

## Jenni Lynch

Doctoral researcher, School of Social Policy

### Contact

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Year started: 2011

F/T or P/T: Full time

Supervisor(s): Professor Tom Sorell

### Research topic

'Developing a valid and reliable assessment and referral model for telecare users'

### Qualifications

- MSc (distinction) Public Service Management
- MA (distinction) Women's History
- BA Hons (1st) History

### Background and professional experience

Prior to starting my PhD I was a senior commissioning manager in a local authority with responsibility for commissioning third sector services in response to the preventative health and wellbeing agenda. This included commissioning on behalf of the Primary Care Trust and working on inter-organisational initiatives.

I have also worked on major projects to develop accommodation based services for older people, primarily focusing on enabling service users with dementia to remain independent.

Having been previously involved in a multi-agency carers' strategy, I have a particular interest in issues affecting informal carers, such as support provided by statutory agencies; interaction with the voluntary sector; and ethical considerations of the role of informal carers.

### Research Overview

'Telecare' and 'Telehealth' are means of delivering services to individuals, preferably within their homes, with the support of information or communication technologies. This can cover a wide range of hi- and low-tech equipment, for example: gas and flood detectors, occupancy monitoring devices, pendant alarms and memory prompters, as well as vital signs monitoring devices. Equipment is often connected to a call centre response, and allows vulnerable individuals to live independently in their own homes.

The research is funded through an ESRC Collaborative (CASE) Studentship which ensures the involvement of non-academic organisations. In this case, the partners are Sandwell PCT, Sandwell MBC and MedilinkWM. It is also part of the ESRC funded EREBUS project - a partnership between the Universities of Aston, Birmingham and Warwick, developed in consultation with West Midlands business stakeholders to enhance research in order to drive business innovation.

Interest in this research stemmed from a lack of protocols for assessing individuals' telecare needs. Close collaborative working between all stakeholders, but especially healthcare, social care and industry is vital in order to achieve a 'best practice' model of user needs analysis and service provision. However, the accurate and appropriate identification of how specific technological interventions can contribute to the overall care package is often not integrated within these and as a result a sub-optimal solution is often delivered to the client.

The study is evaluating different assessment and referral methods currently in use and is identifying key challenges affecting the uptake of telecare and telehealth services, such as lack of robust evidence, the high cost of implementation 'at scale', limitations in interoperability of equipment and lack of integration between health and social care agencies. There are also issues relating to service user experience, such as their involvement in decision making and response to technological interventions.

The intention is to develop and pilot an assessment and referral telecare model, using both quantitative and qualitative methodology to assess costs and validity of assessment and referral models. Outcomes will relate to impact on quality of life and independent living. The study will also focus on some of the ethical dimensions associated with telecare assessment and provision.

**[Jenni is a member of the Health and Social Wellbeing Research Group. \(/research/activity/social-policy/health-social-wellbeing/index.aspx\)](#)**