

## Innovating Informatics: Options, Opportunities and Challenges in Health and Social Care

## The way that data is used will revolutionise over the next two to four years



Leading executives of England's Health and Social Care Information Centre (HSCIC) visited The Farr Institute Scotland Centre in Edinburgh BioQuarter on Tuesday 19th January to meet with research programme directors and deliver a masterclass on options, opportunities and challenges in data analytics and innovation in health and social care.

Facilitated by the Usher Institute's MRC-funded Proximity to Discovery Programme, the talk by HSCIC's Chief Executive Andy Williams and Director of Information and Analytics Professor Martin Severs was broadcast by telepresence to researchers and healthcare professionals gathered in the Institute's Swansea and London centres.



HSCIC is an executive non-departmental public body sponsored by the Department of Health. Acting as the national information and technology partner for England's health and care systems, HSCIC creates, delivers and manages the infrastructure and standards that supports health and care professionals nation-wide. As the custodian of the largest proportion of health and social care data in England across more than 100 national datasets, HSCIC provides researchers with authorised access to data through a variety of means including statistical publications and Data Access Requests Services.

The differences in how and where health and social care data is held between Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland poses limitations for researchers. Differing access procedures and criteria for what constitutes trusted research environments not only restricts the movement of data across the UK but means scientists aren't able to maximise its potential. By discussing these issues, data custodians and researchers can explore opportunities to enhance eHealth research across the country by improving studies, and in turn, the treatment and care of the UK population.



The visit was a valuable opportunity for representatives from The Farr Institute and HSCIC to exchange experiences and ideas for future collaboration. Many themes were discussed such as the future of data collection through wearable technology, types and methods of consent and the importance of defining and implementing standards in the use and quality of data.

Andy Williams said: "Collecting data in anticipation of a question rather than in response to a question is key. We need to collect more data, more proactively, more frequently, improve the quality of that data and focus on health and social care. Collecting data once makes more sense for the system and provides a more streamlined process for approved researchers to gain access."





Professor Andrew Morris, Centre Director of The Farr Institute said: "We were delighted to welcome Andy Williams and Martin Severs to The Farr Institute to discuss these key issues. Our work relies upon the ability to conduct research at scale across the UK. For research to play its crucial role in the innovation of health and social care, data and information needs to flow in the right way. We are keen to build collaborative relationships with HSCIC to advance our informatics research and to improve the health and social care of the UK's population. With an increasing need for efficiency and innovation in health and social care, the relationships between researchers and data providers are more important now than ever before."



