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Changing the way we provide care: The use of social media in social care

This research has identified the current and potential use of social media within social care. It looks at the benefits social media can provide to social care services in the form of communication, collaboration and sharing resources. Through the exploration of the responsibilities of the social care worker and service user in monitoring the use of social media for the organisation, the research will support the future development of policies for the safe use of social media in practice. It has achieved this through descriptive and exploratory of research. This research uses a mixed methods approach combining qualitative and quantitative methods. Social care organisations including statutory and voluntary organisations were approached to participate in the research. 19 semi-structured interviews with practitioners and four focus group interviews were carried out with clients to investigate their views on the current and potential use of social media within social care. An online survey was then developed for social care workers who have experience in social care to generate a wider understanding of the use of social media. There were 184 participants. The survey explored primary themes which arose from the interviews including access to social media, roles and responsibilities of staff, and the provision of a social media guidelines document in the sector. Findings demonstrated in the survey indicate that there are just 44% of social care workers currently engaging with social media where they work. In comparison, 98% of participants use social media for personal use. From the findings of the interviews and survey, draft guidelines were developed and used in the implementation of a social media pilot study in a social care service. The case study demonstrated that social media is a useful tool in social care and elements of social media should be further developed in the future.

