One foot in front of the other

The role of integrated IT systems in serving our residents quality of life.

2020 was one of the biggest years in the Aged Care sector in Australia to date. Not only were the findings of the Royal Commission into Aged Care set to expose some of the major areas in need of an overhaul but Aged Care facilities everywhere battled the very real impact of COVID on their staff and residents alike. It is not surprising that this created a pressure cooker where multiple cracks in our Federal Aged Care system were exacerbated. It is all good and well to talk about 'system' failures but ultimately when you are on the frontline, you need the tools and the training to fulfil what is being asked of you. Integrated IT systems have a huge role to play in the future of quality care provision in our Aged Care System and here is how.

My name is Anna Furlong from [The IT Department](#) a leading Managed Care Provider in the care sector based in Melbourne, Australia and I share a passion for the Aged Care Industry with you. I worked for over 8 years across multiple sized facilities and as a PCA, Division 2 and Division 1 Registered Nurse before landing in Quality Management. The technology systems I experienced were disparate and lacked the integration necessary to help me deliver the best outcomes to my residents. Frustrated, I lost time recording clinical data in multiple locations that didn't translate to a single source and often encountered information systems that failed resulting in outdated or defunct directives. Like you, I wanted to deliver the best care outcomes for those I was charged with looking after but often found myself asking why I was *fighting* systems instead of having them propel me in the delivery of optimised care.

Fast forward to 2021, and the industry is growing in awareness that innovative technology is imperative to the health and wellbeing of our residents by creating safe and streamlined systems that help us deliver on resident outcomes while maximising resources. [Recommendation 109 from the Royal Commission into Aged Care,](#) *ICT Architecture and investment in technology and infrastructure*, speaks directly to this. A call for *systems designed to enable better services* puts the mandate back onto Aged Care providers to be investing in technology solutions to further the delivery of care and ultimately our resident's quality of life.

This can be overwhelming when assessing the vast and various offerings in the health technology space. As such, I implore you to consider the role of integrated IT systems in closing the gap between good intentions and actual resident-centred outcomes.

Let me explain.

Creating integrated IT systems enables a single source of truth. This in turn reduces data entry workload and errors whilst enabling your staff to put time back into resident-facing activities. This also plays out in a reduction of inconsistencies across documentation which is a huge pitfall in maintaining 'accreditation ready' information systems. Bottom-line is, when an organisation makes the resources available to

invest in their IT systems they are enabling care delivery from a big-picture level all the way down to the frontline.

So, what can you do today that makes incremental progress in what is a huge undertaking? The **first step** is to take stock. What is working? What is not working? It is time to get honest with ourselves about the systems we are engaging with and how they are serving our staff and residents. This can be assessed in both an objective and subjective manner. Objectively it can be seen in your data from call bell response times or missed clinical documentation. Subjectively, your staff and residents are more than likely aware of the challenges and opportunities for improvement. In either instance you need to be willing and able to let the data reveal the areas in need of a larger systemic review. From this data you can make informed decisions towards continuously improving your IT ecosystem.

The **second step** is to let the data speak to you and use it to inform the development of your IT Roadmap. This is where outsourcing is smart. Too often I see bolt-on solutions that address an immediate isolated pain points but don't develop a holistic solution that is future-minded. For some larger organisations this means outsourcing the Level 1 support (a term given to trouble shooting and everyday type IT support). This frees their inhouse IT staff to be working on larger strategic projects to further the organisations ability to deliver efficient and effective care outcomes. In smaller organisations both the Level 1 'every day' IT and strategic projects are often outsourced, taking the pressure out of the existing management teams to deliver something beyond their capacity and often scope. These two steps are a necessary component of addressing your IT systems in a way that is cost-effective, resident-centred and outcome-driven.

We are passionate about caring for you as you care for others. For a discussion about your IT systems please call us today: 1300 10 10 40 or email me: anna.furlong@itdepartment.com.au