



Kent County Council - Local Investment Programme

How iterative approaches can enable faster, smarter working

In 2017/18 NHS Leicestershire Health Informatics Service developed a mobile application for Kent County Council (KCC), enabling them to receive real time feedback from clients interacting with care navigation services across the county's twelve districts. Here, they discuss how they went about developing the app, and how it is working in practice.

In 2017, Kent County Council decided that the creation of a digital tool to assess outcomes of the voluntary sector care navigation approach was central to their adult social care vision and strategy. They applied for and were awarded funding by NHS Digital and the Local Government Association to pilot their idea. They wanted to develop an easy to use app to enable people to provide feedback on care navigator services. Care navigators help people to stay independent by providing support to manage money and benefits, stay safe in the home, plan and access social care support. Kent wanted a way to tell whether the service was working and to identify where improvements could be made.

The Business Delivery Team at Leicestershire Health Informatics Service was approached by Kent's adult social care directorate to design, develop and deliver an app that care navigators can use to record real time feedback on the service from a member of the public on a phone or tablet at any location. Leicestershire Health Informatics Service have previous experience of both designing and deploying social care apps and work to agile methodology, meaning that we could meet the tight timescales.

View from the designer: Developing the app – an iterative process

We used a Rapid Applications Development (RAD) platform to develop the app. RAD is a suite of software development methodology techniques used to speed up software application development. RAD uses predefined prototyping techniques and tools to produce software applications.

RAD gives us the flexibility to develop a product in an environment where the requirements are not fully defined up front. This allows the requirements to be defined during the development process once the customer starts to see the progression of the product, by incorporating user feedback to adapt and improve. This is a very engaging way of developing a product, which compliments the agile approach to development.

We also use Agile Scrum methodology for system software design and development. This includes using software to manage the product backlog and user stories, working closely and in full collaboration with the Kent County Council Project team and the Care Navigator Teams. In an agile working environment, the project is broken down into agreed sprints and each sprint has a desired result. There is a review at each stage, and whilst the scope never changes, the specification and requirements can be realigned and updated in line with developments before the next sprint cycle begins.

The app has been developed for use on Kent County Council iPads by care navigators and the people they are supporting. Care navigators themselves have been involved in the design of the app since day one. It was important, as they are the ones using it, that the app is really 'theirs'. People accessing social care services are a mixed demographic, so we designed the application to accommodate a range of needs by providing accessible text, images and alternative language options.

It is now live and will be in pilot for six months before it is rolled out to the wider audience. Responses collated via the app are synchronised back to a database at the Council for reporting. The Council are currently implementing their in-house business intelligence tool perform trend analysis, which will feed into the pilot review but will also be used ongoing to analyse the data captured by the app. There is a free text option on the survey which allows users to give any comments, both about their experience with KCC as well as the app itself.

All of this was achieved in just six months, giving us a strong foundation upon which to build. Iterative approaches mean that the right people are involved at the right time, that we're able to get a prototype developed and off the ground quickly, and that we're constantly gathering information, allowing us to make ongoing improvements. Ideas for future enhancements are added to the activity backlog, meaning that we already know what we need to be doing in Phase 2.

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