professionals at various steps in their daily process. By extracting key concepts and information from unstructured text, care professionals can quickly see the information most relevant to their next interaction. Additionally, Watson Care Manager curates data from historical notes, similar individuals and structured data sources, and associates it with specific actions enabling the care professional to focus on determining the best next step for the individual.

What is cognitive computing?

Watson’s cognitive technology can understand all forms of data; interact naturally with people and learn and reason, at scale. Also referred to as ‘artificial intelligence’, this technology is now being applied to health and social care services. In doing so, we are working to help our clients manage cost and address quality by managing risk and populations.

“Communities all over the world can benefit from this. It’s a revolutionary game-changer for health and social care.”

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