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Using Innovations within Technology to Help Manage Care

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Technology will play a crucial role in meeting the Scottish Government's 2020 Vision, which foresees the integration of health and social care. PAMIS staff share insights into their latest project that taps into the potential of technology to help manage long-term conditions.

We have already seen the benefits of using technology to facilitate communication with people with profound and multiple learning disabilities. By operating applications on the iPad and other tablet devices, we can also use technology creatively in the real world. For example, Hirstwood Training Ltd provides training across the UK in using tablet technology to create stunning multi-sensory environments. These advancements can improve a person's quality of life. PAMIS are now exploring the use of technology to assist in the management of complex aspects of care.

PAMIS' Manage IT Project has been funded by Alliance – Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland – the main aim of which is to enable parent carers to better manage the long-term conditions of their son or daughter with profound and multiple learning disabilities, through the use of technology. The team help family carers to develop skills in using technology and help to increase their knowledge and understanding of its potential for managing care. Parent carers have been supported to use applications, including one application being developed by the project, to record and manage important information on their son or daughter's health; e.g. medication, seizures and behaviour.

To date, the outcomes of the project have exceeded far beyond expectations. The Team has recently been working with parents to develop a digitalised version of PAMIS' Personal Communication Passport. This has meant that important information about the person's communication and medical care needs can now be shared through pictures, videos and sound, viewable on a range of electronic devices. The interface provides a seamless interactive eBook. Parents have been central to this work and have been involved in creating a template from which parents can create their son or daughter's digital passport. This technology can be used anywhere. It does not rely on information systems within the hospital setting, day care centre and school which are often not easily accessible or not read by carers or professionals.

Empowerment and confidence are some of the experience of those parents involved in the project. One participating parent shared that her son had over 100 carers over fifteen years that he has required care. She has experienced great difficulty in repeatedly training new carers in the often complex procedures involved in his care. Her anxieties were clear, particularly in relation to future hospital admissions, "How can I leave him, even for five minutes?". She continued, "But with this [the digital passport], at least I know that all the information on how to care for him is there". This parent is certainly not alone in her concerns, many parents worry about the lack of due care and attention for their son or daughter whilst in hospital. She views the electronic passport as resolving some of these concerns.

The potential of technology to assist family carers in their role of providing care and support has largely gone unrealised, but this will soon change with recent advancements in tablets and phones that are getting increasingly better at communicating and illustrating. They will answer difficulties faced by many carers in administering, recording, organising and sharing information around the care of their son or daughter. Digital passports, for example, will not only empower family and paid carers, but can be used to provide guidance and training to others. Using technology as a training tool for visual impact and guidance, has real potential to positively the way that we provide and manage care for people with profound and multiple learning disabilities.

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