



Report Title

Views on Health Related Apps

Organisation

Healthwatch Bolton

Dates:

September 2017 (Research August 3rd, 2017)

**Healthwatch Bolton
Representatives**

Bolton and Wigan and Leigh staff

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Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Bolton would like to thank members of the public for sharing their views and experiences.

Disclaimer

This report relates verbatim comments gathered during the time of our visit. All comments recorded by Healthwatch Bolton have been added to Healthwatch Bolton's databank of patient comment.

Background

As part of Healthwatch Bolton's aim to improve understanding of the role of Technology Enabled Care (TEC) a town centre event was held on August 3rd 2017. Healthwatch Bolton and Wigan and Leigh had a large tent space and were part of a day including other local organisations.

During this event members of the public were invited to view and see a demonstration of TEC:

- Electronic monitoring devices (pulse, blood pressure, blood sugar level).
- Disability/care aids demonstrated by Bolton Council.
- Health related apps shown by our own staff and by Orcha (a health app rating service).

Strategic drivers

- To improve understanding of how technology is being used in healthcare and demonstrate how it could be used in future.
- Gathering of general and specific comments on TEC, with a view to feeding this back to those intending to provide technology supported care.

Introduction to Apps

Apps are programmes that can be installed on smartphones or tablets. They function in the same way that computer programmes do, but have the benefit of being specially designed to function on a smartphone

or tablet. Apps may make better use of the smaller screens found on portable devices, and most will use a touch screen as interface.

Healthcare providers and app developers have become interested in using the increasing prevalence of portable devices to better reach people in need of health care and advice. Possible uses for apps include:

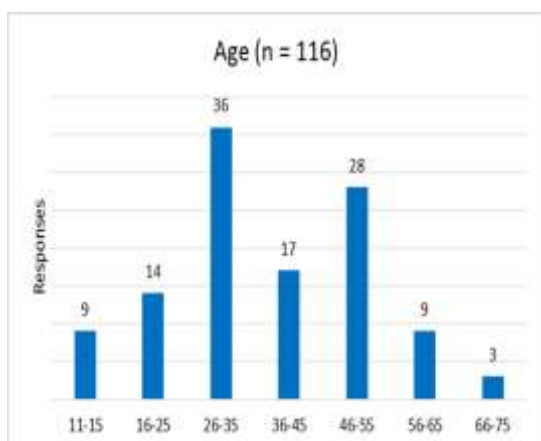
- Booking online appointments
- managing use of multiple health services
- information and awareness
- condition management and monitoring
- treatment delivery
- video or online consultations
- networking and experience sharing.

Currently awareness and uptake of specifically health related apps is at an early stage.

Who we spoke to

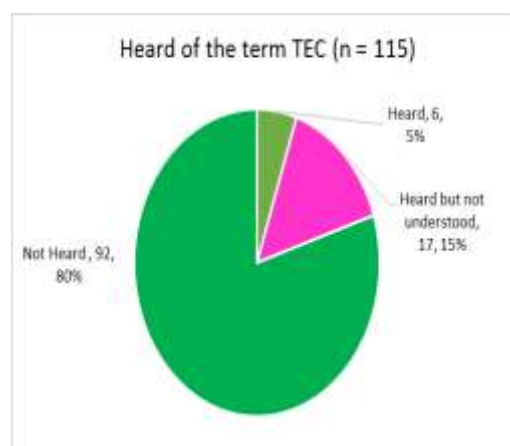
As part of our TEC event we gathered data using four main sources, a survey about TEC attitudes, an apps survey, a young people’s app survey, and general comment.

In this snapshot only information from our apps survey is used. This survey was completed on the day of the event, as well as promoted to young people at subsequent engagements in August. The survey received 116 responses.



Source: app survey for TEC event, August, 2017.

Most of those taking part were between the ages 16-55 (95/116 people).



Source: app survey for TEC event, August, 2017.

A majority of participants 80% (92 people) had not heard of the term ‘TEC’. Only 5% (6 people) had heard of the term.

Method

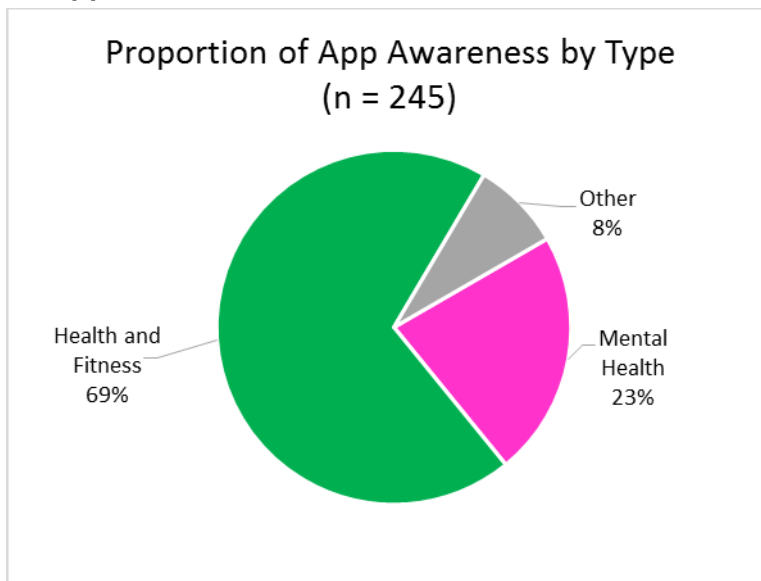
On the day of the TEC event people were asked to fill in a short survey about their current use of technology, whether they had heard of TEC, and their opinions on apps.

At the event responses were recorded on a paper version of the survey. After the event responses were entered into Survey Monkey for analysis.

The survey was also extended to participants not present at the TEC event, these responses were gathered by advertising the survey at engagements in August; these people filled in the questions on Survey Monkey directly.

Topics/Themes

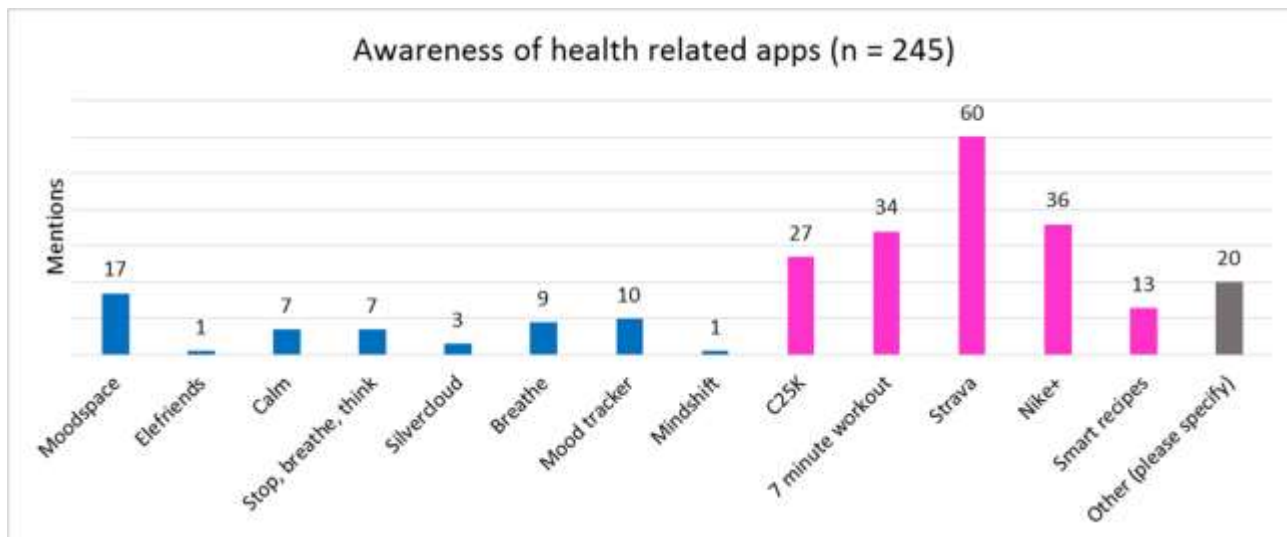
People’s awareness of apps



Source: app survey for TEC event, August, 2017.

We asked people what health related apps they were aware of.

- Health and fitness related apps had the highest awareness at 69% (170 comments).
- Mental health apps were less well known at 23% (55 comments).
- Other apps were mentioned in 8% (20 comments) of responses.

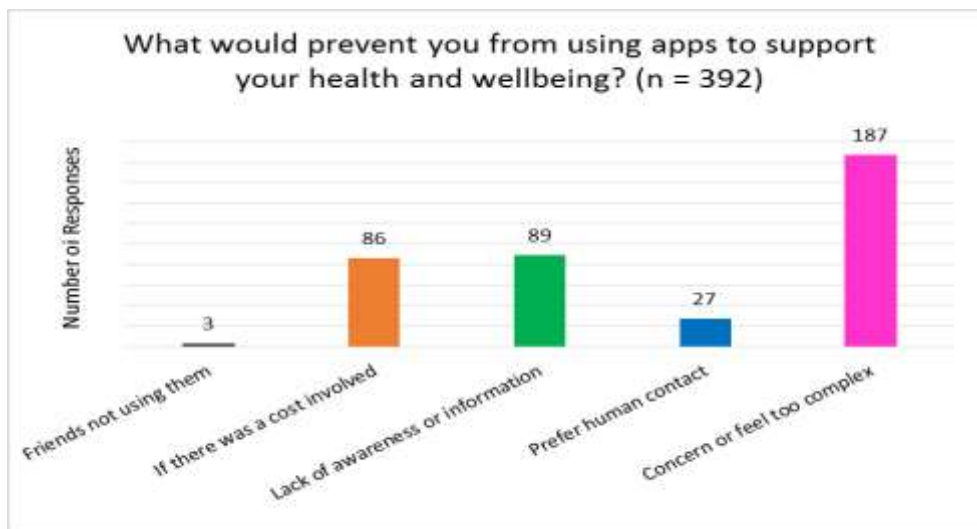


Source: app survey for TEC event, August, 2017.

Well known and popular commercial fitness apps scored highest in our awareness question. Strava - 24% (60), Nike+ - 15% (36), 7 minute workout - 14% (34), C25K - 11% (27) represented the highest totals for awareness of individual apps.

This finding suggests that active people are more likely to use apps and also that people associate apps more with fitness than with health.

Attitudes to app use



Source: app survey for TEC event, August, 2017.

The barriers to using apps to support health and wellbeing’ were clustered around four main areas:

- 48% (187) of responses felt complexity/usability issues were a barrier
- 22% (86) of responses stated that cost would be a barrier (if there was a cost)
- 23% (89) felt a lack of awareness of relevant apps was a barrier
- 7% (27) felt the impersonal nature of apps to be a barrier

The Comments

The key reflections in the comments section of the surveys focused on;

- A desire for greater awareness and information on which apps are good, and how to use them.
- Concerns over the speed of change and if technology in healthcare can be made user-friendly.

“I have autism and have someone who supports me - I would like to use an app but only with support initially as very nervous about new things.”

“Tell us more about it i.e. apps to help support and other things that people can use/have to support them both at home and in the community.”

“Make apps and general info about health & well-being more accessible i.e. you don’t have to be ill to use them and that’s what I thoughts.”

“I will now add an app on my phone and start using it. I appreciate the info as I didn’t know anything about apps. Schools don’t tell us and I’ve never seen anything about them anywhere else. When you first mentioned them I thought they were just for ill people.”

“Show demos of health & wellbeing apps; possibly on TV and social media.”

"I know that phone apps designed to contact individuals who are suicidal works just by contacting the individual each day letting them know they are being thought about."

"It's advancing so much I worry about that. So much of it comes down to the knowledge and ability of the person using it."

"The TEC thing has escaped me and I would need a lot of help to use it. I know I need a mobile phone but it's another thing I'm going to have to learn."

Recommendations

- Awareness of relevant apps is key. Any campaigns to promote apps need to be widespread and should emphasise; ease of use, clarity of purpose and 'free' nature of the Bolton app offer.
- Ensure health and support workers have access to information about relevant apps and are equipped to help people try them out.
- Due to popularity of fitness related apps perhaps blur the lines between mental health and physical health to increase uptake and awareness.