

THE WAY FORWARD

**MANAGING THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE
FACED BY THE CARE SECTOR**



**An interview with
Raina Summerson, Chief Executive
Agincare Group**

Extract from a report commissioned by:



Powerful Accounting Software

Introduction

As yet, the digital revolution might not have taken hold across the care sector – but it's going to happen, probably sooner rather than later.

The impact of robotics, artificial intelligence, machine learning, the internet of things will be significant, and should improve both quality of life for those who are being cared for and the viability of the companies providing that care.

Coupled with technology which optimises operational and administrative tasks, providing information which is of value to the provision of services rather than simply score keeping.

Such change could be the biggest challenge the sector has ever had to address. As one CEO put it, managing technology could be like constantly pressing on the fast-forward button on the television remote and trying to make sense of what you're watching on the screen. But how do we synchronise technology with humanity, a question which is going to be mission critical.

In a report commissioned by iplicit, the cloud accounting software company, to be prepared and published by DECISION magazine later this year, owners and directors in the care sector will be talking about the issues and how they can be reconciled.

This is one of the interviews to be included.



Being able to find the right balance

We've all seen the videos of robots giving out cups of tea at a care home, but is that going to be the new reality?

According to Raina Summerson, chief executive of the family-owned Agincare group, which has twenty-nine care homes as well as providing 'live at home' care services, there's a necessity to balance automating tasks with the importance of human interaction, the need to deliver person-centred care,

"Where robotics could be of value is in freeing up staff to be able to provide more personal care, and help address the demographic dilemma of there not being enough people coming into the care sector," she suggests.

"So robotics should be about enhancing not replacing, and making functional tasks easier, such as reducing manual labour in using hoists to help care home residents in and out of bed."

She describes the application of IT and artificial intelligence in the care home sector as "really interesting". "It means we can predict the pattern of behaviours," she explains, "the likelihood of someone falling or developing pressure sores and how we can





Raina Summerson

prevent that happening. But I would always want a sanity check of that data by a human being.

“A challenge for the care home is identifying the ‘so what?’ in all the information that IT can provide, to be able to easily see what is meaningful and what is not.

“And while AI will help us to forecast, at what point do we move from being aware to acting on the data. That’s another example of where in the context of a care home, human input is a necessity.



“I see Alexa and similar devices as supportive technology and not in the same guise as robotics. Voice activation gives a care home resident more control if movement is difficult for them, so the technology is genuinely life enhancing. So I think there is a line where technology is about improving business function and better enabling the humanity.”

Where technology encompasses both is in monitoring. “Instead of a member of staff going to check someone in their care every half an hour in their room, acoustic monitoring means the carer only goes in if they need to,” says Summerson.

“But the motivation has to be the provision of better person-focused care rather than a means of reducing staffing levels.

“For smaller independent care homes, a consideration isn’t just the cost but the time and resource necessary to implement technology enabled change. That said, while larger care home groups will see it as an investment, for smaller providers it can seem more like additional cost. Because of the investment required, the cost of delivery of care goes up and that needs to be reflected in how the care sector is funded.

“I’d like to say a care home will gain a wonderful return on investment, but that will depend on how you measure it. The biggest impact is being able to analyse quality, comparative data, to be able to benchmark, identify trends more quickly and accurately, and ultimately to deliver better person-centred care.



“I can give you a particular instance. We picked up on a potential hydration issue relating to a resident on our dashboard and analysis found that a reason was that the water jugs we provided could be too heavy for some people to lift.

“Without being able to identify the trend, it could have developed into a problem which would have been hidden in plain sight.

“An example of operational efficiency which IT has made possible? Five years ago, a care provider would spend the last forty-five minutes at the end of their shift writing up their case notes from the day. That doesn’t happen anymore. It’s done throughout the day on their tablets after they have seen each resident.

“IT means next of kin can log straight in to their relative’s care records, although only about twenty per cent use that facility. For them, electronic records are more about occasional observation, but for the care home, they are core to its operation.

“Families do like the social media aspect of technology, seeing pictures posted online of residents enjoying the gardens for example. If we aren’t posting as regularly as before, families would bring that to our attention.”

The take up of technology in the care sector will also be driven by the potential resident and potential employee, Summerson believes. “Someone might choose not to go to a particular care home which hasn’t got technology enabled facilities or records,” she suggests, “and will a job applicant be attracted to a position



Est. 1986

Agincare

Caring in your community

where technology is not deployed to minimise manual labour tasks?

“The last few years have seen private equity investment in the sector, but there can’t be a mindset that digital means a tech company can provide a health-tech platform which will be able to deliver the actual care. By its very nature, there are tasks in a care home which technology can’t or shouldn’t replace, at the very least because of the human interaction requirement.

“An increasing challenge is having a handle on advances in technology, and while you can’t adopt everything which is available, if you aren’t evaluating, you’re likely to be missing opportunities to provide the level of care you could be delivering.

www.agincare.com



About iplicit

Providing a cloud-based finance and management software solution that allows the care sector to focus on what really matters.

Tailored for those frustrated by on-premise legacy software, iplicit provides greater flexibility and enhanced levels of reporting, integrating with other cloud applications for a seamless migration path from a user's existing system, enabling organisations to 'step up' to next generation finance software without losing the functionality they currently enjoy.

iplicit received the Accounting Excellence award for mid-market and enterprise software of the year in 2020, and the top product for enterprise accounting/ERP in the Accounting Web software awards, 2021.

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The interview with Raina Summerson was undertaken with Tim Bryars, specialist at iplicit in working with the care sector.



About DECISION magazine

First published in 1988, DECISION magazine reflects the business lifestyle, the trials and tribulations, the hopes and aspirations of directors and managing partners responsible for businesses with a turnover of £5million and above.

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