BHTA Scotland welcomes the opportunity to provide evidence to the Health & Sport Committee inquiry into Technology and Innovation.

The British Healthcare Trades Association (BHTA) is one of the UK’s oldest and largest healthcare associations. Its membership - of almost 500 companies employing over 17,000 people - comprises both large and small businesses across the many non-pharmaceutical and assistive technology sectors of the healthcare industry.

The products they make and supply are as varied as stoma and continence products (and related dispensing activity), wheelchairs and scooters, stair lifts, first aid equipment, aids and services for children and for visually impaired people, and prosthetics and orthotics. Products might be used by individuals living independently in their own homes, by their carers or by clinicians and health service professionals.

BHTA Scotland shares the Scottish Government’s 2020 Vision that “by 2020 everyone is able to live longer healthier lives at home, or in a homely setting and that there will be a healthcare system where there is a focus on prevention, anticipation and supported self-management and, whatever the setting, care will be provided to the highest standards of quality and safety, with the person at the centre of all decisions.”

The effective use of health technology can deliver a number of benefits including –

- Reduced hospital admissions
- Expedited hospital discharges
- Greater patient self management and involvement in their own care
- Spend to Save opportunities

We appreciate that there are a number of challenges

- Data sharing barriers
- Cultural resistance
- Sharing of good practice
- Need for significant investment
- Digital Skills gap
- Equality of access and local variation
- Cluttered eHealth organisational landscape

The NHS and care sectors on Scotland are facing significant growing demand due to increasing numbers of elderly people and those living with chronic long term conditions. This leads to a number of personnel challenges, particularly in terms of the provision of the required number of care staff.

The Scottish Government, NHS Boards, Integrated Joint Boards and other care providers must harness the potential of technological enhanced care to cope with
service demands. There’s a need for greater understanding of the possibilities healthcare technology affords so clinicians and service commissioners can integrate it in their plans both for individual patients and across whole systems.

BHTA Scotland believe it’s essential that the Scottish Government invests sufficient central resources in its Digital Health and Social Care Vision developing specific budgets to assist Health Boards and IJBs in the development of new technology backed models of care in the community and in people’s homes.

Investment should be driven by structured evaluation of the cost effectiveness and positive impacts of self testing and self management of conditions. This would require an agreed system of evidence evaluation. This should include, but not be limited to, evaluation of the various pilots which have been in operation in some local Health Board areas. Too often it seems as if pilots come to a conclusion without lessons being learnt, information being shared and plans being made to scale up. Investment should be targeted around measurable objectives and a delivery timetable and the Scottish Government must support national development of the required infrastructure.

While Scotland utilises a number of Tele Health services/products and has several thousands of individuals currently monitoring their own conditions there isn’t a suitable platform in place to receive the information from either a smart phone app or other technology that can monitor and analyze the focus therapy areas of Diabetes, COPD and Hypertension.

We appreciate that there are a number of structural, security and cultural challenges around the collection and circulation of personal data. However, the potential price is so great that the Government must develop digital systems which allow citizens to play a full role in their own care. This will benefit individuals, their carers and Health Boards and other health organisations as well as providing valuable health and social care data to drive future political and professional decision making.

Individuals are increasingly making use of health technology themselves on smartphones and other devices and it’s likely that many, particularly younger patients, may become frustrated at the NHS’ restricted approaches to data sharing and patient records.

It’s also essential that older patients are assisted and encouraged to take advantage of technology which can maintain them safely in their own homes. There may be resistance from some patients, for example those suffering from dementia or those with concerns about cyber security, so it’s important that health professionals communicate with carers so they are aware of the possibilities and are supported in the use of point of care equipment and other technology.

A number of BHTA members are Dispensing Appliance Contractors (DAC’s) who provide a comprehensive dispensing and support structure for both Ostomy and Urology patients. DAC customer care staff do provide Tele Care as they are in contact with the patient, or carer, regularly and can highlight issues back to a nurse specialist. The implementation of electronic care records or prescriptions is a long
we would encourage the Government to engage in early dialogue with DACs around this.

From a business perspective, there is a lack of clarity around ownership of the telecare and telehealth agenda in the NHS in Scotland. We appreciate there are a number of different bodies working in this field in Scotland and we would welcome a simplification and rationalisation of the landscape. We believe this would improve stakeholder engagement.

Given the importance of technology to the future of healthcare we would suggest that the Scottish Government might consider appointing a Minister for Health Technology and Innovation at this critical stage in Digital Strategy and the development of new models of care and data sharing.

In terms of accessibility and sharing of the electronic patient record we would welcome a more permissive approach to data sharing and believe this is most likely to be achievable when there is cross party political support and open communication with health professionals and patients.

Since the passage of the Procurement Act, National Procurement has taken a more open approach to pre tender discussions with potential suppliers. BHTA welcome this and we are working with NP and Scotland Excel to build effective ongoing relationships. Product suppliers are keen to play a positive part in the development of new models of care. We would welcome development of an enabling environment which supports, individuals, SMEs and larger companies to innovate. It’s critical that the Scottish Government and the NHS in Scotland see business as allies and partners in the pursuit of health and social care innovation.

Our members seek to supply products which provide whole of life savings to the public purse and we are keen to see Health Boards and others embrace innovation. However, there remains questions about how the Integrated Joint Boards and Health Boards will take forward procurement strategy in future. Which organisations should potential product developers and suppliers interact with? How does a company go about getting new telecare and telehealth products listed?

BHTA would appreciate the Health & Sport Committee giving some attention to the role effective procurement plays in advancing innovation.
Annexe

Several BHTA members make and supply Tele health and Tele care products. These include -

**Pressure and temperature mapping systems** which help wheelchair riders and clinicians better understand tissue protection. Mapping systems are now lighter, more streamlined and user-friendly. Results can be displayed through any average PC or android tablet with a USB connection, or wirelessly with an additional wireless adaptor. This means that mapping results can be stored, shared, and shown, easily and efficiently. [http://www.besrehab.net/find-a-solution/by-brand/fsa-boditrak/](http://www.besrehab.net/find-a-solution/by-brand/fsa-boditrak/)

**Ownfone Mobiles** are being used effectively to assist in discharging patients from hospital. Patients are provided with an OwnFone Mobile in their discharge package. The handset is connected to the local telecare provider. Similar units can be used by lone workers for security purposes. [https://www.myownfone.com/telecare/hospital-discharge](https://www.myownfone.com/telecare/hospital-discharge)

**iHelp GPS Tracker & Fall Sensor Pendant** has a large SOS panic button and the ability to provide precise location details to within 15 metres when requested by a carer. It also sends Google Map links and co-ordinates and automatically calls or sends an SMS alert to a carer’s phone when a fall is detected. It can receive calls as well as set medication, appointments and other reminders. It can be used on any 2G mobile phone network when you install a SIM card. [https://www.nrshealthcare.co.uk/health-aids-personal-care/dementia-memory-aids/falls-wandering-solutions/ihelp-gps-tracker-fall-sensor-pendant](https://www.nrshealthcare.co.uk/health-aids-personal-care/dementia-memory-aids/falls-wandering-solutions/ihelp-gps-tracker-fall-sensor-pendant)