

Using telehealth to avoid hospital admissions and improve the quality of life for people with dementia in residential care homes

Introduction

Among people living in care homes:

- Hospital admissions for avoidable conditions are 30% higher for people with dementia
- 30% of older people in hospital have dementia
- They are often admitted as a result of avoidable conditions such as dehydration, urinary tract infections and complications as a result of long-term conditions
- Once in hospital, people with dementia stay longer and have poorer outcomes than those without dementia

The London Borough of Croydon and NHS South West London have a dementia strategy in place, which aims to improve support for people with dementia and their carers, helping to avoid unnecessary hospital admissions. This includes evaluating innovative strategies for delivering better care to people living in residential homes, such as introducing telehealth.

One of the reasons people with dementia are more frequently admitted to hospital is that they are often unable to communicate that they feel unwell and therefore their condition may not be identified until it reaches a more advanced stage.

Implementing a system of health monitoring for people with dementia living in care homes could help to address the challenges care teams face in gathering reliable information on a regular basis from people living with dementia.

Following a NHS innovation grant, Croydon Council has been piloting the development and use of the Multi user telehealth system in two of its care homes. The purpose of the project was to assess the benefits for both the care home resident and the commissioner from the continuous monitoring of the clients health and well being while remaining in their normal environment. This should lead to, more informed and better-managed care rather than unplanned and emergency interventions such as hospital admissions.

Case study

Heavers Court Care Home

Heavers Court is a London Borough of Croydon purpose-built dementia care home and dementia resource centre. The 60 bed care home facility staffed by Care UK uses the portable myclinic tablet to provide monitoring and potentially early indication of any deterioration in health and well-being of residents.

Twelve residents with later stage dementia are currently using the telehealth system, care home staff having agreed with their family members that it is in their best interest to do so. Each morning a member of the care staff using themyclinic tablet will record the residents' vital signs and complete their bespoke health questions.

This information is then securely transmitted to Croydon's Community Matrons technical triage team. Any readings which are not within the parameters set for that individual resident will be flagged up to the care home manager, who can then take appropriate action. Heavers Court has its own dedicated GP who can visit residents if required, and who can also remotely access the telehealth system and view the readings for each individual resident to help inform the care planning process.

“The myclinic technology has provided the care staff in Heavers Court with a better understanding and awareness of just how our residents' health changes. By alerting staff of health related issues at an early stage it helps minimise unwanted hospital admissions and improves our quality of care.”

Manager, Heavers Court, Care UK

Katie Hersey, Team Leader, Heavers Court with myclinic

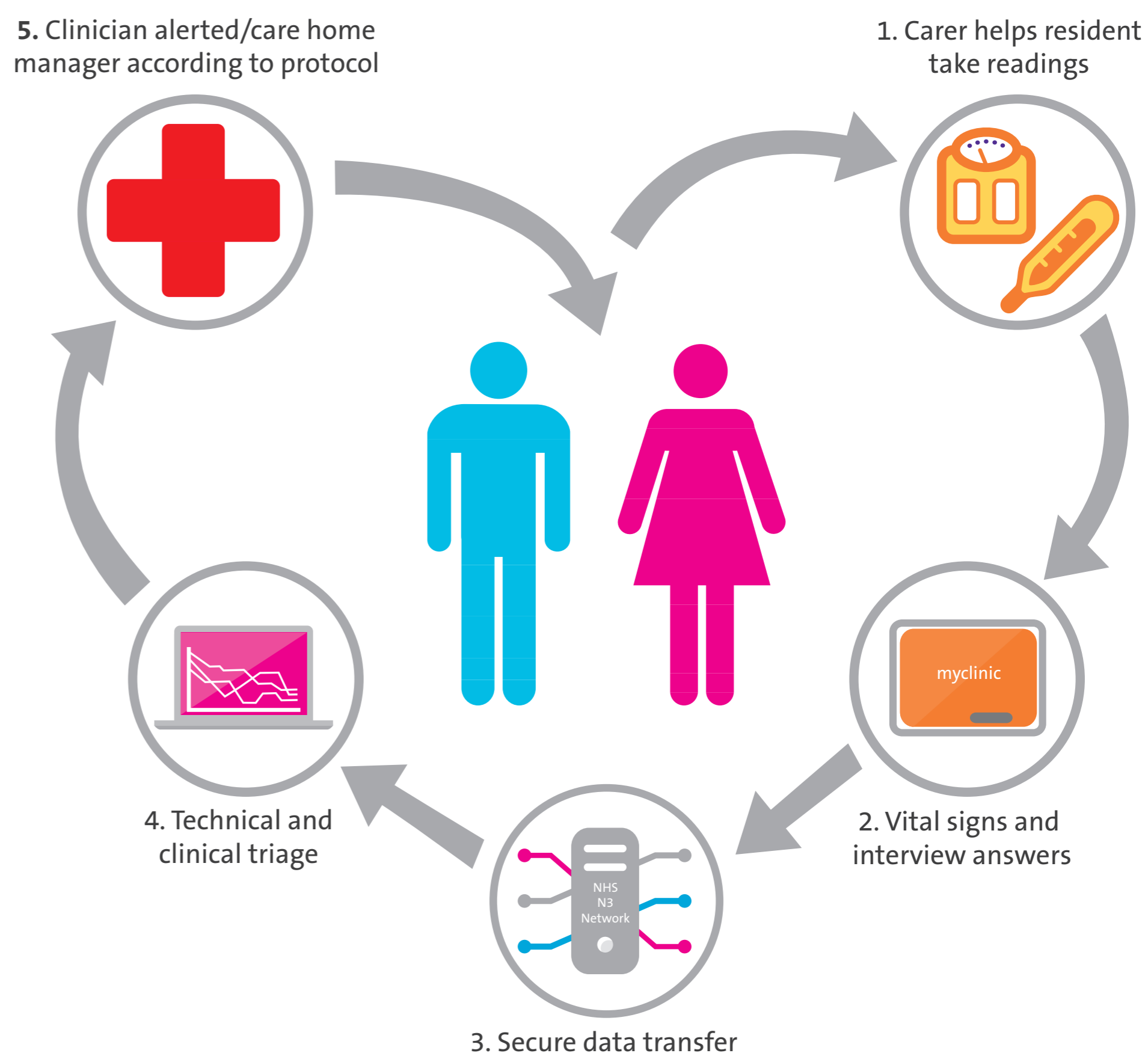


“Patients with dementia have special needs when it comes to healthcare. They are often not able to tell the care staff that they are ill or able to explain why or how they feel unwell. Telehealth is a great way of picking up health and well being issues at an early stage.”

Brian Longman, Telecare & TeleHealth Lead, Croydon Care Solutions, London Borough of Croydon



How does telehealth work?



Outcomes

The myclinic solution has proven to be an effective support system, helping to **provide person-centred care** and **improving quality of life** by detecting possible health issues at an early stage.

Early concerns that residents with dementia may be stressed and resist having their vital signs taken have proven to be unfounded. It is thought because the myclinic is very portable and taken to the resident, rather than the resident having to go to a separate area of the care home to use it, **residents are relaxed and accepting of the system.**

Telehealth monitoring has also become another **opportunity for social interaction** between staff and residents and is valued by both parties.

Staff at Heavers Court enjoy using the myclinic, and report that it has helped them to better understand the residents' health needs and has **empowered them to help manage their care more proactively.**

The use of the myclinic system is currently being expanded to **support more residents in the care home with a wider range of long-term health conditions.**