A review of telehealth in Scotland

Assessing potential opportunities for using telehealth

AUDIT SCOTLAND

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Questions to help NHS boards assess potential opportunities for using telehealth

1. Audit Scotland published its national report, *A review of telehealth in Scotland*, on 13 October 2011. This paper accompanies that report and sets out questions that NHS boards may wish to consider when either introducing or redesigning a service, to help identify opportunities for using telehealth and assess whether the use of telehealth is feasible.

2. Copies of the national report can be downloaded from our website (www.audit-scotland.gov.uk).

What are the potential benefits of using telehealth to deliver this service?

Improved access

- Are any patients unable to access the current service (eg, because of geography, lack of specialist skills locally)?
- Are any patients unable to access the current service due to the nature of their condition (eg, if the patient is housebound or seriously ill)?
- Do clinical staff have to travel more than a four-hour round-trip to deliver the current service?
- Does a patient have to travel more than a four-hour round-trip to access the current service?
- Could telehealth provide the opportunity for patients to be seen more quickly by specialists?

Increased capacity

- Is demand for the current service increasing?
- Could using telehealth help with meeting HEAT targets?
- Could using telehealth shorten stays in hospital and/or support early discharge?

Cost avoidance

- Could using telehealth potentially avoid hospital admissions?
- Could using telehealth shorten inpatient stays and/or support early discharge?
- Could using telehealth lead to a reduction in outpatient appointments?
- Could using telehealth reduce patient transport costs for the NHS board?
- Could telehealth replace the current method of service delivery, or would it have to be provided as an additional service?

Health benefits

- Could using telehealth lead to quicker diagnosis and treatment for patients?
- Could using telehealth potentially improve health outcomes for patients?
- Could using telehealth potentially reduce patient anxiety and stress (eg, by providing a service closer to home)?
- Could using telehealth help patients better manage their own condition?

Does the NHS board have the appropriate resources to deliver this service using telehealth?

Technology and IT infrastructure

- Could technology be used to support delivery of the particular clinical service?

- Is appropriate technology already available in the NHS board to support telehealth (eg, video-conferencing)?

- Is the IT infrastructure suitable to support telehealth (eg, broadband services)?

- How much would any new equipment or improvements to the IT infrastructure cost (capital and revenue) and is funding accessible?

- Is appropriate technical support available to support the use of telehealth?

Clinical staff

- Do clinical staff have the relevant skills and experience to use telehealth?

- Are there opportunities for staff to receive training and support in using telehealth?

- Are clinical staff supportive of the service being provided through telehealth?

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