

A Vision of Scottish Telehealthcare in 2020

The term 'telehealthcare' describes the efficient delivery of healthcare at a distance, enabled by advances in information and communication technology and driven by significant global trends (ageing global population, low carbon economy, etc). Telehealthcare is relevant to urban and rural environments and for the purpose of this document, can be considered to incorporate telehealth, telecare, telemedicine, assisted living, remote clinical monitoring and supported self treatment.

A national telehealthcare conference was held in the Scottish Highlands in May 2010 during which representatives from the Scottish public sector met with Scottish companies and multinationals to discuss the future of this fast evolving sector. On the first day of the conference, an invited delegation gathered at Aldourie Castle, Loch Ness, to participate in facilitated brainstorming sessions.

Approximately 25 delegates, largely representing the Scottish public sector, were asked the question: Telehealthcare in Scotland: A vision for 2020. What will it look like and how will we get there?

In parallel, in a separate room, 25 delegates, largely representing the Scottish and international private sector, were asked the question: A telehealthcare cluster of international repute: What should it look like and how can we build it?

This document describes the shared vision for telehealthcare in Scotland in 2020 derived from these sessions. Further detail on the event and the method by which this vision was developed can be found at: www.hie.co.uk/telehealthcare-summit.

A Shared Vision of Telehealthcare in Scotland in 2020:

“Devices which quickly became accepted as personalised entertainment and information portals (such as the iPhone and the television) now play a major role in health and care. The informed general public, who readily test and buy such devices and systems from high street retailers, regard them as an essential part of their lives that help them to remain happy, healthy and when necessary, allow them access to healthcare services and advice. These devices, systems and associated sensors are user friendly, robust, inexpensive, unobtrusive, low maintenance and easily connected to robust, wireless networks (internet or phone).

Because the devices and associated communications are humanistic, personalised and empathetically designed to match the lives of their users (in terms of mood, culture, class ethnicity, etc.), people happily adopt a preventative approach to healthcare based on interaction with their devices. The advice and information delivered is such that end users learn to become more self-reliant and confident in managing their health and care which includes their active connection to relevant virtual communities. As part of this increased self confidence, the public feel they have assured security and ownership of their healthcare records, promoting a sense of responsibility for their health and care. When required, the devices and systems support the introduction of general healthcare practitioners and if appropriate, specialists who interact with end users via these systems. Evidence based telehealthcare is at the heart of all appropriate services, supporting healthcare professionals, maximising efficiency in delivery and allowing end users to receive the best possible healthcare.

Innovation has been at the heart of these achievements and is evident in the culture of Scottish service delivery organisations including procurement systems that actively promote innovation. Many highly innovative small companies now combine effectively with leading academics and supportive healthcare professionals and have, in association with the presence of multinational companies, created a globally recognised telehealthcare cluster. This cluster makes a significant contribution to the Scottish economy in the form of high value jobs within highly profitable businesses and has a successful investment track record with many successful investor exits, stimulating a competitive investment environment. The cluster’s members receive active assistance from support agencies but the cluster has developed organically, resulting in expertise in a number of specialist areas. It now holds an international reputation, able to attract leaders in business and academia from across the globe. The cluster also generates intellectual property and attracts investment such that these combined factors ensure a steady state of start ups and company sales with many Scottish companies being prepared to grow by acquisition. A welcoming and collaborative culture has developed alongside an international outlook in terms of innovation, business and standards (interoperability, portability and connectivity), leading to influential links with other leading clusters, policy makers and funders.

The integration of preventative telehealthcare into every day life, under pinned by a successful cluster has led to Scotland to become the healthiest country on the globe which in turn has increased the nation’s well being and prosperity.”