



## Digital Champions Report November 2019

Between May and September 2019 Healthwatch North Somerset ran its Digital Champions Project to raise awareness about accessing health services using the internet, and to support people's technical confidence. We collected experiences and views from people about using digital health services. We spoke to over 175 people at 11 events. This is the beginning of an ongoing project aiming to increase our social value across the county and into our two new local Healthwatch areas, Bristol and South Gloucestershire.

Findings included:

- There are multiple digital services that can be used but public knowledge of them is developing slowly and support to use them sometimes difficult to access
- When people receive support to use digital services the response was generally very positive
- It is not well known that you can now book appointments online at all GP websites.

Our feedback suggests that going digital is very daunting for some people. Skills, connectivity and accessibility are all major barriers.

One focus of our project was to help patients use askmyGP. This system was brought in at six surgeries in North Somerset in 2019. Funded by NHS England its aim is to improve continuity, effectively deliver primary care services, and help recruit GPs into the area.

## Background

For people providing health and care services digital health can mean more effective delivery, better outcomes and reduced costs. But many of the people who could most benefit from digital services are the least likely to be online. Eleven million people (20% of the population of the UK) lack basic digital skills, or do not use digital technology at all. These people are likely to be older, less educated and in poorer health than the rest of the population.

NHS England launched their Long Term Plan in January 2019 pledging that everyone who wants one, will be able to have a digital GP appointment, stating, 'We will ensure these technologies work for everyone, from the most digitally literate to the most technology averse, and reflect the needs of people trying to stay healthy as well as those with complex conditions'.

As part of the new GP contract introduced in 2019 GP practices must make at least 25% of their appointments available for online booking by July 2019. This contract said digital access to GP services should increase for all patients, with the hope that this will help practices manage their workloads.

While patients at GP surgeries have to be offered digital access for repeat prescriptions and appointments the intention is to offer patients the right to digital primary care using web and video consultations by April 2021.

## Methods

We invited the public to drop-in at our 'I-Tea' sessions, where we offered a cup of tea and a friendly face to individuals seeking answers to their online digital health problems.



Face-to-face engagement events	Numbers attending
3x I-Tea sessions at digital hub 65 The High Street, Nailsea	10
3x sessions at Public Library, Bourneville, Weston-super-Mare	18
Outreach Charity Leonard Cheshire digital inclusion programme with disabled people	28
Public Presentation by askmyGP online service	45
Weston Homemakers group Weston-super-Mare	48
Outreach at Sovereign Shopping Centre, Weston-super-Mare	9
St Marys Church, Leigh Woods	16

"askmyGP is brilliant. It answered all my questions. It saves time as you don't have to go to the surgery."

## Findings

- \* Poor connectivity where people live
- \* People who are not experienced at using digital technology are finding the process of the askmyGP project problematic
- \* People were pleased that askmyGP gives them an appointment on the same day
- \* A number of people said askmyGP was helpful
- \* When patients use Patient Access, they can't always find sufficient appointments to meet their needs.

## Outputs

We invited the lead for askmyGP project to present an overview at our quarterly public event which was well attended and generated lively debate on and off our social media accounts. We partnered with the charity Leonard Cheshire at one event to hear how it is supporting disabled people to be included in digital progress.

Having made good progress with Practice Managers and Patient Participation Groups (PPGs) the project will be launching monthly sessions inside GP surgeries from October 2019. PPGs are supporting us by promoting the time slots to patients.

## Signposting and Information

*“askmyGP is brilliant. It answered all my questions. It saves time as you don’t have to go to the surgery.”*



*“askmyGP sounds good and easy, but it’s not. When I type in the word for my medication it only allows a smaller number of characters so I can’t get the word into their box.”*

The NHS e-Referral Service (e-RS) gives a choice of place, date and time for first hospital or clinic appointments. Patients can book online or by using a telephone service in the GP surgery at the point of referral.

*“askmyGP assisted me in getting an appointment much quicker and easier than just phoning in and waiting for an eternity to get through.”*



*“The appointments get put up on the site at about 7pm the night before, but there are only a few and if you are not quick they are gone.”*

*“I can’t use computers (don’t have computer or internet) and I can’t hear on the phone. But they won’t let me book an appointment at the reception desk.”*

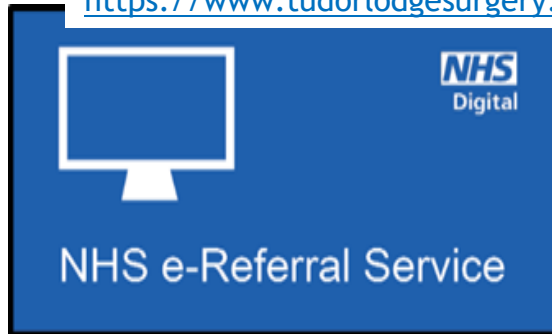
The NHS App lets you check your symptoms, book GP appointments, order repeat prescriptions and access a range of other healthcare services. The NHS App is for people aged 13 years and over who are registered with a GP surgery.

askmyGP is an email messaging system for patients to request appointments. One of its aims is to provide continuity by assigning a named GP. Requests are triaged the same day as they are submitted.

In North Somerset askmyGP is used in the following surgeries; Horizon, Tudor Lodge, Longton Grove, New Court, Milton Road and The Cedars. It is due to be rolled out in 3 more.

askmyGP - Create a strong password by using a mixture of memorable letters (capitals and lower case), numbers and punctuation marks. For example, 1647Hwns!?. When inserting your password, click on the eye image to check you have inserted the password correctly.

Tudor Lodge surgery have created a comprehensive guide about how to create an account. Copies are at the surgery or on the website: <https://www.tudorlodesurgery.nhs.uk/>

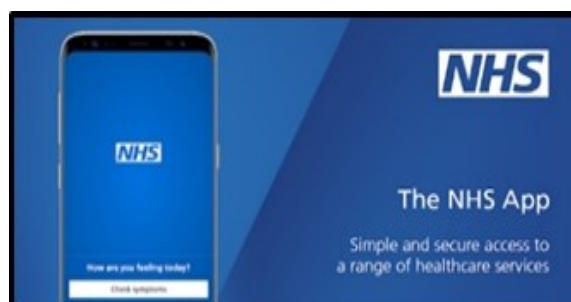


Patient Access allows you to book face-to-face or online appointments, order repeat prescriptions, and view your medical records.

You are also able to make requests for routine appointments, e.g. blood tests, contraception and sexual health, NHS Health Checks, and smear tests (if you have been invited).

Patient Access - To create an account, you must ask for log in details from your GP surgery. You need an email account to use this service. Take identification with you to receive these login details.

If setting up an account on behalf of another family member or adult you need their consent. Check with your surgery whether consent can be given in writing or in person as you may need to go together to get the initial login details.



**Security Top Tip** - Many digital devices come with security measures such as passwords, photo or fingerprint recognition. Keep a record of these somewhere safe. You may be given a traffic light colour when creating a password. It is fine to create an amber password.

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Digital Champions Project 2019

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