Virtual Wards Clinically lead, Technology Enabled Nursing Times Webinar

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Definitions

NHS England

virtual ward

🔊 ˈvəːtʃʊ(ə)l wɔːd

A virtual ward is a safe and efficient **alternative to NHS bedded care** that is enabled by technology.

Virtual wards support patients who would **otherwise be in hospital** to receive the acute care, monitoring and treatment they need in their own home.

This includes either **preventing avoidable admissions** into hospital, or **supporting early discharge** out of hospital.

NB: A virtual ward **is not** a mechanism intended for enhanced primary care programmes; chronic disease management; home intravenous or infusion services; intermediate or day care; safety netting; or proactive deterioration prevention.

technology enablement

A virtual ward enabled by technology consists of (as a minimum):

1. The ability for patients to measure and input agreed health data for example vital signs into an app or website (this may also be done automatically for example with wearable/Bluetooth technology).

2. These data feed into a digital platform / dashboard which is reviewed remotely by a clinical team.

3. The clinical team are alerted when a patient moves outside of agreed parameters so they can take appropriate and timely action.

Why is it important?

The benefits to patients and carers' include:

- Patient Safety
- Scalability
- improved self-care for patients
- empowering patients - Wellbeing
- time saved through accessing services digitally
- cost saved through accessing services digitally
- Ability to get patients home more quickly
- Reduced LOS*
- Increased capacity

And benefits for the health and care system, including:

- lower cost of delivering services digitally
- better patient adherence to medicines and treatments

Clinical Model

Multi-specialty
Multiple pathways
Patient Journey

Patient suitability
Patient experience
Patient Wellbeing

Social situation

Clinical confidence

Patient safety

Practicality
Medications

Virtual Consultation
Home visits

Readmission pathway, if required

https://www.england.nhs.uk/virtual-wards/#:~:text=Virtual%20wards%20(also%20known%20as,call%20home%2C%20including%20care%20homes.

1 Recording vital signs at home

The patient records their own vitals signs eg blood pressure, temperature, oxygen levels and enters readings onto an app, website OR they wear a device that does this automatically.

Care team closely monitoring remotely 2

Clinical teams are able to see patient inputted data and take action where required. Able to support a greater number of patients.

Patient self-managing care 3

Patient able to better self-manage own care, using technology, whilst supported by their care team in their own home.

What is 'Tech-enabled Virtual Wards'?

The use of technology, devices or apps to support patients, or their carers or advocates, to monitor and manage their health or long-term conditions.

- Manual Input
- Bluetooth
- Continuous

NHS@Home

Virtual Wards

NHS England

Systems used

- Vital sign entry - Trend analysis
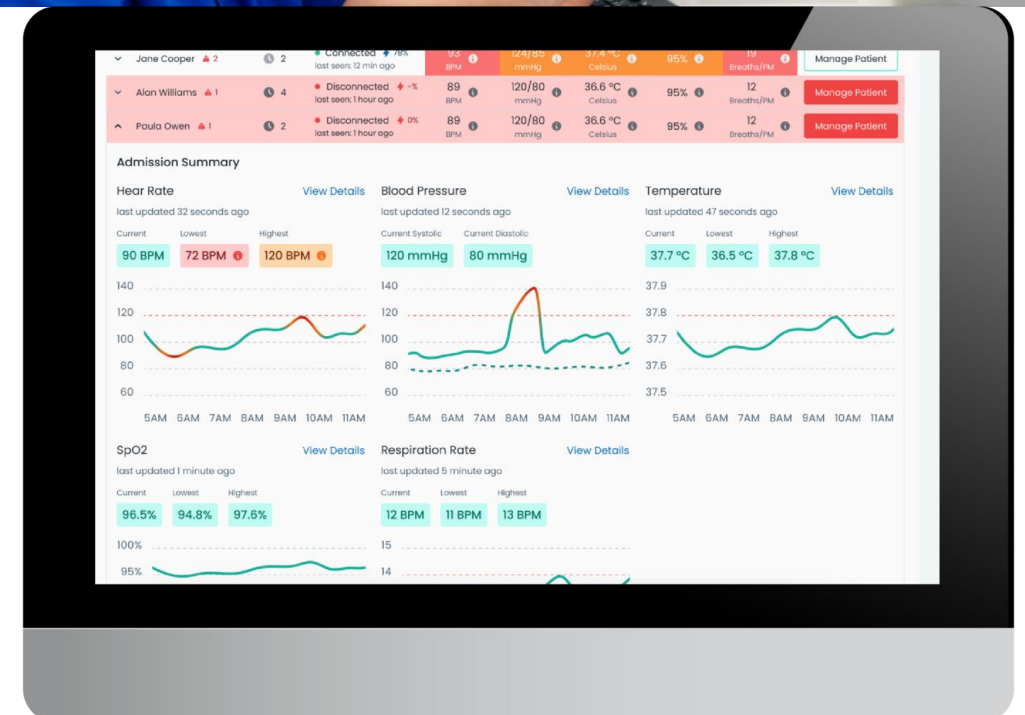- Questionnaires
- Prioritisation
- Configurable Alerting
- Sharing / Integration into EPR
- Teams involved and access
- Clinical Recording
- Video Conferencing

Example devices

Basic kit

- Sphygmomanometer
- Thermometer
- Pulse Oximeter
- Scales
- Questionnaires

Patient specific kit

- ECG
- Digital Peak Flow
- POC Testing - Glucose
- Ultrasound
- Continuous monitoring device watch / patch

Considerations

- How many do we need?
- How will we get them to patients?
- How do we clean them?
- What happens when they break?
- Do they need calibrated?
- Staff training
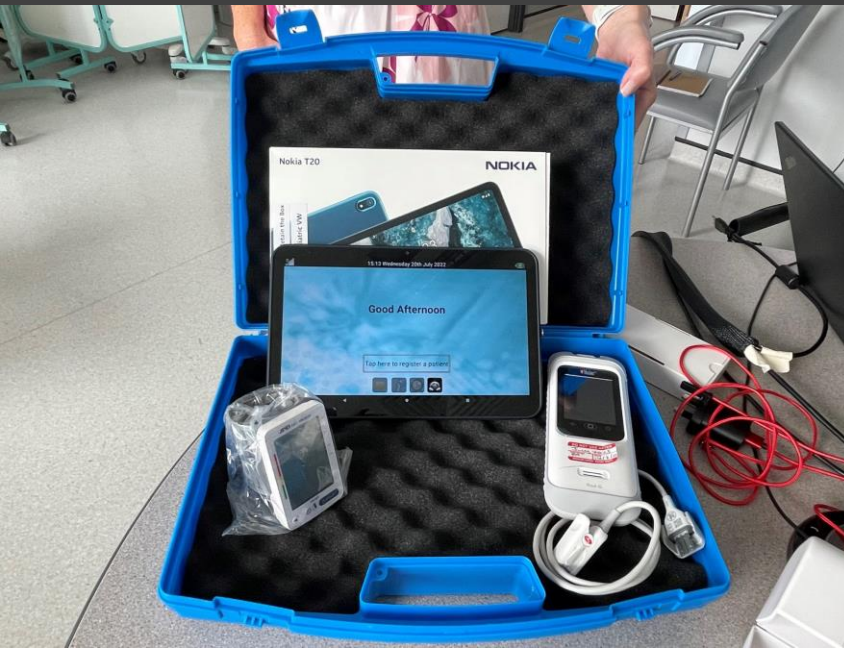
Issues with Tech enablement

- Solutions available

- Devices available – DTAC

- Clinical assurance and skills

- Interoperability – Sharing

- Resolution of problems

- Clinical expectations

- Patient education
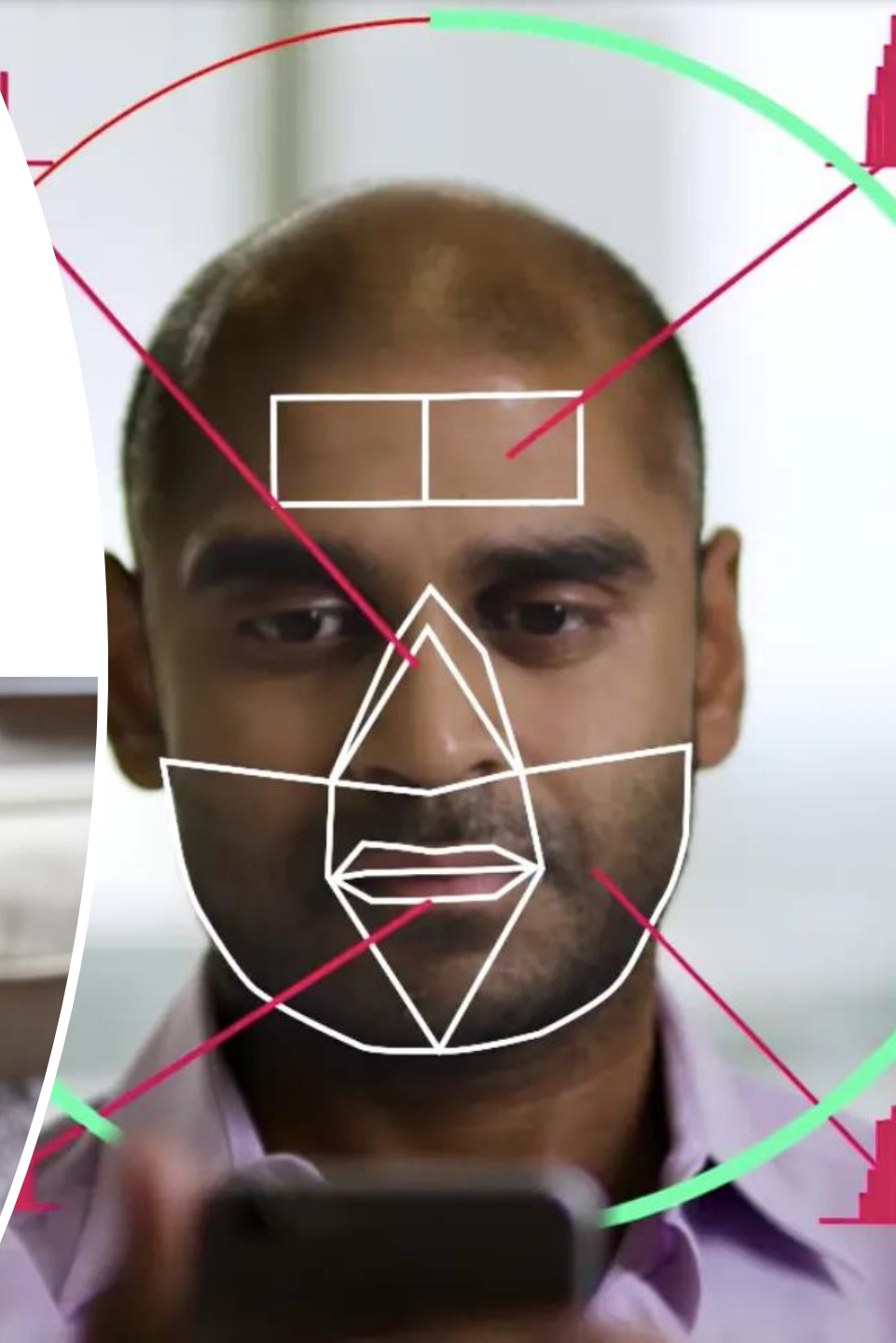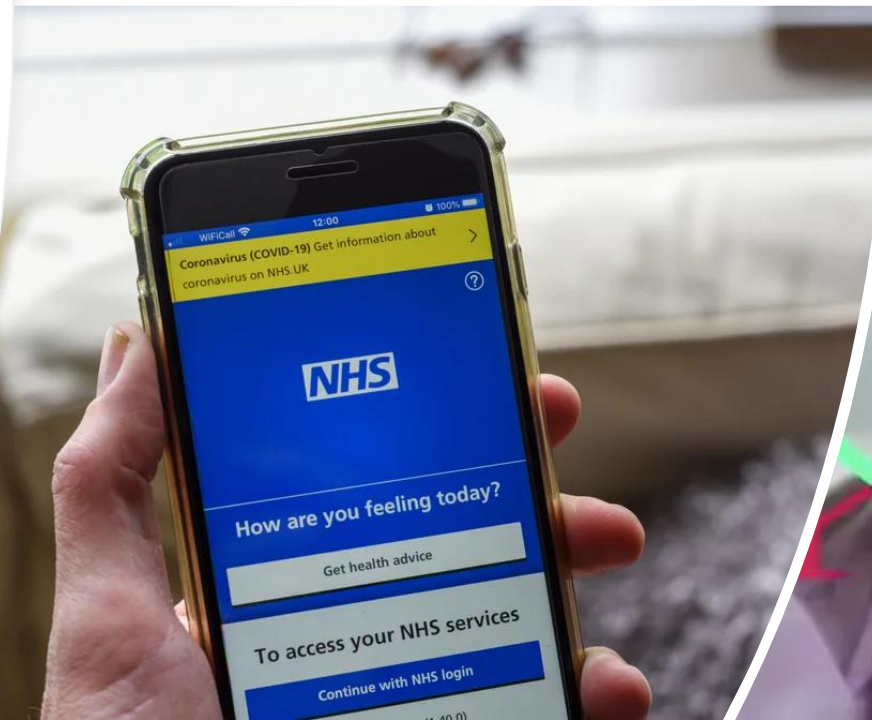
What do we need to think about?

CONNECTIVITY

not everyone has the ability to connect to the internet and go online

DIGITAL SKILLS

not everyone has the ability to use the internet and online services

CONFIDENCE

some people fear online crime, lack trust or don't know where to start online

MOTIVATION

not everyone sees why using the internet could be relevant and helpful

DESIGN

not all digital services and products are accessible and easy to use

AWARENESS

not everyone is aware of digital services and products available to them

STAFF CAPABILITY AND CAPACITY

What do we need to do?

- Digital inclusion is about ensuring the benefits of the internet and digital technologies are available to everyone.

- Digitally-excluded people can lack skills, confidence and motivation, along with having limited or no access to equipment and connectivity. This can create additional layers of social exclusion and exacerbate social, economic and health problems. Getting online is usually life-enhancing and it can be life-changing!

- Citizens Online

- citizensonline.org.uk

The NHS is founded on a commitment to the principles of equal and equitable access to healthcare for all UK citizens.

Yet the use of digital healthcare technologies could undermine these principles by exacerbating inequalities, unless consideration is given to how they affect equality and equity, including the risk that vulnerable groups might be excluded or exploited