



CareTech, NHSX and Facebook launch technology pilot to help combat isolation during COVID-19

NHSX is working with technology firms to help some of society's most at-risk and isolated people access vital emotional support and companionship during COVID-19.

As part of this work, Facebook will provide up to 2,050 of its Portal video calling devices for free to hospitals, care homes and other settings including hospices, in-patient learning disability and autism units.

CareTech is a national social care provider caring for, educating and supporting some of the most vulnerable adults and children across England, Scotland and Wales. It operates over 550 services through eleven companies, including the Cambian Group, and employs over 10,500 staff. CareTech is taking part in the pilot and has taken delivery of 50 devices. These devices have been distributed to care home services across England supporting both adults and children. CareTech will be supporting people in care homes to connect with families and friends through the portals and will be providing feedback throughout the pilot.

Haroon Sheikh, Chief Executive Officer of CareTech said:

"CareTech is delighted to be participating in this pilot and determined, despite the challenges of COVID-19, to enable service users in our care facilities to remain connected remotely and safely with their loved ones. We place great importance on mitigating isolation in vulnerable communities, and providing a connection back to friends and families at this time. This collaboration with NHSX and Facebook is a great opportunity to test and develop new ways for this to take place."

Minister for Care Helen Whately said:

"Social distancing is tough on us all, and we must remember how beneficial interaction with loved ones is for our wellbeing."

"I'm delighted that NHSX is partnering with Facebook to make it easier for those in care homes to keep in touch with friends and family, alongside the ongoing hard work by NHSX to expand communication capabilities across the health and social care sector."

Freddy Abnoui, MD, Head of Health Technology, Facebook said:

"We designed Portal to give people an easy way to connect and be more present with their loved ones. With the global pandemic and social distancing measures, the ability to stay connected is more important than ever."

"That's why we are piloting a programme with NHSX to provide Portal devices in hospitals and other care settings to support patients and help reduce social isolation."