

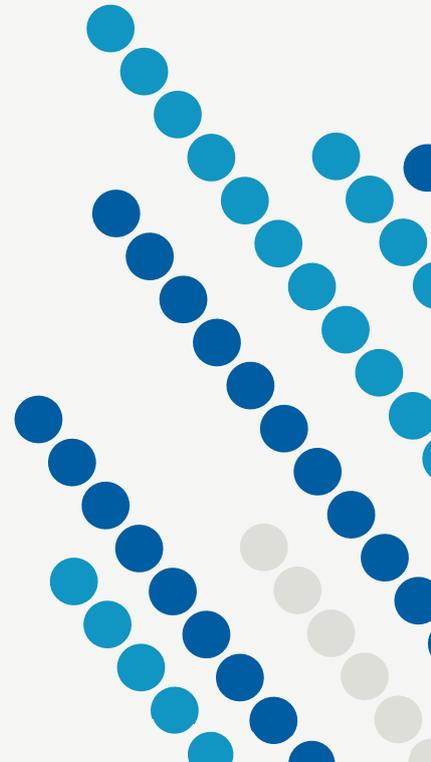


Navigating new
regulation in the
UK social and
home care sector

((sirenum))



Contents

1. **Navigating new regulation in the UK social and home care sector**
 2. **Covid's lasting legacy for management**
 3. **Learning the lessons from Covid-19**
 - 3 What data should you capture?
 - 4 Why better communication will improve care provision
 - 5 How to future proof your workforce
 - 6 Cut bureaucracy without sacrificing safeguards
 - 7 Leverage the benefits of digitisation
 8. **A digitised future – will you be ready?**
 9. **Case studies of businesses who have embraced digitisation**
 11. **What you need to know before going digital**
 12. **About Sirenum**
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Navigating new regulation in the UK social and home care sector

Why workforce woes from Brexit, Covid-19, budget cuts, and impending legislation all point towards the need for the care sector to digitise as a matter of urgency.

In the social care system, local authorities are supporting almost 150,000 older people and over 40,000 young people, typically those aged 13-19, in care homes, as well as over 440,000 people in the community. Lack of data means the number is likely much higher making the calculation of the size of the home care market an ongoing challenge.

Due to the huge workforce required, alongside our aging population, it's easy to see why staffing tends to be one of the biggest challenges. This includes accessing workers, retaining staff, and the transfer of care for patients between worker shifts.

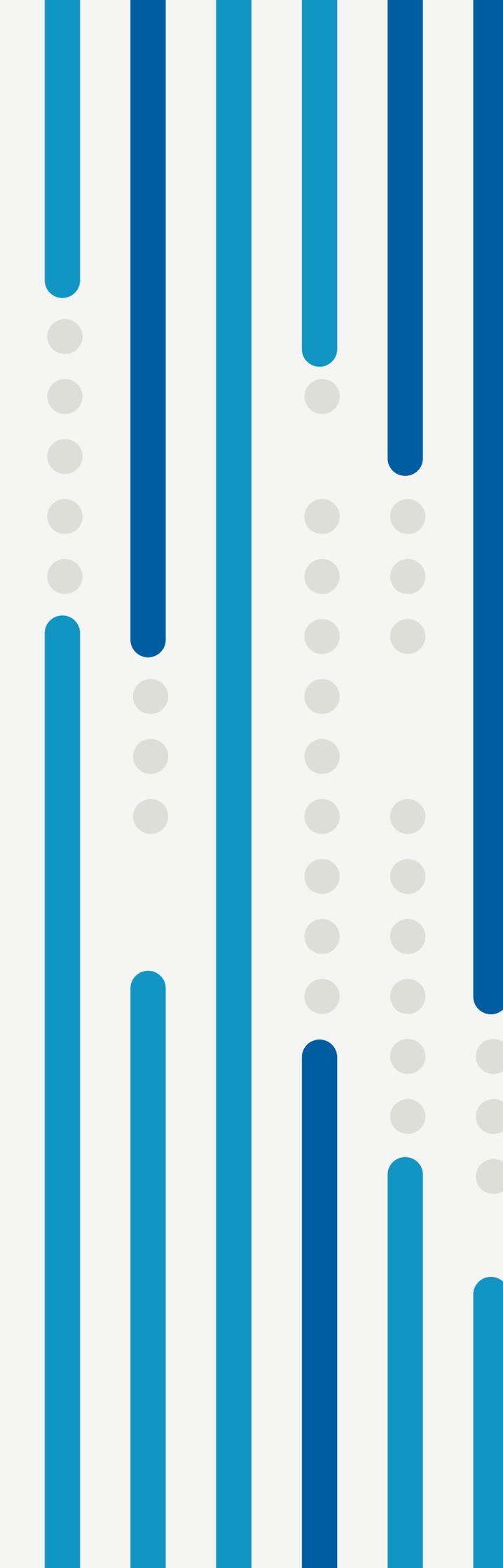
In fact, according to the annual 'The state of the adult social care sector and workforce in England' report, in 2019/2020 there were more than 100,000 vacancies at any one time in social care¹. Moreover, many believe

¹ Still more than 100,000 vacancies in social care, Skills for Care report published: 21/10/2020 can be found at: <https://chmonline.co.uk/still-more-than-100000-vacancies-in-social-care-skills-for-care-report/>

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that Brexit has made this people problem much worse.

Throw in the demands that arose due to Covid-19, and you're faced with even more strain on an already under resourced sector. Yet it's not all doom and gloom and we should also acknowledge that the pandemic did highlight the need to remove bureaucracy and embrace more agile management.

The left side of the page features a decorative graphic consisting of several vertical bars of varying heights and shades of blue (light blue and dark blue). Interspersed among these bars are several light grey circles of uniform size, arranged in a grid-like pattern that follows the vertical flow of the bars.

Covid's lasting legacy for management

Of course, the lasting legacy of Covid-19 is far from over. With the financial implications still weighing heavily on the public purse, 2021's budget will see a £30 billion reduction in spend for the Department of Health and Social Care from April 2021 compared with 2020/21. In addition, new legislation as part of the Health and Care Bill is set to come into force in 2022.

Key themes in the bill include using technology to support staff and patient care and encourage better sharing of data between departments and outside contractors. A point echoed in The Care Tech Landscape Review released in February 2021 by Future Care Capital (FCC), which underlined the need to digitise records and reduce time spent on paperwork.

All of which point to a technology-enabled digitised future for the sector. Yet rather than being seen as a burden on already stretched teams, embracing technology and new processes will provide plentiful rewards, which is why now is the time to prepare and put processes in place to ensure a smooth transition once the legislation arrives.

Learning the lessons from Covid-19

Necessity is the mother of invention as the saying goes, and Covid certainly sped up the need for increased collaboration, the implementation of new technology, and less red tape. These lessons are now forming the backbone to the Department of Health and Social Care's incoming Health and Care Bill to make the innovations that Covid-19 accelerated permanent.

Although the Health and Care reform is still subject to Parliamentary process, the expectation is that proposals outlined in its Integration and Innovation Whitepaper² will be implemented in 2022.

Let's take a closer look at some of the key points covered and where you should take action.

What data should you capture?

The changes to the NHS Digital's legal framework will introduce 'a power for the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care to mandate standards for how data is collected and stored'. It also requires that data can flow in a usable way so that when it is accessed or provided it is consistently meaningful to the user or recipient.

² Department of Health & Social Care Integration and Innovation whitepaper published 11th February 2021: available at –Integration and Innovation: working together to improve health and social care for all (publishing.service.gov.uk)

As part of this, it will also seek to obtain greater accountability over the performance of local authorities and provide a new power to collect data from providers. Changes will also be made to the frequency with which data is collected and an increased need to gather data from social care providers (for both local authority and privately funded care).

The kind of information that will be collected will include data on hours of care services provided and their cost per person. It will also require data on financial flows which will show how money moves to providers and workforce.

This underlines the need for a purpose-built data solution and one where the data can be accessed by anyone in real time and easily exportable. For this reason, managers would be advised to start looking into cloud-based technology that can capture all of this data and translate it into meaningful analytics.

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Why better communication will improve care provision

Linked to the above point is the need for improved access to information to enable better communication. Carers need a way to communicate with both the recipients of their care, their family, and with local authorities.

Given the sensitivity of the data held, it's important that any information is also encrypted and only accessible to those who are allowed to see it.

Digital platforms for record keeping also have the added benefit of helping to reduce the time spent on paperwork and can help track conditions more effectively. With a cloud-based system, this data can also be backed up safely and is accessible anywhere to those who need it, helping to improve the overall quality of care provision through enhanced efficiency. It can also be useful in ensuring patient information can be accessed during shift changes without the need for extensive handovers.

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How to future proof your workforce

The whitepaper also mentions that ‘the collaborative working between Health Education England (HEE), NHS England and NHS Improvement and the Department on the development of the NHS People Plan has shown the need for a flexible and future-proofed regional workforce operating model.’

This could provide great opportunity for suppliers in the sector who can provide a flexible workforce. Key concerns for those working with outside suppliers will be that they can demonstrate excellent record keeping and have the infrastructure in place through technology to enable information sharing in accordance with the impending legislation. That’s why staffing agencies should ensure the technology they are using offers the level of sophistication that will be expected for future contracts.

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Using workforce management technology can have benefits for workers too. Leading platforms tend to boast a mobile app that can be used by workers to see available jobs and receive push notifications for shifts they have been shortlisted for. They can accept or reject these placements giving them a greater sense of ownership and improve their engagement with their recruiter. Some platforms also facilitate payment meaning employees can see what they are owed 24 hours a day without waiting for the recruiter to get back to them. Moreover, with payment being handled by the technology platform, it makes paying workers simpler, even with the most complex rate cards, reducing the chance of human error. Employees are more likely to stay with the recruiter for longer because normal frustrations that often face temporary workers, such as inaccurate pay, are greatly reduced.



Cut bureaucracy without sacrificing safeguards

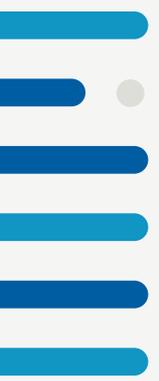
A large number of the proposals include cutting red tape and removing the layer of bureaucracy that often exists in a care environment, but this shouldn't come at the cost of safeguards or compliance procedures. For example, Staffing Regulation 18 of the Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014 states that care providers must have sufficient numbers of staff who are suitably trained, skilled, and experienced on duty to meet the needs of the users of the service.

Ensuring staff have the right training, particularly when dealing with patients who may have complex needs, E.g Dysphagia, is a responsibility of the management team. Knowing which staff have the right training, especially if you are managing a large scale workforce can become an onerous task. Technology can help streamline this process

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Another benefit of technology and digitised systems are to protect workers. For example, a carer may have supported an individual with dementia who has no recollection of receiving support. With a digitised system able to prove a carer has completed their duties – it offers safeguards for all that their duty of care has been met.



Leverage the benefits of digitisation

We've already touched upon some of the benefits of digitisation and why it's the future of care, but there are plenty of other examples.

Digital agencies are able to increase gross profit and improve operational efficiency by putting the right person in the right place at the right time. Sophisticated platforms will enable managers to build compliance rules and manage certifications, credentials, and permits all within the one platform. Managers can also be empowered to monitor easily what is happening across their entire workforce and use technology to proactively check uncovered shifts, reduce lateness, and capture time and attendance. Technology can also support lone workers by making it easy to access digital records and know the location of a workforce while on shift, something particularly useful in a home care setting where carers travel between jobs. With an all-in-one system it also simplifies financial processes, such as the calculation and processing of gross pay, automation of invoices and ultimately frees up time and resources as a result.

Platforms that support mobile apps also make it easier to communicate with staff in real time to handle holiday requests, payroll enquiries and more. By reducing manager



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involvement, it frees them up for business development or customer service. Yet the biggest benefit, and ultimately the one that will prepare care organisations for the digitised future we are heading towards, is the ability to pull analytics from every data point captured by the workforce.

Reports can offer insights into how engaged employees are with an organisation, flag any areas that require action, keep track of invoices and revenue, as well as highlight inefficiencies within a business such as filled or unfulfilled shifts per client, lateness, and the average time it takes to fill vacancies – which could provide the detail required for procurement and mean the difference between winning or losing a contract.

A digitised future – will you be ready?

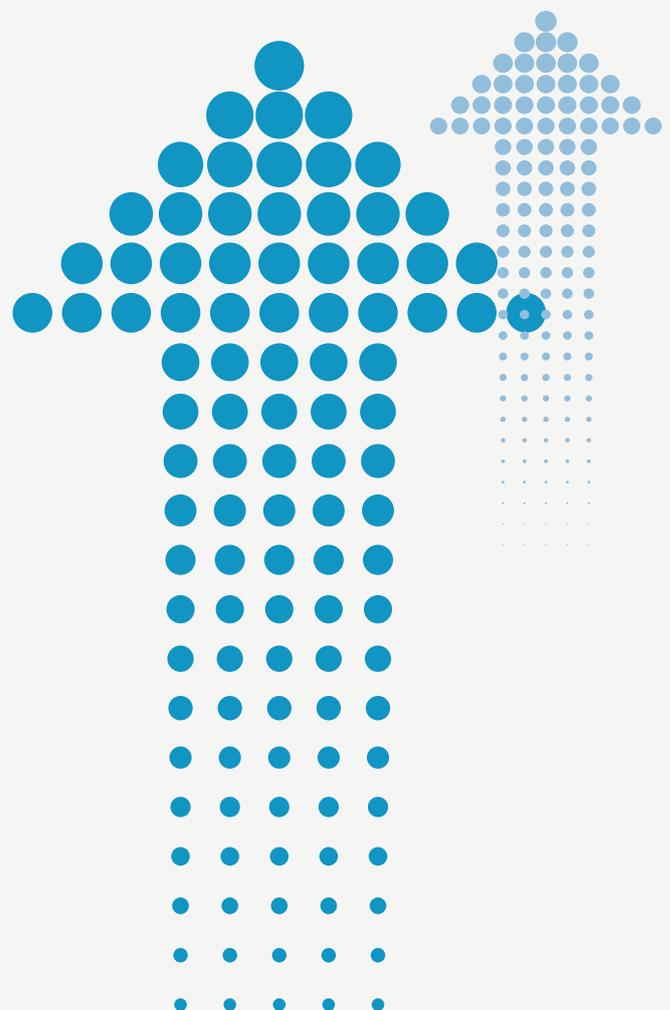
Clearly the budget shortfall will have a significant impact on an already stretched sector, which may make the impending recommendations for embracing more technology a bitter pill to swallow. Yet rather than fear the investment that new technology will bring, organisations should see this as an opportunity to get ahead of the looming digitised future that will become the norm for successful businesses.

Ultimately technology, greater automation, and artificial intelligence will bring substantial benefits to managing social care and home care in the future. Taking action now to ensure you have the right technology and processes in place ahead of the care sector's digitised future will ensure your organisation is ready.

The right technology investment will also save organisations in the long run by being able to automate many of the processes involved, free staff up to focus on income generating activities, or pinpoint inefficiencies in the current management of workers to see where savings could be made.

The worker shortages that plague the care sector can also be improved through staff being freed up to develop better relationships with their workers thanks to technology helping them to automate day to day paperwork. While workers who are empowered to have flexibility and choice over workloads and when they work, will also become more engaged as employees.

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The Good Care Group is the UK's leading live-in care provider. It has over 850 carers for 350 clients across England and Scotland. Although it has been using a cloud-based third party rostering system for some time, there was no link between it and the rest of its technology stack. As a result it often found duplicate data, double entry of data and data inaccuracies, all of which made reporting difficult.

In 2019 it made the decision to work with Sirenum. Data between their CRM and Sirenum was able to flow because they were both on the Salesforce platform. By using technology to manage operations, The Good Care Group could ensure it had the right levels of care and the right person in the right placement looking after clients. It also had a clear picture of where carers were

and the job they were doing, making it easier to spot potential problems. Watch the full case study [here](#).

“The feedback from our team on using Sirenum has been fantastic because they get to work on the same system with the same data and it’s a single click to move from a carer’s contact record to their schedule. From a carer’s point of view, it’s quite similar; it gives them visibility of their upcoming shifts and it’s nice and easy for them to understand where they are going next.”

Tony Hall

Head of Technology
The Good Care Group



OneCall24 specialises in recruiting and supplying highly qualified, experienced medical professionals for permanent, contract, and temporary positions in the NHS and private healthcare organisations in the UK.

Key benefits of using Sirenum

- Replaced lots of apps with one platform
- Easily visualise workforce to see utilisation
- Makes shift handover easier
- Simplifies compliance
- Customisable
- Implementation took less than 4 months

Read the full case study [here](#).

“Since using Sirenum the way we have been running the business itself has changed. We get to analyse what is essential and where we need to invest. The kind of data it provides really helps us to perform at the top of our market. We’re also future proofed for incoming care legislation that requires us to have certain systems in place for our data.”

Manasa Polimani

Senior Project Manager
OneCall24

What you need to know before going digital

We've established the need to digitise, but what next? How do you choose from the myriad solutions out there? Some of the questions you should be asking include:



How accessible is it? Look for technology that is cloud based to ensure anyone who needs access, can have it whenever it is needed.



Is it purpose built, or can it be tailored to your needs? Some features may be more useful to you than others but if a product is off the shelf, it's likely you're paying for functionality that you just don't need.



Does the vendor have experience in the care sector? Ask them for case studies on clients in the care sector and years of experience across the team. By asking these questions, you can be assured that the product has been developed based on extensive knowledge of the market and its needs.



Are there any hidden costs? Don't just look at the software cost itself but consider if you'll need to hire specialist staff to manage the technology, or if the dashboard user interface is simple enough for anyone to use without needing a lot of technical proficiency.



What reporting features are offered and what data points can be pulled? Some tools only offer top-level information that lacks granular detail. The best solutions offer reports that cover management and engagement of employees, financial overviews and operational data to highlight any inefficiencies within the business.



How is data presented back? A visual user interface, or drag and drop functionality will make it much more user friendly for your staff to use the technology and encourage adoption.



Is it compatible with the rest of your tech stack and can you link it with other technology you might already use? By being interoperable with existing tools you can ensure data can be ported across platforms. If it's not compatible, you may find your data collection is hindered and not helped.



How long will it take to onboard? Depending on the complexity of your data it may take longer to get a new platform onboarded, but it's worth asking what the average onboarding time is for clients.

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Sirenum powers the dynamic workforce. As the leading global provider of cloud-based workforce management technology to employers of complex workforces, Sirenum provides transformational technology to innovative employers, streamlining the management of more than 400,000 workers across six continents. Its technology has been used to support workers for leading organisations involved in social and home care including **Randstad, The Good Care Group, OneCall24, Penrose Care, Nurseline, and Bluestones Medical.**

To learn more about Sirenum technology for dynamic workforce management, please visit <https://sirenum.com/care/>.

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((sirenum))

+44 (0) 20 31372842

enquiries@sirenum.com

www.sirenum.com

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