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# Skills and Innovation for Adult Social Care

## PROMOTING INNOVATION LEADERSHIP IN CARE: DIGITAL LEARNING PROGRAMME

IDENTIFYING, SUPPORTING, AND PROMOTING INNOVATION IN CARE

LAPIS RESEARCH PROJECT  
LEARNING FOR ADULT SOCIAL CARE PRACTICE INNOVATIONS AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT  
Project no: 2020-1-UK01-KA202-078960

# Identifying, supporting, and promoting innovation in adult social care:

## Executive summary:

Innovation is central to the advancement of adult social care, as it can lead to better outcomes for service users, more efficient services, and improved working conditions for staff. To identify, support, and promote innovation in adult social care, it is necessary to foster a culture of innovation, establish mechanisms for identifying and sharing good practice, and provide funding and support for innovative projects.

Facilitating innovation leadership for the care sector is important to encourage the development and implementation of innovative solutions that can improve the quality of care provided to individuals. Supporting innovation leadership requires a commitment to fostering a culture of innovation, providing education and training, collaborating with other organisations, and providing resources to support innovation initiatives. By creating an environment that encourages innovation, leaders can help to develop and implement innovative solutions that improve the quality of care provided to individuals. There are many ways to support leaders in learning about innovation and implementing innovation within their organisations:

- **Provide education and training:** Offer workshops, seminars, and training sessions on the principles of innovation, best practices, and how to implement innovative solutions. Encourage leaders to attend conferences and events related to innovation in the care sector.
- **Foster a culture of innovation:** Create an environment that encourages innovation by promoting creativity, risk-taking, and experimentation. Encourage leaders to support and recognise staff who come up with innovative ideas.
- **Create an innovation team:** Form an innovation team consisting of leaders and staff who are responsible for identifying opportunities for innovation and developing and implementing new solutions.

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- **Collaborate with other organisations:** Encourage leaders to collaborate with other organisations in the care sector to share ideas, best practices, and resources related to innovation.
- **Provide resources:** Ensure that leaders have access to resources and funding to support innovation initiatives.
- **Evaluate outcomes:** Establish processes to evaluate the impact of innovation initiatives to identify successes and areas for improvement. Encourage leaders to share the results of their innovation initiatives with other organisations in the care sector.

#### Benefits of innovation in social care:

Innovation is a critical component of improving patient outcomes in health and social care. The healthcare industry is continually evolving, and innovative technologies and treatments are transforming the way healthcare professionals deliver care to their patients. Through innovation, healthcare providers can improve patient outcomes, increase efficiency, and reduce costs, ultimately enhancing the quality of care delivered to patients. Innovative technologies such as electronic medical records, telemedicine, and wearable devices are revolutionising the way healthcare professionals deliver care. Electronic medical records provide real-time access to patient information, allowing healthcare professionals to make more informed decisions quickly. Telemedicine allows healthcare professionals to provide remote care, reducing the need for in-person visits and increasing access to care for patients in remote areas. Wearable devices can monitor patient health in real-time, alerting healthcare professionals to potential health issues before they become serious. Innovative treatments are also transforming the healthcare industry. Precision medicine, for example, uses genetic information to develop personalised treatment plans for patients. This approach ensures that patients receive treatments that are tailored to their unique genetic makeup, increasing the effectiveness of treatments and reducing the risk of adverse reactions.

Innovation is also essential in improving patient outcomes by increasing efficiency and reducing costs. Innovative technologies such as robotics and artificial intelligence can

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automate routine tasks, allowing healthcare professionals to focus on more complex tasks that require their expertise. This reduces the workload on healthcare professionals, enabling them to deliver care more efficiently. Innovative treatments can also reduce costs by improving patient outcomes, reducing the need for more expensive treatments or hospital stays. Furthermore, innovation can improve patient outcomes by enhancing patient engagement and participation in their care. Innovative technologies such as patient portals and mobile health applications provide patients with access to their health information, enabling them to participate more actively in their care. Patients can communicate with their healthcare providers, track their health data, and receive reminders for appointments or medications, promoting better self-care and ultimately improving patient outcomes.

Innovation is critical to improving patient outcomes in health and social care. Innovative technologies and treatments are transforming the way healthcare professionals deliver care, increasing efficiency, reducing costs, and enhancing the quality of care delivered to patients. Governments and healthcare organisations must prioritise innovation to ensure that patients receive the best possible care and that healthcare professionals have the tools and resources they need to deliver care effectively.

#### [Barriers to fostering innovation in social care:](#)

In recent years there has been a growing recognition of the need to innovate in social care, innovation in adult social care is critical for improving the quality of care for vulnerable individuals and reducing the burden on care providers. Fostering innovation in adult social care is vital for improving the quality of care provided to vulnerable individuals and supporting care providers. Innovation can help to address the challenges faced by care providers, such as an ageing population; workforce shortages; and financial constraints. However, several barriers can hinder the implementation of innovative solutions in adult social care staff. These barriers range from limited resources to regulatory requirements, lack of leadership support, and resistance to change.

One of the most significant barriers to implementing innovation in adult social care staff is limited resources. Investing in technology is a strategy that can foster innovation in adult

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social care. Innovations such as the use of technology as community based programmes have the potential to improve the quality of care and enhance the independence and wellbeing of people who use social care services, in addition, technology can help to automate certain tasks, reduce administrative burdens, and support communication between care providers and patients, for instance, digital health solutions such as telemedicine, wearable devices, and mobile health apps can help to monitor patients' health and provide remote care. Investing in technology can also support research and development, enabling care providers to identify new approaches to care delivery. However, there are several barriers to implementing these innovations in social care, care providers may lack the financial and human resources needed to invest in new technologies, training, or research that would enable staff to develop innovative approaches to care, for example, organisations may struggle to afford new technologies such as assistive devices or digital systems that can improve care delivery. In addition, the sector is often underfunded and understaffed, and may not have the capacity to implement innovative solutions or carry out research to identify new ways of working, this is particularly true for small and medium sized social care providers, who may lack the resources and expertise to develop and implement new innovations.

Leadership support is imperative for the successful implementation of innovation in adult social care, without buy-in from senior leaders, staff may lack the motivation and resources needed to implement innovative solutions. Ack of leadership support can lead to a lack of investment in innovative solutions, a lack of recognition for staff efforts, and a lack of support for staff development. Leadership support is essential for fostering innovation, leaders should be committed to innovation and create an environment that encourages staff to think creatively and identify new approaches to care. Leaders should also invest in the necessary resources and infrastructure to support innovation, such as funding for research and development, training and development programmes, and technology.

Training and development are essential in fostering innovation in adult social care, providing staff with the necessary knowledge and skills to identify and implement innovative solutions can help to improve the quality of care provided to patients. Training can also help to

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develop a culture of innovation within the organisation, encouraging staff to think creatively and identify new ways of working. Staff should be encouraged to share their ideas and experiences with colleagues, creating a supportive environment that fosters innovation. However, oftentimes staff may lack the training and support needed to develop innovative solutions, and care providers may not have enough funding or time for training, or may not have access to resources that can help staff develop their skills. This lack of support can lead to a lack of knowledge and expertise amongst staff, and impact on staff motivation, which can impede the implementation of innovative solutions.

Adult social care services are often delivered across multiple organisations, which can lead to fragmented systems and a lack of coordination between providers. This can make it difficult to implement innovative solutions that require collaboration and coordination between different organisations, for example, organisations may struggle to coordinate the use of technology to facilitate information sharing and collaboration. Collaborative working can also facilitate the exchange of knowledge and expertise between different stakeholders, creating a supportive environment that encourages innovation.

There may be cultural and attitudinal barriers to innovation in social care, manifesting as resistance to change among social care providers and users. Social care is a complex and highly regulated sector, and change can be difficult to implement. Social care is often seen as a traditional and conservative sector, and there may be a reluctance to embrace new ways of working. Staff may be reluctant to embrace new ways of working, fearing that they may not understand the benefits of innovation, the impact on their workload, or the outcome of the changes. A lack of digital skills and digital literacy among the workforce is another significant barrier to innovation, many social care providers and users may not be familiar with new technologies, which can make it difficult to use and implement them effectively, with care providers and users preferring to stick with what they know and are familiar with. Resistance to change can stem from a lack of knowledge, experience, or expertise in the relevant area, or a lack of understanding of the potential benefits of innovation. This can limit the adoption of new innovations and make it difficult to

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implement innovations in social care, and limiting the impact of innovations on social care services.

In addition, staff may face time constraints that make it difficult to innovate, care work can be demanding and time-consuming, leaving staff with little time to think creatively, or develop new approaches to care. The limited time available for innovation can lead to a lack of motivation and a lack of innovation. Engaging patients and carers is essential in fostering innovation in adult social care, patients and carers can provide valuable insights into their experiences of care, and identify areas for improvement. Engaging patients and carers can also help to ensure that innovative solutions are patient-centred and meet their needs.

Regulatory requirements can create barriers to innovation in adult social care, regulations and guidelines for social care services are often outdated and do not keep pace with advances in technology and new models of care. Regulations around data protection and privacy can limit the use of new technologies or approaches to care, for example, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) may limit the use of certain technologies such as wearables or sensors that collect personal data. Regulations around confidentiality and informed consent may also restrict the use of certain innovative solutions. This can make it difficult for providers to innovate and can create legal and regulatory barriers that limit the adoption of new technologies and programmes. Regulatory support is necessary in fostering innovation in adult social care, regulatory frameworks should be designed to encourage innovation while protecting patients' safety and privacy, for example, regulations should not limit the use of technology or innovative approaches to care, but rather, support their implementation. The regulatory framework should also be flexible enough to adapt to new technologies and innovative solutions.

To overcome these barriers, there is a need for greater investment in social care services, particularly for small and medium sized providers. Regulations and guidelines for social care services need to be updated and revised to keep pace with advances in technology and new models of care. There is a need for greater investment in digital skills and digital literacy among the social care workforce. Furthermore, there is a need for greater awareness and

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education about the benefits of non-medical innovations in social care, and the cultural and attitudinal barriers need to be addressed.

There are several barriers to implementing innovation in adult social care limited resources, resistance to change, lack of training and support, fragmented systems, regulatory barriers, lack of leadership support, and time constraints are the most common barriers. Addressing these barriers will require a collaborative effort from policymakers, providers, and staff to create a supportive environment that enables innovation to thrive in adult social care. This will involve investing in new technologies, providing training and support to staff, creating an open culture that encourages innovation, and developing regulatory frameworks that support innovative solutions. Fostering innovation in adult social care is crucial for improving the quality of care provided to vulnerable individuals and supporting care providers. Collaborative working; investment in technology, training and development; regulatory support; leadership support; and engaging patients and carers are strategies that can be used to foster innovation in social care. By addressing these barriers and adopting these strategies, care providers can develop and implement innovative solutions that improve the quality of care provided and support the wellbeing of patients and carers.

#### [Barriers to implementing innovations towards climate goals:](#)

Solar power is an increasingly popular source of renewable energy, with the potential to revolutionise the way we produce electricity. However, despite rising living costs, innovation in solar power has been restricted in health and social care, as commercial buildings cannot obtain grants. This restriction has a significant impact on the ability of these institutions to invest in renewable energy, which can ultimately hinder efforts to mitigate climate change. Health and social care institutions are critical components of our society, providing essential services to the community. However, they are also some of the biggest energy consumers, with hospitals and care homes requiring a significant amount of electricity to operate. Given the environmental impact of energy production, it is essential for these institutions to invest in renewable energy sources to reduce their carbon footprint. Solar power is an excellent source of renewable energy, with many benefits over traditional energy sources. It is clean, reliable, and virtually inexhaustible. It can also significantly reduce energy costs, making it

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an attractive option for health and social care institutions that operate on tight budgets. However, the cost of installing solar panels can be prohibitive, making it difficult for these institutions to invest in solar power.

To encourage the uptake of solar power, governments often provide grants or subsidies to offset the cost of installation. However, in many countries, commercial buildings, including health and social care institutions, are not eligible for these grants. This restriction is due to the perception that commercial buildings have more financial resources and are therefore less in need of financial assistance. While this may be true for some commercial buildings, it is not the case for health and social care institutions. These institutions operate on tight budgets and are often unable to invest in renewable energy sources without financial assistance. The restriction on grants for commercial buildings means that health and social care institutions are unable to access this funding, hindering their ability to invest in solar power. The restriction on grants for health and social care institutions has a significant impact on the ability of these institutions to invest in renewable energy. This restriction not only hinders efforts to mitigate climate change but also affects the financial sustainability of these institutions. Health and social care institutions that cannot invest in renewable energy will continue to rely on traditional energy sources, which are subject to price volatility and supply chain disruptions.

#### Identifying, supporting, and promoting innovation in social care:

Innovation plays a critical role in adult social care, as it is necessary to address the complex challenges faced by the sector. It is important to identify, support, and promote innovation in adult social care to ensure that people receive the best possible care and support, while also ensuring that the sector remains sustainable and responsive to the changing needs of the population. Overall, identifying, supporting, and promoting innovation in adult social care requires a commitment to creativity, collaboration, and continuous learning. By embracing new ideas and approaches, we can create a better future for all those who rely on adult social care services.

#### *Identifying innovation:*

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- Encourage staff and service users to come forward with new ideas
- Attend conferences, seminars, and workshops that focus on innovation in adult social care
- Look for inspiration from other sectors, such as healthcare, technology, and education
- Consult with experts in the field and conduct research to identify emerging trends and best practices.

Identifying innovation in adult social care can be challenging, as it may not always be immediately obvious. However, there are several approaches that can be taken to identify innovation. One way is to encourage staff and service users to suggest new ideas and approaches. This can be achieved through regular feedback sessions, suggestion boxes, or by creating a culture of innovation where staff are encouraged to experiment with new ideas. Another approach is to look to other sectors and industries for inspiration. Many innovative ideas and approaches have been developed in other sectors that can be adapted to adult social care. For example, technology is increasingly being used to support people to live independently and to provide new ways of delivering care.

#### *Supporting innovation:*

- Provide funding, resources, and support to help develop new ideas and projects
- Create an innovation hub or incubator that provides a platform for staff and service users to collaborate and develop new ideas
- Provide training and education to staff on how to identify and develop innovative solutions
- Foster a culture of innovation by encouraging risk-taking, experimentation, and learning from failures.

Supporting innovation in adult social care is imperative to ensure that new ideas and approaches can be developed and implemented successfully. One way to support innovation is to provide staff with training and development opportunities. This can help to build their skills and confidence and enable them to experiment with new ideas and

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approaches. Another way to support innovation is to provide funding and resources. This can help to overcome the financial barriers that may prevent new ideas from being developed and implemented. Funding and resources can be provided by a range of sources, including government, charities, and private sector organisations.

*Promoting innovation:*

- Showcase innovative solutions through case studies, articles, and presentations
- Recognise and reward staff and service users for their contributions to innovation
- Collaborate with other organisations and partners to promote and share innovative solutions
- Use social media and other communication channels to share information about innovative solutions and inspire others.

Promoting innovation in adult social care is essential to ensure that new ideas and approaches are widely adopted and have a positive impact on the sector. One way to promote innovation is to share best practice and success stories. This can help to build momentum and inspire others to develop their own innovative ideas. Another way to promote innovation is to establish networks and communities of practice. These can provide a platform for sharing ideas, learning from others, and collaborating on new projects. Networks and communities of practice can be established at local, regional, and national levels.

*Fostering innovation in social care:*

One way to foster a culture of innovation is to encourage collaboration and partnership working between different organisations and sectors, including service users, careers, providers, and commissioners. This can help to generate new ideas and approaches, as well as create a sense of shared ownership and accountability for innovation. Mechanisms for identifying and sharing good practice can include networks, forums, and online platforms where innovators can connect and share their experiences and insights. It is also important to recognise and celebrate the innovative projects and initiatives, through awards, publications, and conferences, to inspire and motivate others to innovate.

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Many innovative models of care and support exist, the challenge is scaling up proven models of person-centred care beyond specific geographical areas or specialisms of care and embedding co-production at all stages.

*Barriers to scaling up innovation in adult social care include:*

- **Financial pressures** which make it difficult for organisations and commissioners to fund new, innovative services at the same time as maintaining delivery and running down (decommissioning) low quality services. Although innovators may be able to access early-stage investment or grant funding to develop and test their early ideas, it can be difficult to secure funding to grow and sustain impact.
  - Providing funding and support for innovative projects is essential to enable them to develop and scale up. This can involve working with funding bodies, investors, and other stakeholders to secure resources, as well as providing practical support such as mentoring, training, and access to expertise and resources.
- **Lack of innovation and growth of skills and capability** such as strategic planning, marketing and market analysis, organisation, and business case development, can mean that opportunities to address need and create demand are missed.
  - Without understanding what 'core' to success is and what is negotiable, commitment to the original values and intended ways of working can be lost and/or innovations can fail to adapt to local context.
- **Inward looking organisational leadership teams** focused on short-term goals and local evidence and solutions often prevent organisations working together as partners to develop shared goals and learn about 'what works' from other places.
- **Performance management and contracting systems.** Performance management systems are designed to manage the old models of care, not to incentivise new ones. They are institutionally based, rather than focusing on people, pathways, or localities. They reinforce silos and they are inherently conservative.
  - The current contracting arrangements across health and social care promote perverse incentives, prioritising treatment over prevention, and rewarding activity rather than outcomes.

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*Drivers of innovation in adult social care:*

- **Ability to undertake high quality impact evaluations.** Many of the most successful innovations have an ambition to ‘go big’ from the beginning. They value and act on feedback and intelligence to improve what they do and increase the number of people who benefit. Producing high quality evidence of impact, meeting the highest standards possible (Nesta Standards of Evidence), is increasingly seen as vital to convincing commissioners and other funders to invest in an innovation.
  - Commissioners and funders can help by being clear about their expectations and being willing to engage with evidence of impact from other areas.
- **A clear vision of the change** being sought and the core features of the innovation that will achieve it. When an innovation is easy to describe it is easier to raise awareness, gain support and engage stakeholders in practical considerations of how to scale. Taking time to define and codify the ‘core features and benefits’ of the innovation can also reassure those interested in adopting it that the intended benefits are likely to be realised.
  - By working together to develop clear referral routes through public services and community resources, innovators and commissioners can create demand for their innovation and a clearer pathway to scale and sustainability.
- **Leadership** a ‘tight and loose’ leadership approach can help to create and maintain a clear shared vision and values, whilst enabling local teams to develop an approach that is adapted to local context and the needs of local people. For innovators, this can mean being open to different routes to scale and creating multiple pathways to reach new users. For commissioners and other providers, it can mean being open to new ideas and enabling teams to take the steps needed to make them a success, including where this requires developing new relationships, decommissioning or changing existing services, or giving up resources and control.

**Conclusion:**

Identifying, supporting, and promoting innovation in adult social care requires a multi-faceted approach that involves fostering a culture of innovation, establishing mechanisms

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for sharing good practice, and providing funding and support for innovative projects. By doing so, we can help drive positive change in the sector and improve outcomes for staff and service users alike. Identifying, supporting, and promoting innovation in adult social care is essential to ensure that the sector is able to meet the complex and changing needs of the population.

Innovations in social care are all around us, but despite good intentions and progress, there remains a rhetoric-reality gap, as innovations take off, we need to develop a unified understanding of innovation. There are several barriers to the implementation of non-medical innovations in social care, including: a lack of funding and resources; outdated regulations; a lack of digital literacy; resistance to change; and attitudinal and cultural barriers. To overcome these barriers, there is a need for greater investment in social care services; updated regulations and guidelines; investment in digital skills and literacy; and greater awareness and education about the benefits of non-medical innovations in social care.

Discussions around investment in innovation often focus on 'new money' but commissioners also need to tackle the issue of transferring resources away from existing low-quality outcome approaches to more person-centred sustainable care and support services. This can be difficult for existing commissioners especially when they have funded services for many years. Existing care providers also need to be supported to innovate and transform services where possible. Innovation in solar power is restricted in health and social care as commercial buildings cannot obtain grants. This restriction has a significant impact on the ability of health and social care institutions to invest in renewable energy, ultimately hindering efforts to mitigate climate change. Governments must review their policies and ensure that health and social care institutions are eligible for grants and subsidies to invest in solar power. This will not only benefit the environment but also ensure the financial sustainability of these institutions.

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Commissioners have a big role to play in supporting investment in innovations. By encouraging staff and service users to suggest new ideas, looking to other sectors for inspiration, providing training and development opportunities, and sharing best practice and success stories, we can create a culture of innovation in adult social care that supports the development and implementation of new and innovative approaches. Moreover, commissioners need to embed co-production in all new services to ensure buy-in and support from service users and their families. It will also allay fears about moving away from more traditional care services to new models which can deliver better outcomes, service users become partners in this process co-producing solutions and actively managing their own health. Additionally, commissioners should pay care and support providers on the basis that they improve resilience, independence, self-care and social connections. There is an urgent need to bring together the evidence base on innovative models of health, care and support into a single 'what works' information source, creating opportunities for gathering evidence and data across different providers which can be used by commissioners to support further investment in innovation and prevention services. These can be shared with stakeholders interested in transformation and innovation via our LAPIS app for innovation success stories. If coupled with evaluation tools to appraise new approaches and measure outcome improvements, the LAPIS app could help ensure new ideas and approaches are widely adopted and have a positive impact on the sector.

It is necessary to develop strategic comprehensive shared objectives and targets across government departments and public bodies in relation to supporting innovation around care and support models. This will mean greater collaboration and shared resources between bodies responsible for health education, housing, council services and tackling poverty and income issues. In addition, a well-defined mechanism for scaling up innovation will be crucial to develop the capacity in the system to transition away from less person-centred models of care. These outcomes will be fundamental in meeting the demands of an ageing population and delivering more sustainable services in the medium to longer term. There will need to be a transition away from paying providers to provide set tasks and only supporting those who have reached a critical threshold in relation to care needs.

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#### Further research:

Identifying, supporting, and promoting innovation in adult social care is a critical area of research that requires ongoing investigation to ensure that the care sector is able to respond to the evolving needs of the population. Some areas of research that could further contribute to the identification, support, and promotion of innovation in adult social care include:

- **Understanding the impact of innovation on the quality of care:** While innovation is often seen as a positive development in the care sector, there is a need to understand the impact of innovation on the quality of care. Further research is needed to evaluate the effectiveness of innovative practices and technologies in improving patient outcomes and quality of life.
- **Identifying the barriers to innovation:** To effectively support and promote innovation in adult social care, it is essential to understand the barriers that prevent innovation from occurring. Further research is needed to identify the systemic, cultural, and financial barriers to innovation, and to develop strategies to address these barriers.
- **Engaging stakeholders in the innovation process:** Successful innovation in the care sector requires the active engagement of stakeholders, including patients, caregivers, providers, policymakers, and industry leaders. Further research is needed to explore the most effective ways to engage these stakeholders in the innovation process, including methods for soliciting feedback, promoting collaboration, and supporting the adoption of innovative practices.
- **Evaluating the impact of workforce development on innovation:** The care sector is heavily reliant on a skilled workforce and investing in workforce development is essential to supporting and promoting innovation. Further research is needed to evaluate the impact of workforce development initiatives, including training, coaching, and mentoring, on the adoption and success of innovative practices.
- **Exploring the role of technology in promoting innovation:** Technology has the potential to revolutionise the care sector, enabling new models of care and enhancing the quality-of-care provision. Further research is needed to explore the

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role of technology in promoting innovation in the care sector, including the use of artificial intelligence, robotics, and telemedicine.

Ongoing research is essential to identifying, supporting, and promoting innovation in adult social care. By focusing on areas such as the impact of innovation on the quality of care; identifying the barriers to innovation; engaging stakeholders in the innovation process; evaluating the impact of workforce development; and exploring the role of technology, researchers can contribute to the development of a more innovative and effective care sector that is able to respond to the needs of the population.

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