

Social Care Digital Innovation Programme  
2019/20 (Funded by NHS Digital)

Kirklees Council – Discovery Phase Easy Read Summary



April – October 2019

We looked at:

**“How might we help people who use our services and carers, to get information about their care services to give them more control?”**

See the highlight video at:

[www.kirklees.gov.uk/digitalinnovation](http://www.kirklees.gov.uk/digitalinnovation)

Working in partnership:





## What the Care Act Says:

The Care Act say that Councils must make sure that they look at how they can make it easier for people who need care and support and their carers, to see their care accounts and they need to look at how putting peoples accounts on line can give them more control over planning their care, as well as putting all their care information in one place.

**(Care Account: A care account is your personal account with all your information about the care and support you get, this will include things like: your personal information, what support you get, your assessments and dates, your records, and how much you pay for your support).**



## People we wanted to involve:

In Kirklees we have 15,800 people who use our services and 4,000 carers



At the moment these people can only get information about their care and support, by telephone or email or post if they ask to. This is also a problem for advocates who are paid to support people and need to spend lots of time trying get support information about lots of people.

We think that if people can look at their carer accounts themselves online, this will help people be more independent and manage their support more



easily. It will also help social care staff to be able to work more easily on cases that need lots of information.

## What we wanted to find out:



- What information and services people who use our services and their carers need to see, about their care and support.



- Their ideas of how things are working at the moment, what they thought was good and bad about it, and how they think we can make things better.



- What people thought would be good things about being able to see their information on line, what things they might find hard about it and any barriers (things that would stop them being able to go online to see their information)

## What we did

We worked with another organisation called Lagom Strategy, they are specialists at finding out what people think.





Our staff looked in lots of detail at the people who use our services.



We talked to lots of people who use our services their carers and people who are paid to support them, as well as people who work on the telephones at the council and social workers to deliver:



- 16 telephone interviews



- 2 workshops



- A survey people filled in online.



- We helped people to fill in the surveys survey at Huddersfield Royal Infirmary, Dewsbury District Hospital, Huddersfield Library and the Kirklees Involvement Network.





- Kirklees Involvement Network made a paper easy read survey for adults with a learning disability.



- What people need when they are getting information online.



- We looked at Council information to see to look at numbers of people with support



- We looked at the different care accounts that exist. We made a practice online care account and tested it.





## The Numbers



- We found out 40 things that were most important to people and put these in order of how important they are.



- We made 6 example descriptions of service users and carers.



- We helped 5 people tell their stories of their experiences of using current services.



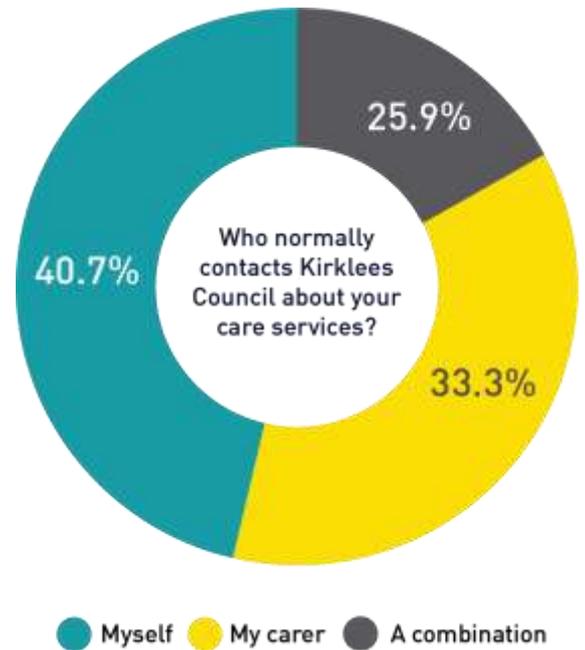
- We made 1 practice online care account and tested it.



## What we found out



**76%** of people involved in this study were carers. Out of all the people who use our services, who filled in our survey, only **19%** did not have a carer or someone who supported them.



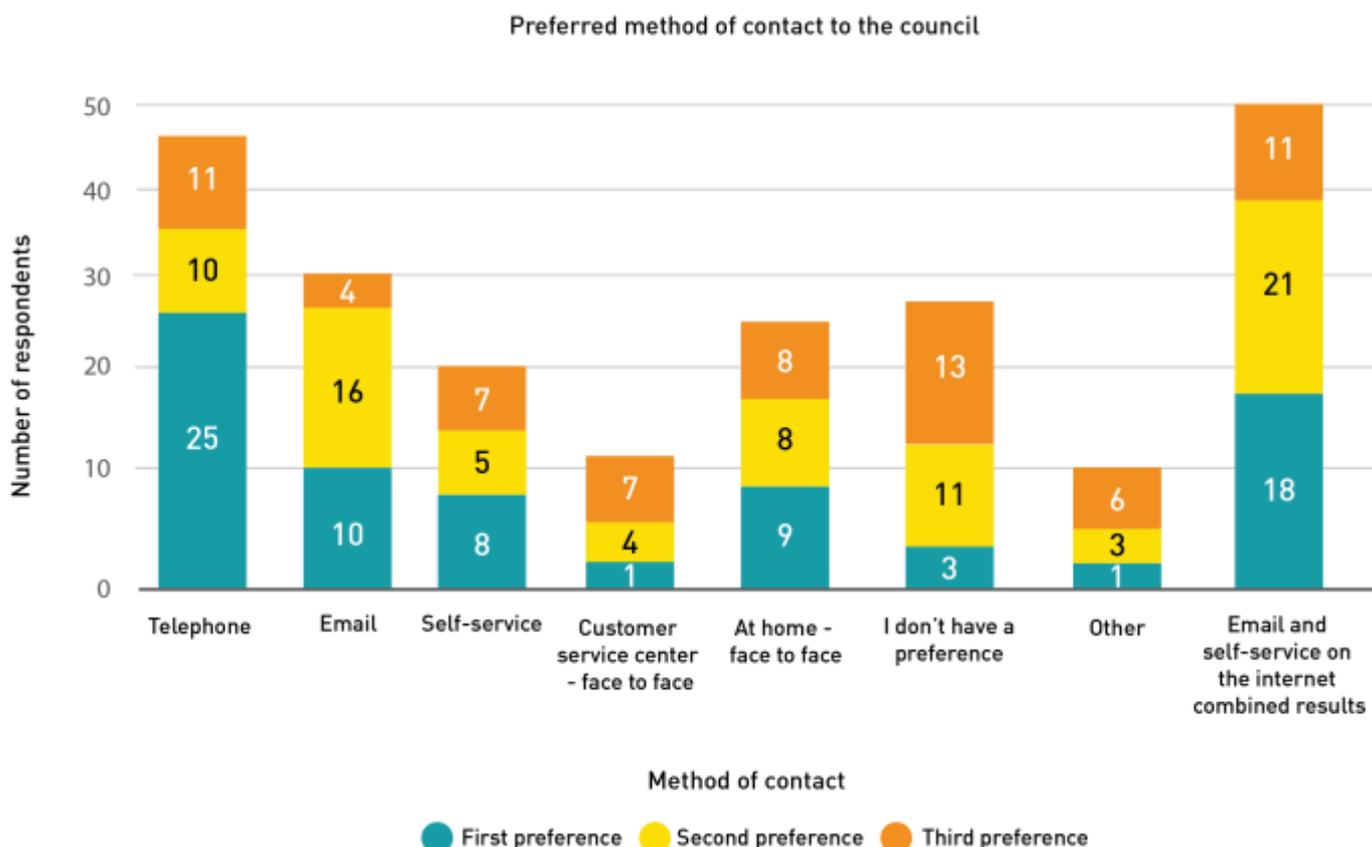
What we found from the information on our online survey was that **79%** of the people were filling in the form on behalf of someone else (**44%** by family members, **32%** by professionals, **3%** by a friend or neighbour).



For this reason, it is important that we meet carer's needs as much as the people who use our services when we are giving information and access to services.



## How people want to be contacted



Most people prefer to make contact by phone as their first choice. They think this is the fastest and easiest way to sort out any issues they have, they feel it's easier to communicate clearly and would always choose to use the phone if they need an answer to something straight away. When we looked at all the results of peoples answers together, most people said they would prefer to manage their care themselves online.





Some people find it difficult to use the phone because they don't have the time, because they are at work or caring for someone, or they just struggle to use a phone.

**“My mum deals with all my support needs. I do not use the phone because of my disability”**



Some people liked printed information but are worried it might go missing in the post.

**“My mum prefers to receive information in a physical format... If the information is all there on a piece of paper, she has time to read through it properly when she has a chance”**

**“I don't trust the post, I'm paranoid in case things go missing”**



People store important information in different ways, some preferring it on paper, some online and some don't store it at all because they feel they can always get a copy later.



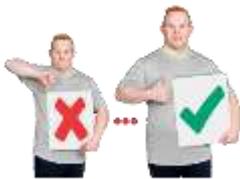
“I always write things down when they happen otherwise, I forget. I have a folder where I keep proof of what has happened”

“I do tend to just keep things on the computer now”



People we spoke to wanted to be contacted in lots of different ways, and this showed it is important that we keep other ways of communicating. People also wanted to be able contact us themselves, at a time that suited them on line 24 hours a day 7 days a week.

### What people said about how they get information and services now:



There are things we can do better, people said they liked to use the telephone (**24%** of people said this was their first choice), but **60%** of people who had used telephone had not had the best experience.



### Things people found hard or frustrating:



- Getting calls they weren't expecting about their care services; feeling uncomfortable to take calls in public places; lack of control and ability to plan for call; and having to stay at home and



wait for calls. - **“If I’m out I leave my phone at home so I’m not always contactable”**



- Waiting a long time for people to call back.
- Not finding out that phone numbers or ways of doing things had changed - **“It’s a minefield... not knowing anything, who to contact and who to ask for help. I felt very isolated caring for my mum, I had to ring lots of different departments to get help and advice”**

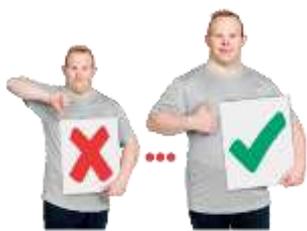


- Asking questions about their care but not hearing anything back.



- People sometimes found it hard when they were contacting on behalf of someone else, as the information they ask to prove the person who gets the care has given their permission was not the same every time. People who are paid like staff ask family members to make contact because they believe it will be easier.





## Things we can do better



- Stop asking people questions if things are still the same.



- Be clear and honest with people and be more hands on when talking to people who use our services. To do things like helping them to arrange reviews, sending reminder alerts and helping them to do their own assessments to see if they can get services.



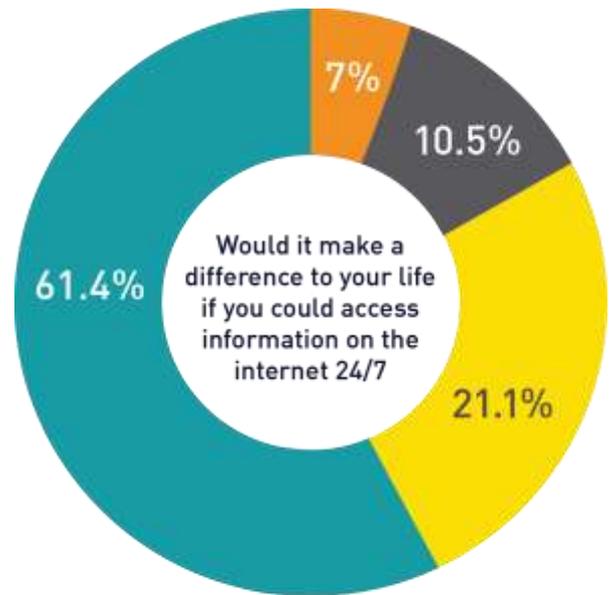
We found that most people are generally happy with care services once they are in place; **45%** got everything or most of what they needed from contacting the council. However, the way of contacting the council and getting services they need can be difficult. If this happens some people won't bother contacting the council in the future.





## How many people wanted to access their information online?

The number of people who said they would like to do things by themselves online and email in our survey, showed it is possible for people to do more things themselves online.



Yes No I don't know Other

**“I'd be happy looking for information relating to my mum's care online. The urgency dictates what I'd be happy with finding online, anything urgent I'd phone up”**

**“Email would be my preferred method of contact as it's easier when you work full time”**



**61%** of people said it would make a difference to their life if they could access their care information online (**77%** for carers and **50%** for services users).



## Good things about having information online

- There would be more time and space to read, understand information and answer questions – **“I would then be able to**



**access this when the people I care for have gone to bed, in my own time and at my own pace”**

- Easier than phoning up – **“I get a bit tongue tied over the phone, so an online form is appealing”**

Lots of stuff is online now, so it makes sense.

- People want a record of their chats with the council - **“I prefer email as it is evidence that a conversation has happened”**
- It would be a safe space to store my care information – **“Online is more personal and more private”**



### **Bad things about having my information online**

- Some people said they would be worried about how private their personal information would be online –
- **“I have email on my phone, and I do email friends, but I would not do banking via my phone”**

**“If I was changing personal details it would definitely be on the phone. I’m quite conscious that anybody could put in a password and access all my personal details and know that there’s a vulnerable person at that address”**



Not all people who use our services and carers want to use self-service online for their adult social care services. People like to talk to another person and are worried that the information going online would stop that. Therefore, it is important that any online self-service offer is provided as an extra service rather than to stop telephone or face-to-face conversations.





## People are using digital services

Online services are now a big part of people's lives  
These are the numbers of people who said they could do things online (without help):

“ I pay bills, do internet banking and shopping online. ”



We found that Carers are more confident and able to do things online than people who use our services.



“ I rely very much on my disabled network on Facebook where we all keep tabs on asking questions. People have a similar disability to me so we all keep in touch in order to bounce off each other's ideas ”

People who use services and carers are finding out how to get services they need, on social media and by sharing information online with people they know.

Some people get help from others to do things online

“ My husband does things online. If it's a bank transfer I need to pay for, he'll do it. If it's online shopping, I'll choose the things I want but he does it ”





“ I get emails from Carers Count and complete forms online. The MS Society are always doing surveys online ”

Some people are already getting information from other organisations online.

53% of people said they had a My Kirklees residents account already, mainly used for bin collection dates, however one person said:

“ I would use My Kirklees more if it contained my Dad's care information ”

83% of people said they could use the internet at home, and 33% used it at work.

## Things people need

We found 40 things people said they needed, that we looked at in more detail. We looked at how people had contacted us over the past year looking at phone calls, forms people had filled in online and how many people had used our website. We looked for if they:



- were asked for by lots of people and how much they needed them
- could be easily put in an online care account





By putting together people's needs and information people gave us, we listed them as need that **'must'** or **'should'** be included in an adult social care account.

Some of the most important things to people who use our services and carers were:



1. **Check when my next review is due** so that I can book it or change it.



All of our 15,800 service users should currently receive at least one review per year.

Of 55 survey respondents, the council had been contacted at least 35 times in the last 12 months to check their review date. This could scale to around 10,000 calls in total across our full service user base.

People don't want unnecessary contact if their needs haven't changed.

Some find the review process stressful and worry they may lose services they need in the current financial times.





## 2. Be able to see my assessment documents and

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Each of our 15,800 service users has a support plan provided in print format.

Of 55 survey respondents, the council had been contacted at least 45 times in the last 12 months to check what was in the support plan. This could equate to around 13,000 calls in total across our full service user base.

**support plan** so that I can check what was agreed.

People can't always recall conversations clearly following an assessment or review.

Some want to check how their services have changed between their current and previous support plan.



## 3. Download my support plan so that I can share it with other people who support me with my care when they need it.

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One carer described the severe emotional distress it causes her father, who suffers with Dementia, and the resulting additional burden it can cause her as a carer to try and calm situations down when organisations incorrectly contact her father about his services, rather than contacting her as his representative – through not storing contact preferences correctly and using them effectively.

In prototype testing one service user told us:

"Having access to see all documents relating to care is really useful" - "I access this frequently"





4. **Look at my contact details** and change them if I need to.



Each of our 15,800 service users has personal contact details stored in our internal care system.

Contact details were updated in our care system around 7,500 times in the last 12 months.

GDPR legislation requires organisations to ensure that information held about people is accurate and correct.

Currently, telephony staff and social workers handle calls requesting updates to service users and carers contact details and manually update this information in the internal care system.



5. **Look at who can act on my behalf so that people can speak up for me.**



There are around 2,800 people recorded as having permission to advocate for service users in our internal care system currently. With 4,000 carers registered, more service users could ensure this information was correct if given visibility and control to maintain the data recorded.

One carer described how difficult it can be for her to take her son, who has learning disabilities, to the nearest library with her to scan, print and post copies of his support plan each time an organisation requests a copy as it is only provided in printed format currently.





We then put these needs online and asked different people (people who use services, carers, people who answer the phone at the council and social work staff) to see how it worked, and tell us what they thought.





These are things people said about using the practice online account:

“ Having access to see all documents relating to care is really useful. I access this quite frequently  
– Service user ”

“ This would be life changing to have  
– Carer ”

“ Being able to book or postpone appointments online would take a lot of pressure off social workers  
– Telephony team member ”

“ Being able to amend support plans inside the account would reduce avoidable contact  
– Social worker ”

## What is available?



We looked at different online care accounts for sale to see if they included all the things that people said were important. We would have to do extra work to make them include all the things people need.



## What we learned?

- We knew from the beginning that this was a big job, so we asked Lagom Strategy to help us as they have lots of experience of doing



research and finding out what people think. We did what we set out to do very well, but we learned things along the way including:



- We had a set amount of time to do this consultation and to choose a company to help us. Choosing a company takes a lot of time and work, and it cannot be done quickly.



- We managed to choose a company in 11 weeks, but this meant we had lots of work to do in the time that was left and there wasn't much time to make changes to cover things like staff training, sickness, leave or other things that affected staff.



- Even though we worked with Lagom Strategy we still had to use lots of Council time and staff to make sure that the activities we arranged to talk to people were right, and we could get the right amount and types of information.



- People are happy to share their experiences to help improve services but they want to be kept informed about what will change after.



## Things we didn't expect



In doing this consultation we found lots of things we didn't expect, we got to know about real experiences and views on how people felt about trying to get their information from the council. Some people told us about the things they were unhappy or frustrated with. Even though this is not what we set out to look at we made sure people's views were fed back to senior managers, so we can make things better for the future.

## What we will do next



We are going to take everything people told us and our practice online account and work on it until it meets the needs of all the people who will use it. When we have finished, we will invite people to come and use it and tell us what they think, we will then be able to look at how this benefits people who use services and carers and other councils from across England.

We want this online care account to meet the needs of people who use our services and carers to make it easier for them to manage their own care in away and at a time that suits them. We will still have our telephone and face to face services for things that need sorting out quickly, or for people who don't like or cannot use computers, or don't have the support to do things online.

Councils should make sure they look at what we found in this consultation before they make any changes to telephone and face-to-face services.

One of our 7 shared outcomes



# Independent

People in Kirklees live independently and  
have control over their lives