



Hartlepool
Borough Council

DIGITAL STRATEGY 2026-2031

Adult Social Care: Better Outcomes, Better Lives

1. Our Vision

We all want to live in the place we call home, with the people and things we love, in communities where we support one another and do what matters to us.

Adult Social Care helps people live independent, fulfilling lives. As communities change and technology advances, we have an opportunity to improve how care is delivered and experienced. This strategy explains how we will use digital tools to improve outcomes for people, support our workforce, and make services more efficient and sustainable.

In practice, we will use digital innovation to strengthen human contact – supporting, not replacing, the relationships at the centre of our practice.

2. Our Ambition

We want Adult Social Care in Hartlepool to be digitally innovative, using technology to deliver high-quality, efficient and joined-up care. We will make digital the preferred channel for communication, information sharing and service access, while ensuring inclusive alternatives remain available for those who need them.

3. Responsible and Ethical Digital Innovation

We will take a responsible and ethical approach to digital innovation, underpinned by strong information governance and a clear commitment to data ethics. This includes the transparent, proportionate and accountable use of the data and artificial intelligence, with openness about when and how AI supports decision-making, clear human oversight and a focus on safety, fairness and trust in everything we do.

4. Our Aims

- Digitally Enabled People – help residents use digital tools to access information and make informed choices about care and support.
- Digitally Enabled Workforce – equip staff with the right technology and data to provide high-quality care.



- Digitally Enabled Partnerships – work with partners to share systems and information so people only need to tell their story once.

5. Digitally Enabled People – What This Means

Local people are at the heart of our work. We want to make digital tools easy to use and accessible for everyone, while ensuring alternatives remain available for those who prefer non-digital options.

Our aspiration for residents:

- Improve digital access and skills, reducing digital exclusion.
- Ensure people are informed about the digital and care technology options available, so they can help shape how technology is deployed to support their outcomes and preferences.
- Ensure fair charging policies for technology.
- Share stories and data to show the impact of technology.
- Provide online tools for self-assessment and financial assessment.
- Offer clear, accessible information to support informed decisions.
- Enable contact in ways and at times that suit people.
- Provide a wide range of inclusive, least intrusive digital aids to help people feel safe and independent at home.
- Share data securely so people don't have to repeat their story.
- Make sure digital tools are safe, secure and protect people from harm so they can use them with confidence.
- We will make digital the preferred channel for communication, information sharing and service access, while ensuring inclusive alternatives remain available for those who need them.
- Ensure people are able to access information, support and services quickly and easily through digital channels, with inclusive alternatives available whenever needed.

6. Digitally Enabled Workforce – What This Means

Our staff play a vital role in supporting local people. We want to give them the right digital tools to make their work easier and improve services.

Our commitment to staff:



- Digital Confidence – Access to tools and technologies that make work efficient and allow more time with people.
- Skills and Training – Support to develop digital skills for assessments, support planning and reviews.
- Create opportunities for staff to contribute to horizon scanning, sharing insight on emerging technologies and innovations from practice.
- Data Quality – Confidence in entering accurate data and challenging poor quality.
- Collaboration – Ability to work digitally with colleagues and partners for quicker, better decisions.
- Embed digital safeguarding into workforce practice, ensuring staff understand and manage online risks, data protection and safe use of digital tools.
- Access to simple, reliable digital tools that make communication, information sharing and service delivery easier, faster and more effective.

7. Digitally Enabled Partnerships – What This Means

Better outcomes happen when we work together. We will build on strong relationships with health services, care providers and the voluntary sector by enabling more digital collaboration.

Our commitment to partners:

- Access to shared systems and information.
- Reduced duplication of processes.
- Improved collaboration through digital tools.
- Use of system-wide data analytics for better planning.
- Shared health and social care records for a complete view of care.
- Secure portals for invoices, payments and care package information.
- Shared learning to improve digital practice across the sector.

8. Where We Are Now

We have started the journey with projects such as:

- Developed Hartlepool Now (www.hartlepoolnow.co.uk), which includes a chatbot and equipment finder review, to make it easier for people to access information and support.



- Introduced an AI-powered tool, Beam Notes, that records and produces case documentation for social workers, enabling them to spend less time on administration and more time supporting people.
- Implemented the Great North Care Record (GNCR), enabling improving information sharing and more coordinated care across services. We will also expand on this project in the latter half of 2026 whereby we will upload datasets to GNCR so they can be viewed by partner agencies.
- Developed real-time performance reporting and dashboards using Power BI. This enables senior management to have instant, around the clock access to real-time data, improving visibility and supporting more informed decision-making.
- Use of digital tools and resources, including Togetherall, which provides online mental health and wellbeing support and Mobilise, which supports unpaid carers through advice, resources and peer connections, to improve access to help and support.
- Expansion of 'self-service' capabilities for providers using tools such as the Provider Portal. The portal will enable providers to manage information, submit performance information and interact with council services digitally.
- Provision of secure shared access to key systems (e.g. CareFirst, Employee Protection Register) for external providers and partner organisations. This promotes collaborative working and ensures that providers have timely access to information to improve service delivery.
- Sustained Data Security and Protection Toolkit (DSPT) compliance over the last 10+ years, demonstrating our commitment to information governance – this has led to the implementation of NHS Mail to all care home providers in Hartlepool.
- Collaborative work with innovation partners such as Triple Value Impact to identify, test and scale digital and assistive technologies, including solutions such as Howz and Vocala, to promote independence, improve wellbeing and support preventative care for residents.

9. Summary

The five-year strategy sets out how we will create a digitally enabled Adult Social Care system. Digital technology will not replace face-to-face care, it will help us deliver high-quality, joined-up support more efficiently.



We will evaluate digital initiatives based on their impact on people's outcomes, staff experience, service quality value for money and our commitment to responsible and ethical digital innovation.

We have already begun this work and will continue to collaborate with staff, providers and partners to achieve our ambitions. With technology and shared systems at our fingertips, there has never been a better time to implement this strategy.

10. Priorities

To achieve our vision, we have agreed five priorities:

Priority 1 – Digital Inclusion

- Work with voluntary sector partners to improve digital access.
- Support residents with skills, connectivity and equipment.
- Promote digital inclusion across the council and with partners.

Priority 2 – Resident Self-Service

- Develop Hartlepool Now as an interactive platform for information and engagement.
- Provide digital tools for feedback.
- Implement online self-assessment and financial assessment forms.

Priority 3 – Care Technology

- Modernise our care technology offer.
- Commission a flexible, innovative care technology service.
- Develop Technology Champions within the workforce.
- Create informal networks to promote care technology.

Priority 4 – Digital Skills

- Build staff confidence through training and events.
- Share case studies and data to show impact.

Priority 5 – Working with Partners and Providers

- Ensure interoperability of systems and improve communication.
- Use shared data analytics for planning and improvement.
- Reduce delays and duplication through joined-up approaches.
- Improve financial processes and data accuracy.
- Collaborate with providers to implement care technology.



11. Conclusion

Delivering a digitally enabled Adult Social Care service will require sustained commitment, collaboration and learning over the lifetime of this strategy. We will take a phased and proportionate approach, prioritising solutions that deliver clear benefits for people, support our workforce and make best use of available resources.

We will focus on practical delivery, embedding digital tools into everyday practice, building skills and confidence across the workforce and working with partners to reduce duplication and improve joined-up care. Progress will be monitored through clear outcome measures, regular evaluation and open reporting, allowing us to learn, adapt and continually improve.

By grounding digital innovation in strong values, ethical principles and human relationships, we are confident this strategy provides a clear and credible roadmap for modernising Adult Social Care. Through inclusive, responsible and collaborative delivery, we will strengthen services that support people in Hartlepool to live safe, independent and fulfilling lives, now and in the future.

12. Policies

Title	Link
Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) – Easy Read Guide	 Easy Read Guide - Using AI _1_.pdf
Guidance on the use of AIAVT in Adult Social Care and Multi-Agency Meetings	 Guidance on the use of AIAVT in Adult Soc
Statement of Agreement for the use of AVT in meetings	 Statement of Agreement for the us

