

Becoming The National Centre for Technology-enabled Care and Assessment



The care conundrum

The progressive loss of physical ability is a central feature of neurological conditions like multiple sclerosis (MS). Starting with the bigger muscles, losing the ability to walk is an early feature of the condition. Ultimately many will lose the ability to use their hands and then experience near total dependence on someone else, usually a loved one, for all physical activity.

The loss of independence is devastating and significantly impacts the life of partners, who also become carers. There are consequences for the wider family as relationship dynamics are changed and family income can be impacted, making it difficult to cope with greater costs borne by a disabled individual.

This is a problem for everyone because the state is the provider of last resort. The Health and Social Care budgets are growing exponentially as the general population ages and those living with conditions like MS increase in number. It really does not have to be like this.

Integrating technology-enabled care into Leuchie House

Readily-available, mass-market technology can be coupled with intelligent sensor and voice-controlled switches to return independence to those who have lost it.

Today, we can return the ability to answer the front door or phone, to turn on and off lights or open and close doors and curtains to those who have lost it. Everyday tasks can be made possible using technology matched to SMART washing machines, dishwashers, height adjustable sinks and sensor-operated taps, doors and showers.

Sensor technology can have direct health benefits as well, like predicting the likelihood of falls before they happen. It can identify changes in routine which might indicate the need for emergency healthcare, and the mental health benefits are enormous as people become reconnected with the world. There are wider benefits, allowing family carers more freedom, reducing the cost of care for the individual and for Scotland as a whole.

All of this is available now, but there is nowhere in the UK that gives people the opportunity to trial and test the technology that would work for their unique needs.

Leuchie House welcomes 300 people every year for a short respite break and has earned the highest regulatory grading for a service of its type in the country. Having recently invested in a hardwiring infrastructure, we now intend to integrate SMART technology and environmental controls into every facet of our facilities for the benefit of those who we support.

Our ambition is to become the National Centre for Technology-enabled Care and Assessment over the next three years.



The benefits of technology-enabled care and assessment

By integrating these technologies throughout Leuchie House, we plan to turn the traditional model of care on its head for good. Instead of spending time on tasks, our care team will spend more time engaging with our guests.

Our guests will experience even greater autonomy during their stay and have the opportunity to trial and learn about the benefits these technologies could bring to their homes. This is something that is not currently available anywhere.

Many of these technologies can be calibrated for personal use, and this is something our staff will provide support with as our guests learn about the various equipment available to them. This will help our guests make informed decisions before deciding to purchase something for their home, saving them the hassle and cost they might otherwise incur.

In time, we envision creating a Living Lab, in which Leuchie could be used to develop and test innovation in technology-enabled care, creating a lending library of resources and knowledge that could be shared on an open source basis, to the benefit of the health and social care sector.

We will build 'profiles' of individuals living with neurological conditions over time in order to provide information and advice to those not able to come to Leuchie, about the technology that would best meet their needs, thus benefiting thousands of families.

How much will it cost?

We can only achieve this bold ambition for Scotland with your help. In 2021, Leuchie House will establish a short life working group which will deliver Leuchie's ambition to create Scotland's National Centre for Technology-enabled Care and Assessment at Leuchie House.

The leadership group will need expertise in technology, marketing and business development. We will also need funding to appoint a full-time resource to undertake research, assessment and implementation of integrating technology into Leuchie, and to purchase the necessary equipment.

We invite interest in membership and total year one investment of £100k to realise this ambition.