

UK Digital Health and Care: Rising like the Phoenix from the ashes of the Faculty of Clinical Informatics

Professor W Angus Wallace, Chair of the Board of Directors at UK Digital Health and Care

As we move into the digital age, it is important that all of us involved in both health and care work together in an inclusive way. We already have too many 'sub-specialist' groups with their hurdles, barriers, and silos. We need those in information technology, nursing, medicine, allied health professions, and care services to work together, to speak to each other, and understand the challenges each of our separate professions are experiencing. That is why – following the decision to close down the Faculty of Clinical Informatics (FCI) in February 2024 – we created UKDHC – to be 'inclusive' not 'exclusive', and we wish to do this for the benefit of our patients and those in care whether they be patients, elderly, or disabled.

How are we achieving this?

We have now laid the foundations for UKDHC and have over 50 members and an increasing number of Corporate members. Our membership is across the whole spectrum of the health sector including many of those working in nursing, pharmacy, physiotherapy and professional care as well as doctors. We have already identified better ways of working through collaboration with some members focused on better communications between on-call teams, better electronic/digital communications with patients, and safer ways of working.

Progress made by UKDHC since its launch in April 2024

UKDHC has developed a philosophy of encouraging organisations in the digital health and care field to communicate and work together better. We have already supported the following universities by providing webinars about their master's degree courses – University of Strathclyde; University College London (UCL); University of Central Lancashire; Imperial College London; University of Swansea; University of Manchester; Combined UCL/Manchester; and University of Edinburgh.

We have developed collaborations with the University of Central Lancashire and West Notts College (who worked with UKDHC and Tech Skills on a DHSC Grant application to improve digital training for frontline health and care staff); Patients Know Best (PKB) who are working with the NHS on providing patient centred records; NHS Digital AirEmail (who have developed an email management app for NHS staff). It is important for UKDHC to encourage and support these organisations, but it is not UKDHC's role to advocate for them nor approve their products although most of these developments are significantly improving efficiency and helping us to 'work better to improve our service delivery'

Our conference on 4th September 2024 was a big success with high-profile speakers, nine podium presentations selected from submitted abstracts and a very informative day. We had very positive feedback from attendees and all our presenters are eager for us to repeat our Conference next year.

We are running our autumn webinar programme from 9th October 2024 – every Wednesday evening from 18:00 to 19:00 and all webinars are open to all who wish to attend. Our programme includes:

1. Wednesday 9th October: **6-month Report of UKDHC achievements and planning for October to March 2025** – Taimur Shoaib, Angus Wallace & David Wright, UKDHC
2. Wednesday 16th October: **The challenges of clinical coordination: how can we better manage information flows across boundaries?** – Angus Wallace & DJ Hamblin-Brown
3. Wednesday 23rd October: **Which Digital skills are of most value to Health and Care** staff – Jane Fitzgerald, UCLan and Linda Vernon, Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board (ICB)
4. Wednesday 30th October: **How we support Family and Carers in the Home using Digital Technology** – Angus Wallace & George Kowalski, MiiCare
5. Wednesday 6th November (Invited not confirmed): **How Skills for Care is progressing with their Adult Social care (ASC) - Digital Skills Support project** – Claire Smout, Programme Head - Sector Digital, Digital Services, Skills for Care
6. Wednesday 13th November: **Has digital made it easier and safer to deliver care over the last 10 years? What hope is there for the next 10 years?** – Will Monaghan, Group Chief Digital Information Officer – UHL & UHN
7. Wednesday 20th November **“UKDHC Supporting Mentoring for Health and Care Professionals and SMEs”** – Angus Wallace, UKDHC and Dr Alexandra Harkins, GP and Former Responsible Officer of a large designated body with both primary and secondary care doctors
8. Wednesday 27th November (Invited not confirmed): **How Sherwood Forest Hospitals is driving Digital Transformation in Robin Hood Land** – Nikki Turner, Clinical Digital Information Officer, Sherwood Forest Hospitals.

We launched our video-podcast library from October 2024 with professional podcast editors, Sarah Coetzee and Brett contracted to convert the presentations from our annual scientific conference and from our webinars into 30-to-40-minute podcasts to make them more useful for busy professionals. The podcasts can be accessed [here](#). Taimur Shoaib is also helping convert our weekly Webinars into easily accessible podcasts.

From November 2024 we will be launching our UKDHC **online digital skills assessment programme**. We will be using modules that have already been developed for UK university digital health master's degree courses but modified to an appropriate level to help health and care staff who are working face-to-face with patients and the elderly to help and support them in their everyday work.

UKDHC future questions/priorities

Why are we still seeing maternity patients developing 'shock' from peri and post-partum bleeding without being identified when we could have 'intelligent watches' linked with computers at nursing stations to raise the alarm when pulse rates go up and BPs drop?

Why have the principles of 'Patients know best' not been more widely adopted within the NHS?

Why have we allowed the private healthcare sector to be isolated from the NHS electronic systems – now resulting in obstruction to collaboration between the two sectors?

Why do the results of tests ordered by the GP appear on the NHS App within 24-48 hours, but hospital ordered tests and reports are delivered to the NHS App late or never appear?

Why do some hospitals and GPs let patients book their own appointments electronically, but others do not?

Why have many healthcare professionals been left behind with digital training and guidance compared with NHS Hospital staff?

Why is the NHS not promoting more digital solutions, partnerships, and education to support the NHS workforce and trainees/students?

The importance of digital clinical safety cannot be overstated.

Accelerate adoption of digital systems with standards compliant secure sharing of data. It is vital that the NHS gets rid of closed siloed information systems – shared data improves and saves lives. A role the UKDHC can make a missive difference in.

We should be working with innovators and companies to ensure that new software and services are designed to be fit for purpose, by using the valuable experience and expertise of frontline health and care workers, patients, and carers to guide development.

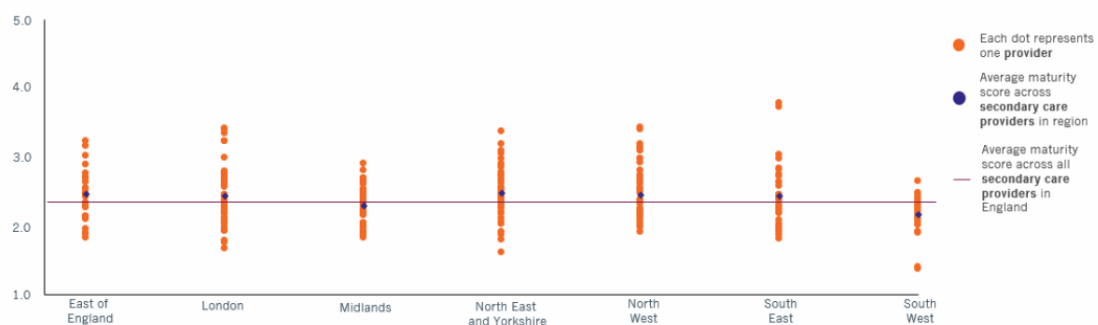
Influence the development and updating of formal training programmes in NHS etc. to include awareness of transformative technology and the use of data driven improvement to enable future NHS, health and social care staff to design and provide better services.

Why is access to NHS digital systems restricted outside hospitals – the hundreds of thousands of NHS staff working outside hospitals urgently need the benefits of NHS digital systems.

Given the population's high rates of mental health need, difficulties accessing mental health services are of pressing concern, which respondents felt was due to poor service accessibility, digital exclusion, stigma, and how we bridge this gap through non-digital touchpoints.

The NHS has been starved of capital, so the service has too few scanners, too little investment in digital automation in laboratories and pharmacy, and too little digital technology to support its workforce. Digital maturity is still a huge opportunity in the NHS:

Figure V.3.5: Digital Maturity Assessment secondary care provider scores (out of 5)



Data saves lives & Goldacre review – strengthening public trust on NHS use of patient data, aligning NHS Digitrials platform and secure data environments to optimise data for the benefit of new treatments.

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