

# Can online innovations enhance social care?

Exploring the challenges of using digital technology to develop new models of support for older people



A PROVOCATION PAPER written for Nominet Trust by Shirley Ayres

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## Foreword

The ageing population brings with it a rise in the concentration of assets that older people bring to a community: wisdom, experience, perspective and a wide range of skill sets and capacities. At Nominet Trust we are looking to understand where digital technology can best amplify these capabilities to strengthen communities and to enable meaningful participation in them by older people. Equally though, the ageing population brings a requirement to rethink our approach to social care as more of us require care; support in caring or become active as carers. This paper explores this theme highlighting a number of exciting new approaches to care, as well as some of the challenges we need to address if we're to ensure our approach to social care is fit for purpose. As always, I'd be delighted to hear your response to this paper and to work with you to address the recommendations and challenges it sets out.

**Dan Sutch**

Head of Development Research  
Nominet Trust – January 2013

## About the author

Written by **Shirley Ayres**  
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**Shirley Ayres** is a qualified social worker and marketer, who has worked within the care sector for over 35 years. She has extensive experience of helping organisations to understand the value of digital engagement.

Shirley supports organisations in optimising their digital presence by exploring, developing and evaluating their communication strategies. She is the author of '*The Future for Personalisation? service users, carers and digital engagement*' (Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services) and the '*Click Guide to Digital Technology in Care*'.

Shirley co-presents and produces the Disruptive Social Care podcast a weekly audio discussion programme promoting innovation in the care sector.

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Digital technology offers a phenomenal opportunity to stimulate new forms of collaboration, to mobilise new communities of interest, and to unleash the imagination of millions of users in addressing specific local and global challenges.

At Nominet Trust we are committed to making these opportunities a reality – for as many people as possible.

Nominet Trust is a UK-based social investor that advocates the imaginative use of digital technology to improve lives and communities.

That's why we bring together, invest in and support projects committed to using digital technology to make society better.

Through our on-going research programme we identify specific areas of need and channel funding towards initiatives designed to make a significant difference to people's lives.

Since our inception in September 2008, Nominet Trust has invested in hundreds of projects, providing business support as well as financial investment, seeking to make a positive difference to the lives of disadvantages and vulnerable people.

To find out more about our work or how you can apply for funding, please visit: [www.nominettrust.org.uk](http://www.nominettrust.org.uk)