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Digital care planning in care homes for older people: perspectives of unpaid carers and care practitioners

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the UK Government is promoting the rapid digitisation of health and social care services. In response, some care homes have implemented digital platforms for planning and documenting care. As part of the Wellbeing in Care Homes project[1], this mixed-method study explored stakeholder perspectives on digital care planning in care home settings for older people. Evidence was collected through semi-structured interviews with care home staff (n = 20), two-round Delphi responses from care home practitioners (n = 100), and focus groups with family members of care home residents (n = 28) across England. Practitioners reported several advantages to digital care planning, including time and space efficiencies and improved information sharing across health and social care services. Family members highlighted the accessibility of digital care plans enabled them to feel more involved in their relatives' care. Concerns were raised about the security and privacy of digital platforms, and the risk of depersonalising care when employing prescriptive digital *pro forma*. Also noted was the potential digital exclusion of - and deepening inequalities experienced by - individuals less confident with technology. Overall, participants were broadly optimistic about the potential of digital care planning to improve care delivery; signalling the prospect for co-developing person-centred digital tools that address current adult residential care sector needs and that support integrated working models across care sectors.

[1]Smith, N. et al (2024) Care planning in older adult care homes: a qualitative study of care staff experiences and views, IJCC, DOI: 10.1332/23978821Y2024D000000092.