

# Exploring how digital health technologies to integrate health and social care are implemented and evaluated

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## Context:

- Integrated care is a perspective or an approach that aims to enhance connectivity, alignment, and collaboration between health and social care sectors at an administrative, organisational, service delivery, and clinical level, to improve quality of care, quality of life, patient satisfaction, and system efficiency (1).
- Digital health technologies are now central to promoting the integration of health and social care services (2; 3). The underlying assumption is that it can help to improve information sharing and communication amongst diverse organisations. However, there are various socio-technical and socio-organisational challenges associated with such complex interventions (Ibid).
- Integrated care using digital health technologies attempts to create e-infrastructures for sharing information across various organisational groups with diverse organisational requirements and activities (4). These information infrastructures grow on existing installed base, that is, practices, conventions, and tools that shape information systems (5).
- Unlike a single intervention to attain predetermined outcomes, integrating health and social care using digital technologies involves the convergence of various organisations with different information needs, and practices through a multiplicity of objects, aims and strategies (6).
- Evaluation of such complex e-infrastructures requires new approaches to capture various socio-technical, socio-organisational and political factors, and emerging benefits, disbenefits and unanticipated effects (7).
- England : 2022 Health and Care Act directs the formation of integrated care systems to implement the adoption of digital technologies to integrate health and social care (8). Integrated care systems comprises of integrated care boards to plan and allocate funds, and integrated care partnerships to bring together system partners, there are 42 integrated care systems. Scotland : The 2022 Scottish digital health and care strategy aims to use digital technologies to integrate health and social care across its 14 boards (9).

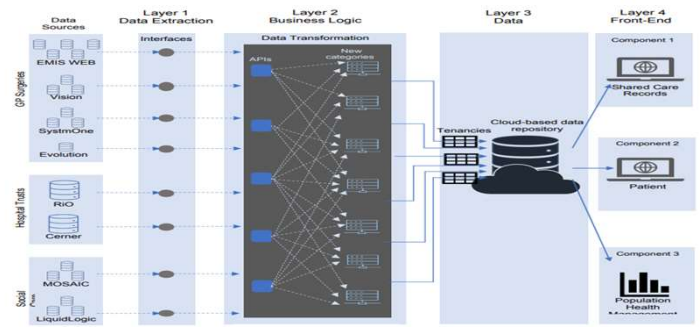


Figure 1- an example of inter-organisational information infrastructure in a health and social care setting (InteractingCare is based on Graphnet's CareCentric solution) (10)

**Aim:** The aim of the project is to explore the various socio-technical and socio-organisational factors shaping the adoption of digital technologies to integrate health and social care, using NHS England and NHS Scotland case studies. This will include exploring the various international, national and regional approaches to integrate health and care through digitalisation, and the different frameworks that may be adopted to evaluate such complex systems.

## Research objectives:

<p>1.Scoping existing experiences of integrating health and social care using digital health technologies.</p>	<p>2. Empirical case studies of integrating health and social care using digital technologies across England and Scotland.</p>	<p>3.Drawing theoretical and methodological insights, as well as implications for policy and practice.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are the existing international experiences implementing digital health technologies to integrate health and social care?</li> <li>What are the methods and frameworks that have been used to evaluate such complex interventions?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are the various policies and strategies in place to integrate health and social care using digital health technologies across England and Scotland?</li> <li>How have they been implemented across England and Scotland?</li> <li>How do socio-technical and socio-organisational contexts vary and what are the consequences of these contextual differences?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How can existing theoretical frameworks inform the various socio-technical and socio-organisational contexts and strategies around adopting digital technologies for integrating health and social care?</li> <li>What are the impacts of policies and interventions on health practices and health system organisational, and how can policies better address them?</li> <li>How can evaluations of such complex e-infrastructures capture the various socio-technical and socio-organisational changes it brings forth?</li> </ul>

## Research design :

In order to explore the research objectives in place, the study will employ qualitative methods and tools as follows

**Research objective 1:**

~Scoping review to understand the experiences of various international strategies and efforts of deploying digital health technologies to integrate health and social care.

**Research objective 2:**

~Scoping interviews with developers, policymakers and implementers, social care organisations and members of integrated care boards (where they exist) to identify relevant strategies, contexts, and technologies.

~ Attending webinars and seminars relating to digitalisation of health and social care, integration of health and social care, digital services and technologies for social care, will be another approach to identify relevant developments, stakeholders and digital health technologies being implemented to promote integrated care in England and Scotland.

~ Qualitative methods of data collection including qualitative interviews, focus group discussions and multi-sited ethnographic observations across England and Scotland. Similarly, documents capturing organisational visions and missions, health and care policies, reports by partnering entities, minutes of meetings, circulars and posters will be collected and analysed. Qualitative approaches to analysis will include a combination of inductive and deductive approaches.

**Research objective 3:**

~Insights from research objectives 1 and 2 will be consolidated, integrated with the empirical and theoretical literature, and analysed to gain theoretical and methodological insights, as well as draw out implications for policy and practice

**Case studies identified – tentative**

- England – Shared care record by Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire ICS
- Scotland – Recommended Summary Plan for Emergency Care and Treatment (ReSPECT), Forth Valley

**Your thoughts and feedback please !!**

- Could you share any one example of integrating health and social care through digitalisation?  
(Example : Key Information Summary for Anticipatory Care Planning, Scotland)

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