Digital Health & Care Innovation Centre

Digital Care Collaborative Scotland: Delivery Plan 2026/2027

A community driving digital innovation across social care, social work and housing - May 2026

10 YEARS

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This document has been written and prepared by the Digital Health & Care Innovation Centre.

DHI was established as a world-leading collaboration between the University of Strathclyde and the Glasgow School of Art and is part of the Scottish Funding Council's Innovation Centre Programme. It is part-funded by Scottish Government. DHI supports innovation between academia, the public and third sectors, and businesses in the area of health and social care.

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Digital Care Collaborative Scotland

What is Digital Care Collaborative Scotland?

The Digital Care Collaborative Scotland (DCCS) was launched in December 2025 to create the conditions for sustainable digital innovation across social care, social work and housing. It brings together national partners and people with lived experience from across care, housing, academia, policy and industry to accelerate the adoption of digital approaches that improve outcomes for people and communities.

Hosted by the Digital Health & Care Innovation Centre* (DHI) and delivered in collaboration with national partners, the DCCS provides strategic coordination, alignment and knowledge exchange across Scotland's digital care landscape. By building a shared agenda and strengthening collective action, the DCCS supports the sector to adopt, scale and embed digital innovation more effectively.

The DCCS responds to the gap in the digital health and care innovation landscape in Scotland by focusing on social care, social work and housing, and aims to complement similar approaches in health, such as the ANIA (Accelerated National Innovation Adoption) pathway and regional Innovation Hubs.

Read more about the development of the DCCS here.

The DCCS focuses on five national priority areas developed through extensive co design and engagement with Scottish Government, care providers, housing organisations, academic experts, industry partners and national bodies, and informed by learning from digital care programmes in England and Wales.

Diagram 1: DCCS - National Priority Areas

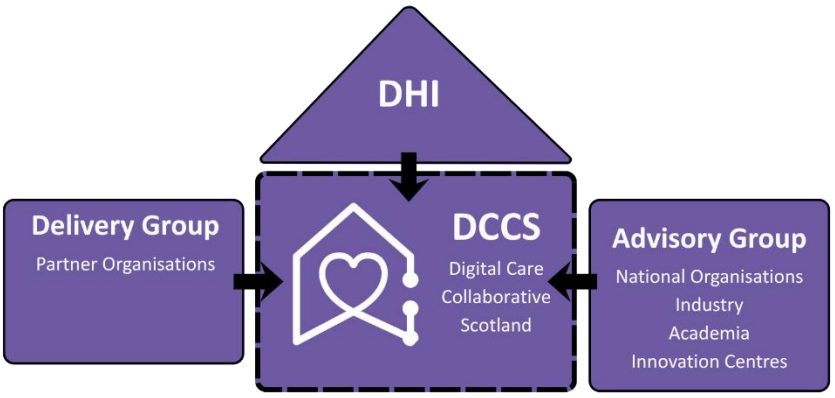
**DHI is a national resource, key enabler and catalyst for change, occupying a unique and visible position at the heart of the Scottish innovation ecosystem for digital health and social care. DHI is a not-for-profit organisation, publicly funded by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and Scottish Government.*

The Structure of the DCCS

Current strategic governance for the DCCS is provided through the DHI Board. A Strategic Advisory Group, with representatives from key national organisations and stakeholders, provides advice on direction, priorities and alignment across the wider system (see Annex A). Opportunities will be taken to connect with other relevant governance/groups specific for social care, social work and housing.

The DCCS is supported by a Delivery Group, involving national partners who have contributed to the work to date and who support ongoing implementation and delivery of activity across priorities (see Annex A). Current partners include: the Care Inspectorate, Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), Local Government Digital Office, the new Public Services Delivery Scotland, Quarriers, Scottish Care, Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA), Social Work Scotland, The Health and Social Care ALLIANCE Scotland (the ALLIANCE), and academia (the University of Strathclyde). Membership of the group will be reviewed in the context of emerging priorities.

Diagram 2: DCCS Structure



DCCS Delivery Plan for 2026-2027

Creating Conditions for Digital Care Innovation

The 'Creating the Conditions' priority sets out the foundational work required to enable meaningful, digital innovation across the social care, social work and housing. This priority is driven by the recognition that digital progress in social care, social work and housing must be person-led and values-driven, intentionally shaping an environment where innovation responds to identified needs, and supported by appropriate structures, capabilities, and resources required to be sustainable.

Engagement across sectors has highlighted a consistent set of needs in creating the conditions for digital care innovation* including:

- Building on existing assets and resources to avoid reinventing what already works;
- Supporting innovation to become more intentional rather than accidental;
- Supporting sectors to be alert to how rapidly emerging technologies such as AI may disproportionately affect marginalised communities; and
- Ensuring digital tools support people with low digital literacy.

**The term Digital Care Innovation is used to encompass digital innovation across the social care, social work and housing.*

'Creating the conditions' focuses on building a strong and coherent identity for digital care innovation in Scotland, with the DCCS acting as a 'hub' for exploration, learning, and collaboration. Gaining recognition and legitimacy for digital care innovation is another key component. Securing endorsement from national stakeholders while also elevating digital innovation in social care, social work and housing as essential infrastructure that requires long-term investment, is key. By forming a collective national voice, this work will help ensure parity and understanding for digital communities across care sectors.

Through this priority, the DCCS will deliver practical mechanisms for enabling progress through opportunities to support organisations on their digital innovation journeys, identify persistent barriers (e.g., infrastructure, workforce, information governance) and the enablers needed to overcome them, and facilitating collaboration across the ecosystem. It will also help organisations access the right expertise, resources, and partnerships required for sustained digital transformation, creating the conditions for enabling innovation to progress to adoption and delivery at scale.

'Creating the conditions' is about building the ecosystem (identity, recognition, relationships, insight) and infrastructure needed to enable purposeful, equitable, and community rooted digital care innovation across Scotland.

Focus for 2026/27

Over the next year (April 26 to March 27), the DCCS will develop a 'version 1' digital care innovation pathway, taking account of existing examples and evidence (e.g., ANIA) and by engaging with partners and stakeholders. Work will draw on the learning from the Chief Scientist's Office and wider innovation activity with the opportunity to identify key priorities that could be developed into national programmes. Creation of an innovation pathway specific to digital social care, social work and housing will include providing clarity on technical, service and commercial readiness levels. Consideration of digital inclusion will be central to the innovation pathway work and in advocating for how digital inclusion can be embedded in wider digital innovation pathways across wider health and social care in Scotland.

DHI Project Alignment

A number of ongoing and completed projects within DHI and across DCCS partners (see Annex B) will provide test cases to explore the development of a digital care innovation pathway. These will be updated on an ongoing basis. Projects include:

- Care In Place
- Care Technologist
- Digital smart housing blueprint
- Magic Notes (Implementation in Social Work)
- MXAi Smart: SCOTLAND
- Navigating Scotland's Digital Health and Social Care Innovation Ecosystem - Mapping Support Structures, Readiness and Signposting from an Entrepreneurial Perspective.
- PainChek
- Proactive Telecare
- Robotic Medication Dispenser
- Remote frailty monitoring
- Projects via the SFHA Smart Housing Awards

Ongoing Sector Work

Aligned with this priority we will also support wider sector work relevant to DCCS where capacity permits, for example, DCCS is providing research and co-design support to work being developed in the context of approaches to digital social care procurement.

Outcome: a clear understanding of the distinct needs of social care, social work and housing in relation to digital innovation by analysis of existing pathways and based on insight from key stakeholders.

Output: A prototype innovation pathway for digital in social care, social work and housing in Scotland.

Knowledge Exchange and Networking

The 'Knowledge Exchange and Networking' priority will create a connected, confident, and collaborative ecosystem for digital care innovation. It has been shaped through extensive engagement across sectors, reflecting a shared desire to strengthen cross-sector relationships, remove duplication, and make digital knowledge easier to access, understand, and act on.

This priority recognises that digital innovation progresses best when organisations collaborate and will focus on building strong partnerships with key national bodies (and international networks) to ensure alignment, mutual support, and shared learning. Equally, it will create structured opportunities for stakeholders across care, academia and industry to contribute knowledge and expertise while gaining a deeper, more nuanced understanding of sector priorities, avoiding misalignment and helping ensure research and innovation genuinely meet care needs. Fostering the development of partnerships among providers who already have practical experience of implementing technology in social care, social work and housing is a key part of the work to initiate shared and grounded learning.

Engagements across sectors has highlighted a consistent set of needs for knowledge exchange and networking, including:

- Designing sessions to build confidence and demystify technology, starting from what people already know and avoiding technical or intimidating language, especially around data;
- Ensuring sessions are inclusive and welcoming to stakeholders from across different sectors and organisations and offer tailored information for different parts of the sector; and
- Activities will include informal sessions, peer learning opportunities, non-sequential events, and recorded content that people can access in their own time.

The 'knowledge exchange and networking' priority, as well as fostering shared learning (including across the UK and internationally) will highlight and celebrate what is already working in the sector through real stories of good practice and implementation of innovation. The intention is to establish a supportive, collaborative, and accessible foundation for digital innovation across social care, social work and housing, ensuring people can learn from each other, see what is possible, and feel confident to take the next step.

Focus for 2026/27

DCCS will lead a structured programme of innovation-focused knowledge sharing and networking supported by creation of a membership area within the DHI 'cluster'* model.

Activities will include:

- Digital care innovation specific knowledge sharing through newsletters, thought pieces and innovation case studies;
- Networking and learning through recorded and 'live' online sessions with digital care innovation experts from across sectors; and
- Host and promote webinars and events relevant to digital care innovation, including partnership events with organisations (e.g., the International Foundation of Integrated Care).

Outcome: creation of a vibrant, practice informed learning community that supports the continuous development of digital innovation in social care, social work and housing.

Outputs:

- **Quarterly newsletters** providing updates on latest developments across the DCCS community.
- **4 thought pieces** from leaders across digital care innovation.

- **6 innovation case studies** showcasing practical examples and real-world impact across sectors.
- **5 bitesize learning series** through a bi-monthly video recording offering accessible introductions to key innovation topics.
- **5 Lunch-and-learn sessions** delivered bimonthly, designed to deepen understanding and facilitate cross-sector discussion through interactive online networking.
- Ongoing leading, hosting and contributing to relevant, **conferences, webinars and events**.

**DHI has a strong track record in implementing innovation hub networks and models of collaboration. Innovation hubs are a catalyst for managing multi-directional knowledge flow. Hubs can build on the existing work of innovation community members and serve as a clustering mechanism for a particular region, discipline or task. They represent a powerful collaboration of shared strategic interests, expertise and skills from policy, sector specific expertise (e.g., social care), academia, research and commercial partners, centred around a common purpose.*

Evidence Building and Research

The 'Evidence Building and Research' priority strengthens the shared evidence base for digital innovation in social care, social work and housing by consolidating learning, generating practical insights, and identifying opportunities for future research. Engagement across the sector has highlighted the need for clearer intelligence on credible technologies, accessible case studies, and a better understanding of emerging products and international approaches.

This priority brings together existing evidence of digital care innovation including published research, market insight, and early-stage testing of digital tools, under a single, coherent organising principle. It also supports wider sector aims to reduce duplication and improve decision-making through consolidating high-quality evidence.

The DCCS has delivered two major reports in the digital care innovation domain:

- **Digital Innovation in Social Care: Priorities and Opportunities for Scotland (2025)** https://doi.org/10.17868/strath.00092940
- **Digital Innovation in Social Care – Industry Engagement Workshop Report (2025)** https://doi.org/10.17868/strath.00094443

In addition, DCCS has also published a position paper setting out the background context and priorities for the work:

- **Digital Care Collaborative Scotland Position Paper**

Sector feedback has highlighted several core needs:

- Clear visibility of credible, safe and effective technologies;
- Practical case studies, including examples of unfunded or low-cost innovation;
- Regular market insight, horizon scanning and product intelligence;
- Small-scale testing or demonstrations to understand real-world applicability;
- Synthesised international learning to broaden perspectives on transformational models;
- Support with procurement and solution-finding, especially where services face shared challenges; and
- Trusted channels for sharing evidence, insights and learning.

This priority will consolidate the evidence base for digital innovation social care, social work and housing and foster collaborative research opportunities that respond to sector needs.

Focus for 2026/27

DCCS will deliver a focused programme of evidence and insight activity that strengthens understanding of digital care innovation and supporting cross-sector, interdisciplinary research partnerships.

Activities will include:

- Maintaining ongoing horizon scanning and market insight, ensuring DCCS supports the understanding of credible products and emerging technologies;
- Strengthening recognition of social care, social work and housing within wider research communities (e.g. NIHR, UKRI/ EPSRC), ensuring end-user perspectives and domain expertise inform cross-disciplinary learning;
- Promoting funding opportunities for research and innovation across the digital care landscape; and
- Fostering collaborations across sectors to develop research and innovation proposals that respond to sector needs.

Outcome: A clear, trusted and practically useful evidence base and a collaborative research and innovation community that strengthens the capacity for adoption and scale of digital care innovation.

Outputs:

- One annual market insight summary (pipeline and horizon scan);
- Minimum 3 exploratory research collation sessions (responding to funding calls); and
- Ongoing research applications / submissions led, facilitated or partnered by DCCS.

Developing Resources and Practical Tools

The ‘developing resources and practical tools’ priority will focus on transforming DCCS into a trusted, 'hub’ where the care sector can easily find the guidance, tools, and examples needed to support digital care innovation. While there is a wealth of information available across different organisations, it is fragmented, difficult to navigate and rarely tailored to the diverse landscape of social care, social work and housing. To make knowledge accessible, this priority will invest in clear, user-friendly signposting to existing resources, tools, and examples of best practice. DCCS will also identify any gaps in existing resources and work with partners to support the development of materials.

Learning from engagements across sectors has highlighted what would be helpful for practical resources, including:

- Clear signposting, searchable formats, and curated pathways that filter and organise resources by sector, setting, and need;
- Flow charts to guide users to what is most relevant; and
- Highlighted key takeaways, excerpted insights, and pre-reading materials to help ensure everyone starts from the same baseline, particularly important where training capacity is limited and is difficult to access due to low digital literacy.

The ‘resource and practical tools’ priority aims to create a well-organised, intuitive, and responsive resource base that supports learning, reduces duplication, and builds confidence in digital care innovation. By enabling partners to contribute to thematic areas and share resources across their networks, it will strengthen skillsets, increase available tools and resources for innovation, and foster collaboration and develop a connected community of innovation.

Focus for 2026/27

DCCS will map and organise the resources currently available across sectors, to bring together existing materials into a resource hub. DCCS members will be encouraged to share and deposit useful resources so the collection continues to grow and stay relevant.

DCCS and DHI will work together to support the curation, organisation and accessibility of these materials, with guidance from the Delivery Group. DCCS will also share a range of materials designed to highlight innovation across sectors, promote learning, and strengthen collaboration across our community.

Outcome: a centralised resource hub that supports innovators across social care, social work and housing to navigate pathways, de-risk decision making and understand where digital solutions add value in different care contexts.

Output: an easy to navigate resource hub and dedicated members area. Over time, we will maintain, track and expand the available resources to ensure the hub remains comprehensive and valuable for the sector.

Workforce Capability and Learner Pathways in Digital Innovation

The 'Workforce Capability and Learner Pathways in Digital Innovation' priority focuses on strengthening the skills, confidence and leadership needed across the care workforce to support meaningful digital transformation. This priority recognises that technology adoption is only effective when matched with investment in workforce capability. It also seeks to support national organisations in addressing gaps in current learning provision, improve accessibility, ensure inclusion, and shift away from temporary 'digital champion' models toward embedded, sustainable capability.

DCCS will strengthen links between practice, education and research by developing innovation-focused learning opportunities, contributing to national frameworks, and enabling cross-disciplinary collaboration.

Sector engagement has identified key needs for workforce capability and learning pathways, including:

- Learning that builds confidence, avoids assumptions about staff digital readiness, and is accessible to all roles;
- Competency frameworks and professional standards that reflect digital skills as core requirements;
- Clearer progression routes, particularly within SVQs, that recognise increasing digital responsibilities;
- Workforce planning that considers skills, capacity and human-resource requirements for innovation;
- Inclusion of diverse voices and lived experience within learning design; and
- Stronger connections between innovation activity, implementation and workforce development

Focus for 2026/27

DCCS will strengthen digital innovation capability across the care workforce, while forming clearer pathways between practice, education, and research through closer alignment with national workforce programmes.

Activities will include:

- Supporting entrepreneurship and innovation across social care, social work and housing through delivery of programmes and development of further funding submissions;
- Developing and supporting a dedicated MRes Scholarship in Social Care Innovation or Digital Transformation, including supervisor identification and specification development;
- Collating existing microlearning resources and materials developed across DHI and related academic upskilling programmes;
- Supporting partners to embed digital innovation capabilities within national learning programmes, induction frameworks, digital maturity work, and workforce planning processes; and

- Ensuring lived experience and diverse voices are central to workforce development, learning design, and capability building.

Outcome:

Creation of a confident, digitally skilled care workforce with clear pathways for learning, leadership development, and career progression, enabling innovation to be adopted, sustained, and shaped by those delivering social care, social work and housing.

Outputs:

- Delivery of the *Social Care Innovation & Entrepreneurial Bootcamp* in early 2026/27;
- Submission of the Glasgow City Region funding bid to support women innovators in health and social care;
- Launch of one dedicated MRes Scholarship in Social Care Innovation or Digital Transformation;
- Increased access to inclusive learning resources such as microlearning materials, induction content, and innovation aligned pathways.

How can I get involved in the Digital Care Collaborative Scotland?

The Digital Care Collaborative Scotland is one of DHI's innovation clusters, offering open membership to people who are interested in digital care innovation. The DCCS will publish annual reports on progress and outcomes, alongside regular updates through DHI and partner communication channels. Membership is free and is available by subscribing to DHI and selecting the DCCS community:

https://www.dhi-scotland.com/subscribe

DCCS website link: https://www.dhi-scotland.com/innovation-clusters/dccs

Annex A DCCS Delivery Group Partners and Strategic Advisory Group Members (current)

Strategic Advisory Group Members	Delivery Group Partners
Care Inspectorate CEO provider group CoSLA The Data Lab ENRICH International Foundation of Integrated Care IJB Chief Officer Reference Group Local Government Digital Office Public Services Delivery Scotland Scottish Care Scottish Government (CSO/ANIA, Digital Health and Care, Social Care) SCVO National Social Work Agency SFHA SSSC The ALLIANCE Technology Services Association (TSA -Industry rep) University of Edinburgh University of Strathclyde	Care Inspectorate CoSLA Local Government Digital Office Public Services Delivery Scotland Quarriers Scottish Care SFHA Social Work Scotland The ALLIANCE University of Strathclyde

Annex B DCCS Supported Projects

Details of current projects supported by the DCCS.

Project Name	Overview	Partners	DCCS Support
Care in Place	Care in Place is a research and development project undertaken by the RCE in collaboration with Moray Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP). Together with citizens, staff, and third-sector groups the project aims to understand current challenges with health and care needs and explore new ways to deliver important services using digital solutions.	DHI, Moray Health and Social Care Partnership	Knowledge exchange
PainChek	PainChek® is a clinically validated pain assessment tool initially designed to improve pain management for individuals with moderate to severe dementia in care settings.	Care Inspectorate, University of Strathclyde,	Case study for innovation pathway; exploring cost benefit analysis support
NIHR RSPC Oxford University Proactive Telecare Project	This project works in partnership with three care organisations to study and support the real-world implementation of proactive telecare. Using a multi-level action research approach, it aims to generate practical and transferable insights into how proactive telecare services can be designed, implemented and sustainably embedded within routine social care practice.	DHI, LGDO, University of Oxford	Supporting participation in a Scotland-based implementation site
RCE LL4B Housing Digital Blueprint	The blueprint is a bold rethinking of the home as a living system: one that generates energy, supports wellbeing, anticipates need, and evolves with its occupants over time. Designed for rural Scotland but relevant far beyond, it combines low-carbon construction, digital health, and adaptive design into a single, integrated blueprint. The model is structured across three	DHI, Be-ST, Moray Council	Supporting early adopters, next stage funding opportunities; Knowledge exchange

	horizons, allowing housing providers and policymakers to act immediately while planning for future integration.		
Robotic Medication Dispenser	The project focus is how this digital device impacts on medication adherence, staff resources and outcomes for people; and to explore how data generated by MDRs can be used for care planning within the Scottish health and social care context, and/or by the national Telecare Alarm Receiving Centre (ARC).	Evondos, DHI, LGDO, IJBs	Case study for innovation pathway; Supporting academic evaluation
Scaling up digital infrastructure to support social care organisations	Identifying options (UK and wider) to support the use and adoption of digital products and services for a diverse social care sector, taking account of existing frameworks.	CoSLA, Scotland Excel	Supporting research review, engagement and co-design
Archangel and Bield Housing project	The Archangel Joining the Dots project is an initiative leveraging the Internet of Things to transform the way social housing and care services are delivered. As part of the Glasgow 5G Innovation Region's Smart and Connected Social Places (SCSP) Innovation Fund, this initiative aligns with national priorities to foster digital transformation, economic growth, and commercial investment in advanced wireless connectivity solutions.	Archangel, Bield Housing, DHI	Knowledge Exchange
NIHR ETECH	Embedding Technology in Care Homes (ETECH) is a 30-month NIHR-funded study exploring digital maturity in care homes across the UK. The project will map the current landscape of digital tools and systems, examine how technology is experienced by staff, residents and families, and identify what supports safe, person-led digital development. The project places equal value on	University of Glasgow (lead) University of Edinburgh, DHI, ENRICH and partners	Knowledge Exchange

	health, care and social technologies, ensuring digital transformation enhances quality of life as well as practice		
MXAi Smart: SCOTLAND	Developing a carer-led, AI-enabled platform to improve brain health and wellbeing through personalised, evidence-based engagement.	MXAi Heriot Watt University, University of Strathclyde, University of Stirling, Scottish Care	Knowledge Exchange, innovation pathway learning partner
Digital Lifelines Scotland	To improve digital inclusion and to design digital solutions that better meet people's needs, to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for people who use drugs and reduce the risk of harm and death.	DHI, SCVO, Simon Community	Knowledge exchange