



Bronze Software Labs | Trailblazer

An innovative new project, supported through the Healthy Ageing Challenge, addresses inequalities in local and national care and community support for older people.

Richard Howells had an older family member living in a rural area who badly needed long-term care. But when he tried to source that care, Richard was shocked by the lack of choice he had. Still, as CEO of a software company specialising in linking localised teams, Richard was in a position to act: he began looking to improve the situation through technology.

This resulted in the [Tribe Project](#), led by [Bronze Software Labs](#), and supported through UK Research and Innovation's Healthy Ageing Challenge. Tribe addresses inequalities in local and national care and community support. "Our mission is to ensure that there are no more 'dark patches' in care in the UK," said Bronze Software Labs' Director James Brinkler. "Your chance of getting decent care shouldn't depend on where you live."

At the heart of Tribe is an artificial intelligence engine that collects information from sources including local authorities and the NHS, to build up a picture of care needs. Local councils can then map these needs against their ability to deliver services. They can say, for example, "in 18 months, there will be an acute need for dementia care in our community." Councils can then train up care providers, including volunteers, to meet the projected need. You could think of Tribe as a kind of match-making services for care, pairing supply with demand.

Tribe also aims to stimulate flexible, local markets in care services, and help create up to 750 micro-enterprises supplying trained and accredited carers. In doing so, it will help to up-skill people in areas of low economic activity and high public service demand.

"This is ultimately about giving people choice in the care market," said Brinkler. "In our model, your council assesses your care needs and gives you control of a budget to pay for your care. With our platform, you can commission small, local social enterprises to provide your care, building up your own schedule and commissioning exactly the care you need. That can involve local voluntary and community groups, as well as paid care."

As a result, individuals get more tailored care, which leads to better health and wellbeing. If this helps individuals stay out of hospitals and care homes (which can cost up to £2,500 a day), that means huge savings.

Councils can significantly lower the costs of commissioning care. People across the UK have greater opportunities to develop skills and gain high-quality employment in the care sector. And where many larger, established domiciliary care companies pay only the minimum wage to carers, under the new system carers can be better paid, while still saving councils money.

The project includes partners from the care and technology services sectors, including charity Carers UK, TSA (the representative body for technology-enabled care services), and social enterprise Humanly Ltd. Tribe's model is now being tested in areas around England.

"Scaling-up Tribe across the UK would benefit millions of people, helping them keep their independence for longer," said Brinkler. "Having support from the Healthy Ageing challenge has meant that we could accelerate the project significantly, allowing us to make a positive difference to people's lives much sooner."

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James Brinkler,
Director of Bronze Labs