

**NHS will gain efficiency savings through telecare and telehealth**

The Royal College of Nurses (RCN) has warned of front line NHS job cuts, at a time when the demand for care within the health system has never been greater.

To put this in context, official population forecasts indicate that the over 65's will increase by over 40% to 11.6 million by 2025 – representing 1 in 5 of the population. According to a report by Sue Yeandle, Leeds University, "it is predicted that the over 65's will include 5.5 million people with a limiting long-term illness (up 42% on the 2008 figure, 3.9 million), including:

- **819,000 people whose illness is caused by a heart attack** (446,000 men and 372,000 women) – up 41% from the 2008 figure
- **893,632 people with a diagnosis of dementia** -up 51% from the 2008 figure
- **321,000 people with illness caused by a stroke** (192,000 men and 129,000 women) – up 49% from the 2008 figure
- **256,000 people with illness caused by bronchitis and emphysema** (165,000 men and 90,000 women) - up 41% from the 2008 figure
- **31,000 people with a moderate or severe learning difficulty** (compared with 23,000 in this age group today)."

The RCN was supported by Health minister Anne Milton, who stated:

"I understand the RCN's frustration and concern. Many trusts are living in the past and interpreting efficiency savings as budget and service cuts. This is wrong. It is about doing more for less."

The good news is that the technology and services to do more for less already exists and has been proven effective. The use of telehealth in the treatment of long-term conditions such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), and chronic heart failure has resulted in higher levels of control and independence for patients, and enabled specialist nurses to treat more patients with high quality care. Across the UK, telecare and telehealth continue to produce substantial cost and efficiency savings across health – and across social care. The facts are well documented. In Scotland, for example, the Newhaven Research reported on the progress made across the Telecare Development Programme, outlining how telecare was providing essential services to individuals and real value for money to health and social care commissioners:

- The estimated value of efficiency savings topped £11 million in 2008/9, against an expenditure of £1.645 million.
- The total estimated efficiency savings from 2006 to 2009 totalled £23.18 million, against an expenditure of £7.347 million.

- For individuals in receipt of telecare, reductions in unplanned hospital and care home admissions, together with significant increases in the number of individuals able to maintain themselves at home, made a real difference to quality of life.

Ministers have talked about making the system more efficient by encouraging more care to be moved out of hospitals into the community. Andrew Lansley, in his speech at the NCAS conference in October 2009, stated “And we know that it [telecare] works. In Scotland, a new programme provided to 7,900 older people in Scotland last year achieved savings of £11 million and significant improvements in self-reported quality of life for both elderly people and carers.”

Trevor Single, CEO of the Telecare Services Association (TSA) stated, “It’s all about making best use of resources – not cutting costs. Utilising telecare and telehealth will enable significant efficiency savings within the NHS to be made, freeing up resources to treat more patients – that’s got to make sense.”

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**Notes to Editors:**

**About TSA**

Telecare Services Association (TSA) is the representative body for the UK telecare and telehealth industry. It works with government, commissioners, suppliers and service providers in the development of national telecare strategy, and promotes the benefits of telecare and telehealth, which helps older people and vulnerable adults to lead independent lives. It developed, and maintains, the Telecare Code of Practice – the only customer-centred code of practice available for telecare. This independently audited Code was designed in the UK by telecare experts and undergoes regular updates to remain current and relevant. For more information visit [www.telecare.org.uk](http://www.telecare.org.uk)