

# Telehealth successes patient stories



# Introducing Telehealth

In the UK we have an increasing older population and a rise in people living with one or more long term health conditions. This inevitably leads to an increasing demand for NHS services, and Telehealth is one solution that we have adopted locally to deliver the right care in the right place at the right time.

Telehealth is an 'assistive technology' available to the NHS to help people with long term conditions remain safely within their own home for longer.

Patients who could benefit are given a simple wireless device which they use to monitor their health from home, without the need to see a health professional. They use the equipment to provide regular blood pressure, blood oxygen, and weight readings, and give answers to pre-set questions about how they are feeling.

In Nottingham, NHS Nottingham City Clinical Commissioning Group, Nottingham CityCare Partnership and Nottingham City Homes provide Telehealth as part of the City's Integrated Care programme.

## **Better health, improved wellbeing and more independence**

Regular monitoring through Telehealth helps health professionals support patients and prevent unnecessary admissions to hospital. Patients also benefit from reduced GP or clinic appointments, as well as a greater understanding of their own health.

Feedback from Telehealth users across Nottingham is extremely positive, and has shown that using the system not only supports their physical health, the reassurance it gives also improves their feeling of wellbeing and independence.

Some of their stories\* are featured in this leaflet.

*\* Some names have been changed and some pictures are posed by models.*



## Telehealth has made 'a real difference' for Grace

*"Since using Telehealth I've spent far less time in hospital and needed fewer appointments with my GP as well."*

Grace Cox, 63, had been in and out of hospital with COPD, asthma and heart problems – all of which she was finding stressful – and had just moved into a new property on her own when Telehealth was recommended as a way to help her manage better at home.

Since starting with Telehealth four years ago she has only been admitted to hospital three times and says the system has made *"a real difference"* to her life.

Last year Grace was fitted with a pacemaker after suffering heart failure and she's now only checked in hospital once or twice a year. The continued daily monitoring through Telehealth gives her confidence that this is enough.

*“Before I started using Telehealth I was being admitted to hospital about once every six weeks,” explained Grace. “Since using Telehealth I’ve spent far less time in hospital and needed fewer appointments with my GP as well.”*

Being admitted to hospital so often was disruptive for Grace and she often wondered why she had gone in when she felt well again after such a short time. She says that the hospital can’t do any more for her than she now has at home – from her medication, equipment and monitoring to knowing she has her community matron and the Telehealth team available at the end of a phone.

***“The Telehealth Call Centre team are fantastic,”** she added. “If my readings show anything untoward someone will call to ask me if I need a nurse to visit or an ambulance.*

*“The new monitoring equipment from Docobo is brilliant as well. I no longer have to do my readings when the machine says so; I can do it any time between 6am and 10am, depending on when I’m up and about and feel like it.”*

Grace now feels more independent, has a better awareness of her own health, and feels safe and comfortable at home.

She also says the equipment is simple to understand and easy to use - *“Even my young grandson knows how to help with it! The device asks the questions that have been set specially for me, reminds me to take my medication, and **it’s easy to work, even with my arthritis.***

*“I would advise anyone that can have Telehealth to use it. It takes a bit of getting used to but if you persevere it can be a real lifesaver – it’s certainly saved me a couple of times.”*





## Stephen “hardly gives his condition a second thought”, thanks to Telehealth monitoring

After suffering from heart problems since he was 50, Stephen Jones, now 74, finally feels like he has his life back, thanks to Telehealth remote monitoring.

Stephen’s blood pressure tends to be very low, which led to such frequent hospital visits over the years that he could have called the hospital his ‘second home’.

*“You spend so many hours there that you start to feel like you live at the hospital and just visit home,”* said Stephen.

*“I may be retired but I still have things to do with my time. When you have a hospital appointment it can blow a whole day away. If you need to be there for 11.30am that’s the morning gone with the time you spend travelling, and even if you’re in and out quickly you still might not get home until mid-afternoon.”*

Thanks to Telehealth Stephen now only needs to be checked at hospital once a year, where it used to be every 28 days.

He added: ***“I think Telehealth is so empowering – I get to know what is happening with my health, and know that if my readings are low someone will come round and sort it out, and with this system that happens quickly.”***

Telehealth was recommended to Stephen after he had a spate of ‘unpleasant occurrences’ with his heart a couple of years ago and his heart failure nurse thought it would be the best way to regularly check on his health.

He says the kit he initially received was quite messy, as he had to take the readings first then set up the phone to transmit them, but the latest version is much better.

*“This is all digital – I just sit with the device at the side of me and respond to the pre-set questions, then when it says to do my blood pressure I just put the cuff on and the machine does the rest. It’s just as easy checking my weight and oxygen levels,”* he explained.

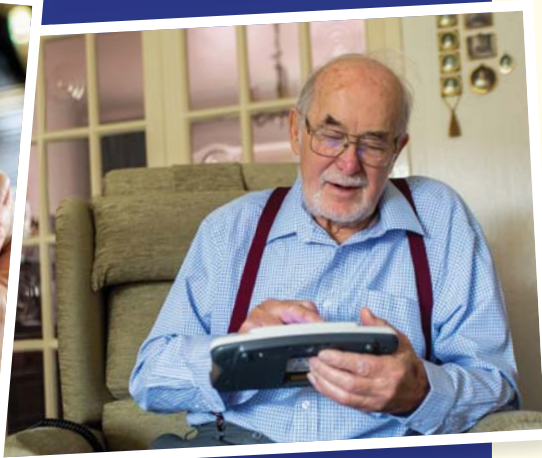
*“The device is pre-set for me to take my readings at 8am, a time that suits me as it helps me make the most of the day and be independent.*

*“I live in sheltered accommodation and have a set slot for using the laundry which is 7am on a Tuesday. There’s no way I could be back by 8am but that’s fine as I have a period of grace of around 45 minutes for taking the readings. I can also do the readings early if I wish, and can let the team know through the device if I’ll be away for a day and not doing my readings, so they don’t have to worry.”*

Stephen says he gets the same assurance from using the Telehealth device as he would from someone else coming in to take the readings – but without having to wait in for them or tidy up!

He says he would recommend Telehealth to other people with long term conditions. *“You don’t get completely taken over by your condition and it doesn’t make you think about it all the time; in fact I hardly ever give it a second thought as I know the machine will pick up any issues,”* he said.

*“I now feel safe to be away from home for a day whereas I might have worried before. **It’s been an absolute boon.**”*



## Telehealth monitoring gives Keith more peace of mind

*"It's good to know when I'm well enough for the short drive to the shops."*

Former Electricity Board engineer Keith Cottell, 83, says that you don't have to be plugged into the mobile technology revolution to be able to get the best from Telehealth remote monitoring.

*"Even with the benefit of my past career I don't understand all this modern stuff, but the Telehealth kit is really easy to use,"* he said.

Keith, from Broxtowe, had his first heart attack around 20 years ago and suffers from heart failure. The Telehealth system was recommended by his heart failure nurse and he's now been using it for around 18 months.

He says that psychologically it's been very good for him. *"I'm monitored by the Telehealth team during the week but I also log my readings at the weekend for my own benefit,"* explained Keith.

*"It puts my mind at rest and if anything is wrong on a Monday I can use my readings to let them know how I've been over the weekend."*

The heart failure nurses had been visiting Keith every other day but now he has the Telehealth system they only come around once a month. Keith is happy with this level of face-to-face support because he knows he can call them directly if he needs to and they will visit within a couple of days or arrange more urgent care if necessary.

*“Since I’ve been using Telehealth there have been a few times when my heart has gone into atrial fibrillation with an irregular heartbeat. It’s shown up in the readings and the team has picked it up much quicker than when it’s happened before,”* he added.

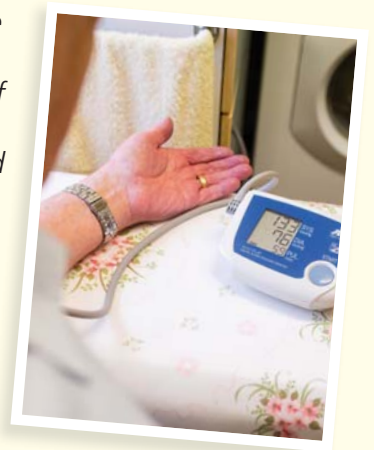
*“The monitoring helps me know when I need to have a quiet day and not take the car out. I don’t get a lot of activity but I can walk a few yards, so **it’s good to know when I’m well enough for the short drive to the shops.** It gives me the confidence to know I will be safe getting out and about for a while.”*

Keith’s daughter didn’t like the first version of the Telehealth equipment and the way it spoke, dictating when it was time for him to take his readings. *“I’ve had the newer kit for about a year now and it allows me to take my readings at any time of day – when it suits me,”* he said.

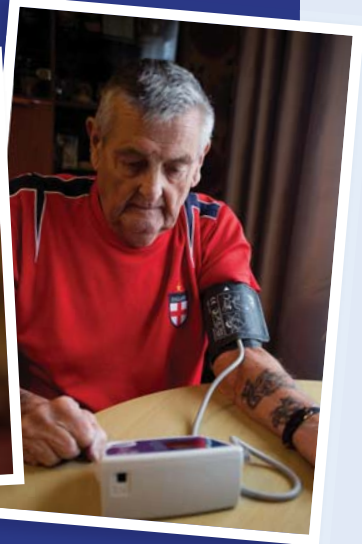
*“Previously my readings were a bit all over the place but the new device is reliable and easy to use, with a straightforward touchscreen. I’ve only had to re-set it twice in all that time, which basically just means using a button to switch it off and on again!”*

*“A member of the Telehealth team rings if there is any variation in my readings and asks if I can do them again. Sometimes it has corrected itself and I know everything is OK, or they can alert the nurses if my readings are outside the agreed limits.*

***“I would certainly recommend Telehealth***  
*– having someone call when your readings look wrong is a great assurance that someone is there to help you when you need it.”*







## Husband and wife both benefit from shared Telehealth device

*"It's great having someone there at the end of the phone when we need them."*

Husband and wife team Anthony and Winifred Rook from Bestwood Park both used to have physically active jobs, but as each of them now has COPD, their day-to-day lives are affected. However, thanks to Telehealth monitoring, they now have the confidence to know when they are well enough to get out and about safely.

Winifred, 68, has been an embroiderer and a pub cleaner, and spent 10 years in the Nottingham City Hospital laundry. She has been monitoring her condition through Telehealth twice a week for a few months now, sharing the device that husband Anthony, 70, has been using for about a year.

Anthony, who worked in industrial plumbing and heating, takes his readings five days a week and says that it's much more convenient than having different people coming round at all times of the day to keep an eye on his health.

*"I used to have visits every week to ten days, but since using Telehealth I only see my community matron around once a fortnight, unless I have any problems and need to see someone sooner," he said.*

Winifred is still visited once a month by the community matron, the same as before she used Telehealth, but she still finds the monitoring useful. *"It helps me know how my health is," she explained. **"It gives me more confidence, as I know whether I'm safe to go out on my own."***

Anthony agrees that the monitoring has been helpful for him too. *"When my readings are high the Telehealth call centre team rings to ask me to do it again," he said. "When this happened recently I told them that I was feeling unwell and they contacted the matron for me. After I spoke to her she was able to sort out a prescription for me as I'd run out of my steroids – that really was great service."*

The couple both use the same Telehealth equipment, making it more convenient for them to manage than having two sets and having to remember which is whose. On the days they both need to take readings it doesn't matter who goes first, as long as they're done by 10.30am – they simply tap the right name on the screen, answer their own personalised questions, enter their readings, then swap places! The regular monitoring of their health also reassures Anthony and Winifred's four children, who no longer worry about them quite as much.



*"When I showed them the equipment and explained what it can do their first response was 'crikey!' They were really impressed," said Anthony.*

*"We would definitely recommend Telehealth to others," said Winifred. "It gives us all peace of mind and it's great having someone there at the end of the phone when we need them."*



## Remote monitoring offers Peter more involvement in his health and care

*"It's a useful little implement, as it means any issues are picked up quickly."*

Remote Telehealth monitoring has helped Peter McClure, 66, feel more involved in his own health and care since he suffered heart failure two years ago.

He uses the Telehealth device every morning to monitor his weight, blood pressure and oxygen levels and sends the reports down the line. *"It's a useful little implement, as it means any issues are picked up quickly,"* he said.

*"Over time I've come to learn when someone will call to ask how I'm feeling and check if I need a visit. If I don't like the readings I know that the team won't either, and someone from the Telehealth Call Centre will ring me either straight away or later that day."*

When Peter first started using Telehealth there was a problem with the blood pressure cuff not giving the right readings and a replacement was needed, but he's had no real difficulties since. He moved over to the new system from Docobo around six months ago and he says that while there can still be occasional problems with the cuff it's usually something he can sort out himself.

*"It doesn't worry me; I know when something's not right and often it's just a case of swapping arms to get an accurate reading,"* he explained.

Peter also finds the equipment easy to keep clean and says the general maintenance is simple – changing the batteries is most frequent job.

*"I'm not so worried about the actual kit – I can see that the new equipment is more up to date but what's more important is that I'm getting the same benefit,"* he added.

While Peter still sees his GP, community matron and a heart failure nurse – plus a COPD specialist for his lung health – having Telehealth built into the mix has improved how well he can manage his own health.

*"Using Telehealth has made such a difference,"* said Peter. ***"I've got a much greater awareness and understanding of my health and I feel more independent. I would definitely recommend it to other people."***



For more information on the Telehealth Service or other assistive technologies which are available to support patients please contact Chris Summerlin, Assistive Technology Project Officer, on **0115 883 9222** or email **[chris.summerlin@nottinghamcity.nhs.uk](mailto:chris.summerlin@nottinghamcity.nhs.uk)**