

# Caring and Technology

## Guidance sheet

### What are the benefits for carers of using technology?

Health and care technology can help improve the safety of your home, reducing the stress associated with leaving the person you care for at home alone for any length of time, whilst providing independence for you and the person you are looking after. There are many practical and digital technologies that can help to improve the general quality of life for both you and the person you care for by addressing issues that have a negative impact. Technology that ensure a person's safety can help them to gain some independence and allow you more freedom to do things away from them without worrying or rushing back. Communications technology can help you to keep appointments with health professionals and maintain relationships with friends and family.

**Challenge:** Janine's mother has dementia and lives alone. She has recently taken to wandering at night and Janine is worried she will leave the house and get lost or confused. Janine is struggling to sleep well because of the anxiety and it is affecting her job.

**Tech Solution:** Bed sensor and door sensor via Telecare that alert Janine if her mother doesn't return to her bed within a set time limit or if she exists the property during night time hours.

**Outcome:** Janine can sleep more easily knowing that she will be alerted if her mother falls out of bed or leaves the house in the night.

**Challenge:** Derek has diabetes and is currently struggling to control it after a bout of illness.

**Tech Solution:** Derek was provided with a Telehealth glucose meter to keep a check on his blood sugar levels and a low blood sugar alarm which looks like a wristwatch and is worn at night to alert him if his blood sugar falls while he is sleeping.

**Outcome:** Derek feels safer living alone now that he has a blood sugar monitor and alarm to help him stay on top of his condition.

**Challenge:** Jason's father Graeme has difficulty putting faces and names together due to his diagnosis of dementia and no longer feels confident going out alone. This is putting a lot of pressure on Jason, who works and has a young family.

**Tech Solution:** Jason and Graeme have used the camera on Graeme's mobile phone to take pictures of people he has regular contact with (with their permission). Graeme has learned to use apps and maps on his phone to continue to navigate around independently. His emergency contact details are also kept on the phone.

**Outcome:** The photographs reduce Graeme's anxiety when he meets people that he recognises and thinks he should know but does not recall their names. The map/apps have allowed Graeme to regain some of his independence and ability to keep control of his daily living through use of the calendar and notes functions. Should there be an emergency it is easier to for him to access support as needed. This has eased the pressure on Jason and allowed him to feel less anxious about his dad's health and wellbeing.

## What do we mean by technology?

Technology doesn't have to mean a smart phone or tablet computer. There are a number of technology aids available to help you in your caring role that do not rely on you having your own computer or access to the internet.

**Physical/practical technology aids** This can mean anything from an electric wheelchair to a video baby monitor. Practical technology aids are products and devices that can be purchased or installed to assist the person you care for and support you in your caring role. There are many of these that are developed for specific reasons as well as generic products that can be adapted to suit your particular situation.

**Technology services** Technology services are designed to facilitate the use of technology by users, such as Telcare and Telehealth (see Derek on previous page). Telecare is an example of a technology service which provides a 24 hour monitoring system that can help keep you and the person you care for safe in your home. Telecare equipment is linked to a telephone alarm unit which, when activated, automatically generates an alarm call to a monitoring centre so that an emergency response can be raised any time of day. The unit has an in-built microphone and a powerful loud speaker so that you can be heard from a distance. Telecare can also provide other sensors to give early warning of natural gas, smoke, extreme heat, flood, a fall or whether someone has left the property or managed to get in/out of bed safely.

**Digital and computer Technology** This includes such things as mobile or smartphones, laptop and tablet computers, smart TVs and the apps (applications) they run. Digital technology has revolutionised the way we live our lives and communicate. Shopping, banking, booking a holiday, researching services, completing registrations or applications and sending information are all examples of activities that can be carried out from the comfort of your own home via the internet. Instead of shops and businesses there are websites. Social clubs have been transformed into social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. Research is conducted on Google rather than in a library and rather than using a phone to speak to friends and family you can skype them, watching them through a computer screen. The digital world is as big as the physical and there are some very useful products and services that can be implemented to help support you in your caring role. Examples include tracking and monitoring devices to give you peace of mind when you are not with the person you care for, automated prompts and reminders to help with taking medicine regularly or remembering to attend appointments, locator devices, communication aids and safety devices.

## How do I start using technology?

Consider carefully what you want to achieve and spend some time speaking with different people, such as an Occupational therapist, your GP or Social Services to work out which technology option will suit your needs best. Some providers, such as Telecare may offer a trial period free of charge or at a reduced cost. Give yourself time to get used to using your new technology solution so that you can feel comfortable and confident before adding anything else. It may be tempting to try and fix all your problems at once but this may prove difficult to manage. There are lots of workshops on offer in the borough with reference to using the internet to access information and services, or getting to grips with tablet or laptop computers and smart phones. At Richmond Carers Centre we have a full programme of Carers workshops that regularly includes computer-based topics such as online banking or shopping and staying safe online. The Library Service and Age UK also regularly run free IT workshops for residents and carers in Richmond Borough.

## Who can help me?

**Richmond Carers Centre** provides information and advice to carers living in or caring for someone living in the London Borough of Richmond. Our Carers Support Team is a source of listening support and can discuss with you your caring situation and challenges you face in order to identify desirable outcomes. We can then work with you to ensure you speak to the right person/organisation to help you find the right solution. We have a full programme of workshops including many IT based topics and IT drop-in sessions. Richmond Carers Centre provides a range of services for carers including listening support, counselling, regular groups and activities, complementary therapies, social evenings and other ad hoc events.

Address: **5 Briar Road, Twickenham, TW2 6RB**      Web: [www.richmondcarers.org](http://www.richmondcarers.org)  
Phone: **020 8867 2380**      Email: [info@richmondcarers.org](mailto:info@richmondcarers.org)

**The Access Team** in the Social Services department at Richmond Council can provide you with a Carers assessment to assess your needs. Initially this will be a telephone conversation about your caring role which may lead to a more in depth assessment of your needs either over the phone or in person, which may take place at Richmond Carers Centre. You may also have a Carers assessment in conjunction with a Care Needs assessment of the person you care for which will be carried out by your social worker. Having an assessment is free of charge and can help you and others understand your needs better, which will help you in turn to consider your options. The assessment should include a consideration for technology enabled care and support services.

Address: **Adult Social Services, Civic Centre, 44 York Street, Twickenham, TW1 3BZ**  
Phone: **020 8891 7971**      Email: [adultsocialservices@richmond.gov.uk](mailto:adultsocialservices@richmond.gov.uk)

**Your GP** If you think that you may need to have adaptations made to your home to support you in your caring role you can ask your GP if you can be referred to an occupational therapist, who will be able to offer an independent opinion and advise about equipment and adaptations that may help meet your needs and those of the person for whom you care.

**Age UK Richmond** offers regular workshops and computer drop-in sessions at various locations in the Borough. These are relaxed, informal groups with friendly technical experts on hand to help you. Sessions are open to everyone and you can borrow one of their laptops or tablets if you don't have your own. If you would prefer a one-to-one session for more detailed help with your laptop, tablet or mobile phone, you can contact Age UK Richmond to arrange this. There is a cost of £7 per hour (or 5 sessions for £30). For more information and booking forms please contact Gill. [wilson@ageukrichmond.org.uk](mailto:wilson@ageukrichmond.org.uk) or telephone Gill on **020 8744 1965**.

**Alzheimer's Society Richmond** provides information and practical guidance to people with dementia, their carers and family or friends, to help someone understand dementia, cope with day-to-day challenges and prepare for the future. Through one-to-one support in person, over the telephone or within support groups, they enable people to stay informed and to remain as independent and active for as long as it possible. They provide specific carer support through peer support and face to face to help support carers caring for someone with dementia. The Alzheimer's Society aim to give carers the information and advice needed to make informed decisions about the wellbeing of themselves as well as the person for whom they care.

**Carers UK** The Carers UK Adviceline is open Monday and Tuesday from 10am to 4pm. They do benefits checks and advise on financial and practical matters related to caring. Alternatively, you can email or write to the Adviceline. Response to enquiries is within five working days.

## Where can I access the internet if I don't have my own computer?

**The Library Service** There are more than 150 computers available for public use across Richmond Borough's libraries. You can book time on a computer by calling or visiting your local library. Once you have been given a card and PIN you will be able to login to a booking page online and book any future computer time that way if you prefer.

**Castelnau Community Centre** (7 Stillingfleet Road, Barnes, SW13 9AQ) has 8 computers available for public use Monday to Friday 9am-5pm. The IT suite is through the front door on the left and any changes to timings are posted on the door of the IT suite. For more information call 020 8741 0909 or visit [www.castelnaucentreproject.co.uk](http://www.castelnaucentreproject.co.uk)

**The Civic Centre Atrium** (44 York Street, Twickenham, TW1 3BZ) has two computers available for public use Monday to Thursday 9am to 5.15pm and 9am to 5pm on Fridays. These computers only allow you to access the [www.richmond.gov.uk](http://www.richmond.gov.uk) website.

## Finding the money to purchase technology solutions

Not all technology solutions need to be expensive but it is important to consider all the costs associated with using technology, which may extend beyond the purchase price or setup. Examples would include maintenance or insurance policies for purchased equipment, software packages, programmes, apps or subscription fees for items such as laptop or tablet computers and smartphones, and associated services costs, such as a Telecare home monitoring system. It may be possible to access certain health and care technology through an assessment for the person you are caring for, which could have a beneficial impact for you both and possibly the wider family.

If a local authority needs assessment has concluded that the person you care for requires certain equipment, it may be provided free of charge. Minor adaptations costing £1,000 or less, including the purchase price and installation, are also provided free of charge, although the local authority may charge for minor adaptations above the cost of £1,000. Larger and more expensive technology items may also be classed as adaptations, but these will come under the responsibility of the housing department at the local authority and are provided through the Disabled Facilities Grants (<https://www.gov.uk/disabled-facilities-grants>). You will need to call the Access team on **020 8891 7971** to arrange for an occupational therapist to assess you.

## Helpful Sources of Information

The majority of these resources are now online but you may be able to request a print copy from the provider if you are not able to print one yourself. You may also be able to print online guides at your local library.

**Richmond Borough Care and Support website**, Telecare information

<https://richmondcareandsupport.org.uk/i-need-help-with/support-at-home/living-safely-at-home/telecare.aspx>

Call Telecare on **020 8891 7413**

**Library Service**

[https://www.richmond.gov.uk/services/libraries/library\\_facilities](https://www.richmond.gov.uk/services/libraries/library_facilities)

**Carers UK technology guide** There is a link at the bottom of the page

<http://www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice/technology-and-equipment/tech-for-you>

Call Carers UK on **0808 808 7777**

**Alzheimer's Society Assistive technology factsheet**

[https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/download/downloads/id/1779/factsheet\\_assistive\\_technology\\_%E2%80%93\\_devices\\_to\\_help\\_with\\_everyday\\_living.pdf](https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/download/downloads/id/1779/factsheet_assistive_technology_%E2%80%93_devices_to_help_with_everyday_living.pdf)

Call Alzheimer's Society Richmond on **020 8611 6800**

**NHS Choices website** - equipment aids and adaptations

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/social-care-and-support-guide/Pages/equipment-aids-adaptations.aspx>

**Richmond Council ICT guide for older people** - it's never too late to get online

[https://www.richmond.gov.uk/media/1418/ict\\_guide\\_for\\_older\\_people.pdf](https://www.richmond.gov.uk/media/1418/ict_guide_for_older_people.pdf)

**Age UK website** – using technology for independence

<https://www.ageuk.org.uk/information-advice/care/adapting-your-home/using-technology-for-independence/>

Call Age UK Richmond **020 8878 3073**

**Adass carers guide to technology**

[https://www.adass.org.uk/media/4161/adass\\_carers-guide-to-technology.pdf](https://www.adass.org.uk/media/4161/adass_carers-guide-to-technology.pdf)

**Disabled Facilities Grant**

<https://www.gov.uk/disabled-facilities-grants>

**NHS Choices website**, Social Care and Support Guide

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/social-care-and-support-guide>

**Richmond council** guidance notes about carers assessments

[http://www.richmond.gov.uk/media/5368/guidance\\_notes\\_for\\_carers\\_about\\_carers\\_assessments.pdf](http://www.richmond.gov.uk/media/5368/guidance_notes_for_carers_about_carers_assessments.pdf)

