



Media Release

The Technology Helping Surrey Care Home Residents Stay Connected with Loved Ones

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Care home residents and patients across Surrey are now able to keep in touch with friends and family, thanks to newly introduced video calling devices installed in care settings. Facebook Portal devices are now available in a number of care homes and hospital care settings, enabling residents to stay in regular contact with loved ones through the touch of a button.

The initiative is one of a number of measures being introduced by partners across Surrey to support the most vulnerable and socially isolated residents remain connected during COVID-19 isolation measures. The initiative aims to reduce feelings of isolation and offer emotional support by maintaining regular contact between residents and their family and friends, or connect residents with local volunteers.

Surrey was the first pilot site in the country to be selected by NHSX, the digital arm of NHS England, to take part in the scheme and learnings from the county will be used to roll out the project nationwide in the coming weeks. 50 Portal devices have been provided free of charge to care homes and hospital trusts by Facebook and NHSX, with support and training offered to staff to ensure successful implementation and connectivity to wifi networks. Infection control measures are also in place to maintain the high hygiene levels currently in place across care home settings when using the shared device.

Katherine Church, Joint Chief Digital Officer for Surrey County Council and Surrey Heartlands Integrated Care System said *'Current social isolation measures pose a real challenge to the health and wellbeing of Surrey residents, especially those who can become socially isolated from friends and family. I'm delighted that Surrey has been selected as the first pilot site in the UK to roll out this fantastic initiative, and that we can now offer a solution*



to bring families closer together, offering support and companionship at a time when we need it more than ever. The Facebook Portal system allows residents and patients the opportunity to hold real-time, face to face conversations remotely from the comfort of their own space and I'm grateful to the many people across the Surrey system which helped launch this initiative'.

Greenbanks Care Home is just one of the local care homes which received the Portal device last week and whose residents are enjoying virtual time with their loved ones. Yasheen Rajan, Director of the home said *'Technology can be an incredible leveller between the young and old. One of our residents recently had a call using Facebook's portal with his 3-year old great grandson. Neither of them had used the system before and it was wonderful to see how natural and au fait they both were conversing over the portal within a few seconds.*

We see huge benefits in using the Facebook's portal, especially with residents who have dementia. Our residents may not fully understand 'the what' effect Covid is having on the world but they can tell something is different and that can be unsettling. Being able to see and hear their relatives is incredibly comforting at this time'.

The pilot scheme will see feedback gathered from participating care homes and hospitals and further devices distributed across Surrey care settings if deemed successful.

E N D S

For media enquiries please contact: **0208 541 7920**

Notes to Editor

1. Surrey Heartlands is a partnership of health, care and local authority organisations working together across most of Surrey – with staff, patients, their carer's, families and members of the public – to transform local services and support people to live healthier lives. Together we are known as an 'Integrated Care System' – partnerships where health organisations, the local authorities and others take a *collective*



responsibility for improving the health of the local population, managing resources (including money) and making sure services are high quality.

2. Specific care settings were selected on the basis of their wifi connectivity and ability to run devices in residents' rooms or another private location. Connectivity options are being explored for care homes without wifi, including the use of 4G hotspots or data-enabled tablets.
3. To date, 50 Portals have been allocated to Surrey Heartlands to trial in Care Homes and NHS Provider Trusts. 20 additional Portals to be delivered to SASH in coming weeks.
4. 27 Portals have already been allocated across 6 care homes, Surrey and Borders Partnership and Sussex and Surrey Hospital Trust. The remaining 23 Portals will be distributed to further Surrey locations this week.