



Demanding Digital:

Health in focus

Realising the benefits from further digitising healthcare

The healthcare sector has a tremendous opportunity to further digitise the service. Doing so has clear benefits to both healthcare providers, patients and citizens, but constraints such as financial pressures and funding for the NHS, and also data security and privacy are limiting creativity and probably holding the sector back from significantly improving the patient journey and patient satisfaction.

To understand exactly what people think of the digital services currently provided to them by the healthcare sector we asked over three thousand UK citizens about their experiences. We wanted to know how these digital interactions compared to other industries, what they think the future holds and crucially, what makes them disengage from the digital services provided to them. This direct feedback from the public allows us to draw conclusions about what they really want to see from the NHS.

The main finding from the research is that only 29% would rate their digital experience from the healthcare sector as 'good' or 'outstanding'. This is below the industry average of 38%, when compared to other sectors such as financial services or transport. However, against these benchmarks, healthcare did outperform police and local government when it came to ranking their digital experience.



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This poses a question about citizens' digital expectations when it comes to public services and what they believe is possible. For example, when communicating with the government you expect to be able to do things digitally because we know the technology is already in place to allow us to pay a bill online. But when it comes to healthcare there is a belief that it is beneficial to see someone and that a face-to-face interaction with a doctor or nurse is a more effective way of getting a diagnosis or treatment.

There are of course many instances when personal contact with a patient is necessary to aid diagnosis or provide greater support, but there is a huge opportunity for digital services to reduce this dependency and also streamline the process of exactly when face-to-face interaction is required. Some patients recognised this, with 46% stating that, within five years, they expect digital services to be available meaning that they never need an appointment with a real-life doctor unless physical intervention is needed.

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51% believe digital services are built for the organisation only



47% want a cleaner, simpler experience

Not only do they recognise this, but they are open to it too. On average, 48% of citizens are 'fairly' or 'very' willing to adopt new digital services from healthcare providers. There are always going to be individuals who may struggle to embrace digital services, but what this shows is that patients on the whole are prepared to give it a go; they just have to be developed with the user in mind. There is room for improvement on this front: our research revealed that 51% believe digital services are built for the organisation only and 49% are riled by services they perceive have no clear benefit.

When it comes to designing a service around the needs of the user, the good

news is that they are very clear about what they want. 47% want a cleaner, simpler experience and 40% want digital services to make things faster for them. Citizens are clear, when it comes to digital services, that they want a reliable platform that will allow them to carry out what they need to do.

What is evident from this research is that the digital journey is not as complex as it is made out to be. Yes, healthcare is a world away from the digital trailblazers in online retail, but by and large the technology needed to improve the healthcare industry is already available, and has been for some time. To begin with, it's about getting the basics right and considering the patient journey as a whole, instead of by organisation or appointment.

At the heart of everything is data. Some patients have dismissed a central database due to privacy concerns but those fears among patients are actually relatively small. In fact, just 3% of respondents admitted to actually walking away from a digital service as a result of privacy concerns. We trust banks with our financial details, retailers with our shopping preferences and the government with our tax returns. At a time when simplicity and speed are the biggest facilitators to improved patient and customer experiences, most are open to trying new options. It's just up to healthcare organisations to give them a gentle push in the right direction. The benefits really are there for the taking for both parties.



Just 3% of respondents admitted to actually walking away from a digital service as a result of privacy concerns