

THE WAY FORWARD

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



**An interview with Ernie Graham
Chief Executive
Graham Care 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.



Transformation with transparency

“Whatever the digital equivalent of nailing your colours to the mast might be, The Graham Care Group couldn’t be more upfront about their position on technology.

Right there on the information bar at the top of their website home page, along with the usual ‘About Us’ and ‘Our Homes’ is a ‘Digital Transformation’ button to click.

Here the talk is about ‘digitally transformed care’, explaining each step of their journey, with drop-down menus to reveal descriptions in everyday language of what real time compliance management delivers for example, through to the resident monitoring dashboard, what it covers and how AI assisted predictive analytics raise health alerts before they become an issue for a resident.

The Graham Care Group provides care and support to those with complex needs, with capacity for 900 residents in purpose-built nursing homes and care suites.

Their story began in 1996, when Ernie, who received an MBA from Alliance Manchester Business School, and Dr Karen Graham





Ernie Graham

founded the first of their homes. “Initially IT was introduced to automate basic finance administration tasks. Today data from across our ten homes can be consolidated at the touch of a button,” says Ernie Graham.

“Any needle in the haystack is immediately highlighted, no matter where it is. Auditing is no longer restricted by only being able to do sampling of data.



“The lightbulb moment for us was being told to set up a data lake before introducing different software. In other words, separate the data from being held in various parts of the system because then it means you have a single source of truth.”

“The relationship between providing care for people and making a profit is usually seen as the elephant in the room,” cedes Ernie Graham. “But having the sound financial management and accountability which technology enables us to deliver is the platform which gives us more opportunities for investing in the improvement of care.

“Technology enables unprecedented personalisation,” he points out. “We apply artificial intelligence to our data lake not only to deliver health alerts for each of our residents from the data inputted by our carers – such as problems with eating – but predictions about a resident’s future wellbeing, whether they could be likely to develop a chest infection or now have an increased risk of falling.

“Take night-time care. If someone has dementia, and let’s say trouble with continence, a care home would need to check on them at least every couple of hours. The carer opens the resident’s door which brings light into the room, and then physically has to make sure the sheets aren’t wet, so the resident could have interrupted sleep.

“With monitoring sensors on the bed we can remotely check their respiration and heart rate, even when they are asleep,





One of the Graham Care suites

and can raise an alert if the sheets have become damp. It's personalisation. Rather than go into everyone's room, the carer only has to disturb a resident if intervention is necessary.

“You could argue that this approach increases risk if there is this degree of reliance on technology. But a monitoring system should deliver a heartbeat signal every five to minutes to a hub to identify it is still working.

“Artificial intelligence will provide huge potential to personalise and improve the lengthy process of writing a resident's care



plan. We can have up to some 200 data points for each resident, so imagine the complexity of writing a personal care plan which is internally consistent.

“Then, if there is change, say in a resident’s mobility, that care plan needs to be amended, but have all the references to the amendment and its impact been adjusted throughout what can be a three thousand-word document? ChatGPT can check the consistency of a human’s work, and frees up hugely the time a provider has to devote to compiling the plan in the first place.

“There are more ways of illustrating the impact of technology. It liberates staff to be focused on people in their care. Half of the time of a manager would have been spent furnishing a head office with information, so their focus was as much on tasks for the organisation as it was on people.

“What we have achieved with technology is a zero percentage requirement of our managers’ time to be spent on providing that information.”

Frontline staff at Graham Care have a digital ‘to do’ list, from noting a resident’s fluid intake to a notification that they also need to be weighed on that particular day.

“It’s means we have real time compliance rather than it being retrospective,” Ernie Graham explains. “Looking back, you might learn something from history, but it won’t have enabled any issues to be flagged and addressed at the time.



“We volunteered for the regulator to have a direct link to that compliance information. You could say that means we’ve got no hiding place, but what it really means is that we’ve got nothing to hide, and that builds trust.”

“But,” says Ernie Graham, “we have to make sure technology doesn’t result in the delivery of institutional rather than personalised care. We had a session with our management team to reflect on this. Remember when we were at school – the day divided into forty-minute periods, everything focused on the timetable, thirty-five of us herded into one room at the same time. So we have to be conscious not to be re-creating that approach at the other end of our lives.

“The risk of that happening comes from not looking at technology in a care home setting from an empathic point of view, a desire to keep improving the quality of care. A risk with the application of technology is that it can turn people into numbers.”

grahamcare.co.uk



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 Ernie Graham was undertaken with Scott Regnier, a 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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