Ethical Issues in the Delivery of Telecare and Telehealth Services

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Need for New Approach?[1]

❑ **Telecare** origins in social alarms / safety alarms / personal response systems – 'social' / community perspective

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Need for New Approach?(2)

□ **Telehealth** origins in telemedicine – 'medical' / institutional perspective

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Need for New Approach? (3)

☐ Smart homes and automation also in the 'mix'

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EU Perspective

- Demographic changes
- Escalating cost of healthcare
- Citizens arise!
  - Expert patients
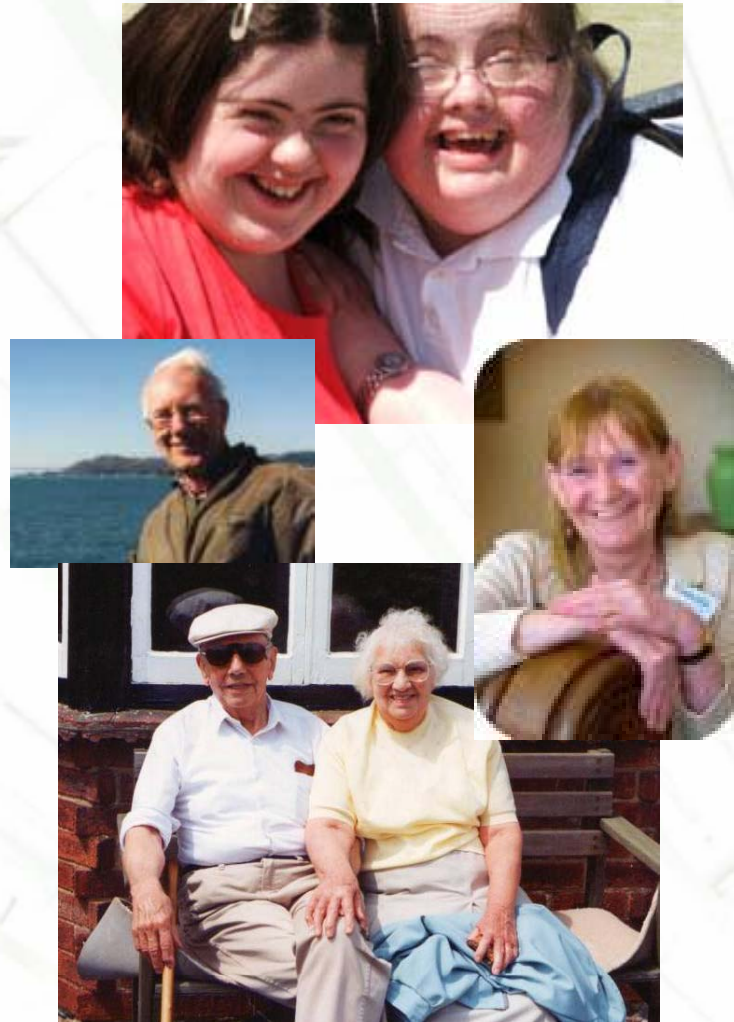 - Health the responsibility of the person, not the state

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Key New Areas

- **Lifestyle monitoring**
  - It's all about surveillance … but what is acceptable?
- **Telehealth / vital signs monitors**
  - Medical (institutional) service frameworks transferred into people's homes?

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The Main Ethical Issues

- Intrusiveness of equipment
    - Reflects institutional norms - dominated by risk and clinical objectives
    - Reduces user control and choice
- Configurability of equipment
    - Limited configurability
    - Assumes acceptability of loss of privacy
    - Normally assumes transfer of data to third party
    - Fails to give control (or feedback) to user
- Underpinning assumptions
    - Promoting dependence not independence
    - Medical not social

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Concluding Note

- ❑ Real potential of telecare and telehealth, but ...
- ❑ Need for recognition of user empowerment agenda
- ❑ Need for equipment configurations to reflect this

- ❑ … giving scope for the development of ethically appropriate services

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