



## **Digital Inclusion Survey Report**

Healthwatch Nottingham & Nottinghamshire is the local independent patient and public champion. We hold local health and care leaders to account for providing excellent care by making sure they communicate and engage with local people, clearly and meaningfully and that they are transparent in their decision making.

We gather and represent the views of those who use health and social care services, particularly those whose voice is not often listened to. We use this information to make recommendations to those who have the power to make change happen.

Between March and April 2021, we undertook a Question of the Month survey to gain a greater understanding of people's use of Information Technology to access health and social care information.

The aim of this survey was to understand how people who already had access to the internet were choosing to use digital technology to assist in their health and care.

The questions asked were taken from a previous Question of the Month report, 'Can Technology Improve your care' that we carried out in 2018. In addition, we received input from the digital transformation programme - Connected Nottinghamshire - who commissioned this report.

Various questions were asked in order to canvass the views of a range of scenarios including:

- Internet access and confidence of use
- Smartphone/tablet ownership and use
- Digital engagement with GP appointments - telephone and video calls
- Monitoring existing health conditions remotely
- Access to local support
- How well people understand health or care information (for example, appointment letters, emails or text messages) that they receive.

Responses to this survey were from local people across Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County through an online SNAP survey linked to our website shared by staff, volunteers and partner organisations.

The main findings of this survey were that nine out of ten respondents have access to the internet, eight out of ten own a smart phone/tablet and seven out of ten use applications on these devices.

Furthermore, over half of participants would like to access GP appointments via online video and monitor their health conditions online or access a link to local services or support.

Although nearly two thirds of people already access GP appointments by booking them over the telephone a further quarter of respondents would like to.

However, the way in which information is provided is not always easy to understand, with one fifth of people reporting that they only understand health and care information sometimes.

The total number of responses received was 545 with 16.9% (n=92) being received from residents of Nottingham City and 78.9% (n=430) from residents of Nottinghamshire County.

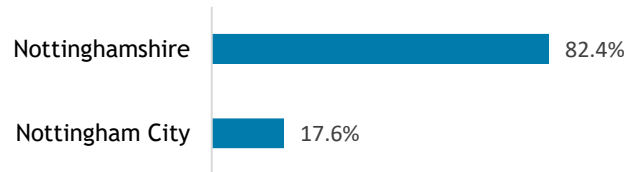
Completed Responses	No	%
Nottinghamshire	430	78.9%
Nottingham City	92	16.9%
Outside of Nottinghamshire	18	3.3%%
Not answered	5	0.9%
Total	545	100%

Table 1: source all respondents (n=545)

Only responses received from Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire County (n=522) were used in the collation of this report.

Completed Responses	No	%
Nottinghamshire	430	82.4%
Nottingham City	92	17.6%
Total	522	100%

Table 2: source all respondents (n=522 less 'outside of area' and 'not answered')



## What people said...

### Q1. Do you have access to the internet?

Response	No	%
Yes	486	93.1%
No	21	4.0%
Sometimes	13	2.5%
Not answered	2	0.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>522</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 3: source all respondents (n=522)

Out of the 522 participants most people, 93.1% (n=486), replied they do have access to the internet, 4.0% (n=21) do not have access, 2.5% (n=13) sometimes have access to the internet and 0.4% (n=2) did not answer this question.

### Q2. If sometimes, how do you access the internet?

Seven participants out of 13 responded to the question if you only access the internet sometimes how do you access it, the main themes were through the library, through a third party (friends and relatives), at home and via a mobile phone.

### Q3. Do you feel confident using the internet to find information?

Response	No	%
Yes	445	85.2%
No	29	5.6%
Sometimes	45	8.6%
Not answered	3	0.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>522</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 4: source all respondents (n=522)

Of the 522 participants most people, 85.2% (n=445), replied they do feel confident using the internet, 5.6% (n=29) do not feel confident, 8.6% (n=45) sometimes feel confident and 0.6% (n=3) did not answer this question.

### Q4. If sometimes, what is it you feel less confident in finding information about?

Over a quarter of respondents, 26.7% (n=12), provided comments which included concerns about whether the information was reliable or not for example, *“Worried about misinformation”*, *“sometimes too much information, it is impossible to know which sites to read and believe”* and *“accessing the correct information by putting in the correct search terms and then establishing the validity of the information”*.

Others found they were unable to find the right information for them for example, *“Sometimes it is difficult finding the specific information needed”* and *“Sometimes the information provided is too general but then there isn't a contact number to find more details”*.

One person said, *“I'm not confident about accessing medical information on-line as its can be scary”*, implying that some people may need additional support to interpret information.

## Q5. If not, what is it you do not feel confident in finding information about?

Out of the 29 respondents, 41.4% (n=12) did not feel confident using the internet to find information.

For 17.2% (n=5) of respondents, the issue of not being able to use the internet due to lack of training was an important issue as evidenced by the following quotes: *“I find it really hard. My children help me, I’ve never used it so I don’t know how to do it. Someone needs to teach me”*, *“I wouldn’t know how to do it because I don’t know how to use it”*, *“I am never sure how to word the question I want to ask. If someone would teach me how, I would do more on-line”*, and *“I am not a competent internet user”*.

Two respondents were not confident about the accuracy of health information on the internet stating, *“Some of the information available on the internet is factually incorrect, often alarmist and dangerous. As a retired Ward Sister, I would be wary of recommending the internet as a source of reliable information”* and *“I don’t think the internet is a reliable source of information on health”*.

In addition, there were challenges for users with various impairments including learning disabilities, dyslexia and visual impairment.

## Q6 Do you have a smart phone or tablet? (iPad, Android device etc.)?

Response	No	%
Yes	453	86.8%
No	57	10.9%
Sometimes	6	1.1%
Not answered	6	1.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>522</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 5: source all respondents (n=522)

Of the 522 participants most people, 86.8% (n=453), indicated they do have access to a smart phone or tablet, 10.9% (n=57) do not have access, 1.1% (n=6) sometimes have access to a smart phone or tablet and 1.1% (n=6) did not answer this question.

## Q7. If sometimes, how do you access the smartphone or tablet?

Five participants responded to this question with two answers stating that they used a third party/friend or relative - *“Borrow families’ or friends”* and *“Usually borrow someone’s”*. The other answers provided were not relevant to the question.

## Q8. If yes, do you use any mobile applications (apps) on the device?

Response	No	%
Yes	366	70.1%
No	32	6.1%
Sometimes	44	8.4%
Not answered	11	2.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>453</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 6: source all respondents (n=453) Total is same as yes above

Of the 453 participants who owned a smartphone or tablet, most people, 70.1% (n=366), replied they do use mobile applications on their device, 6.1% (n=32) do not, 8.4% (n=44) sometimes and 2.1% (n=11) did not answer this question.

### Q9. Would you like to, or have you already accessed, health and care information/records online?

Response	No	%
I already do	216	41.4%
Yes, I would	216	41.4%
No, I would not	85	16.3%
Not answered	5	1.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>522</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 7: source all respondents (n=522)

Less than half of the 522 respondents 41.4% (n=216), indicated they already do access health and care information/records via online with the same number, 41.4% (n=216) indicating that they would like to. Fewer people, but still a high proportion, 16.3% (n=85) indicated that they would not with 1.0% (n=5) not providing an answer.

### Q10. Would you like to, or have you already accessed, GP appointments via telephone?

Response	No	%
I already do	330	63.2%
Yes, I would	143	27.4%
No, I would not	45	8.6%
Not answered	4	0.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>522</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 8: source all respondents (n=522)

Of the 522 participants 63.2% (n=330) of respondents indicated that they already do access GP appointments via telephone with over a quarter, 27.4% (n=143) indicating that they would like to. Fewer people but still a high number, 8.6% (n=45) indicated that they would not with 0.8% (n=4) not providing an answer.

### Q11. Would you like to, or have you already accessed, GP appointments via online video link (Skype, Facetime, etc.)?

Response	No	%
I already do	41	7.9%
Yes, I would	285	54.6%
No, I would not	190	36.4%
Not answered	6	1.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>522</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 9: source all respondents (n=522)

Less than one tenth of the 522 participants, 7.9% (n=41), indicated that they already do access GP appointments via an online video link with 54.6% (n=285) indicating that they would like to.

More than a third of people 36.4% (n=190) indicated that they would not with 1.1% (n=6) not providing an answer.

**Q12. Would you like to, or have you already accessed, technology or online services to monitor your health conditions?**

Response	No	%
I already do	68	13.0%
Yes, I would	304	58.2%
No, I would not	147	28.2%
Not answered	3	0.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>522</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 10: source all respondents (n=522)

More than one tenth of the 522 participants, 13% (n=68) indicated they already access technology or online services to monitor their health conditions, with more than half, 58.2% (n=304), stating they would like to. Less than a third of people 28.2% (n=147) indicated they would not with 0.6% (n=3) not providing an answer.

**Q13. Would you like to, or have you already accessed, a web or app-based tool to link to local services or support?**

Response	No	%
I already do	94	18.0%
Yes, I would	274	52.5%
No, I would not	146	28.0%
Not answered	8	1.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>522</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 11: source all respondents (n=522)

Fewer than one fifth 18% (n=94) of the 522 participants, have already accessed a web or app-based tool to link to local services or support with more than half, 52.5% (n=274), stating they would like to. Slightly less than a third of people 28.0% (n=146) indicated they would not with 1.5% (n=8) not providing an answer.

**Q14. When you get health or care information (this could be appointment letters, emails, or text messages) can you understand what it is telling you?**

Response	No	%
Yes, always	394	75.5%
Yes, sometimes	109	20.9%
No	7	1.3%
Prefer not to say	5	1.0%
Not answered	7	1.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>522</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 12: source all respondents (n=522)

More than three quarters 75.5% (n=394) of the 522 participants receiving health or care information in writing understand what it tells them. However just over a fifth 20.9% (n=109) indicate that they sometimes do and 1.3% (n=7) do not understand what it is telling them. One percent (n=5) prefer not to say with 1.3% (n=7) not providing an answer.

## Q15. Are you able to tell us more about the answer you have given?

Out of the 74 people who answered this question 36.5% (n=27) of respondents felt that the messages are not clearly communicated and/or did not understand what they were being told. Quotes to evidence this included: *“I had a letter from the local hospital with an appointment time and clinic location. I have multiple conditions and I had no clue what the appointment was for”* and *“I would prefer letters to be sent to me as they seem to give more information than a text message for example, address of appointments that are other than my own GP practice especially a practice I do not know and is 2.5 miles away”*.

More than ten percent of respondents, 13.5% (n=10), commented that they would prefer their communications to be made using plain English and/or with less medical jargon and acronyms. Comments supporting this included *“As long as information is clear and doesn't include NHS jargon”*, *“I generally understand, but some of the terminology and numbers can be a little confusing. Perhaps more plain English or footnotes might help”* and *“Sometimes uses wording that I don't understand”*, *“It is not always clear when terms are used that are not explained. The writer should not assume information regarding medical conditions or results will be understood by the reader and should have full explanations”* and *“If its straightforward. The words they use aren't easy to understand”*.

Less than ten percent of people 9.5% (n=7) receiving communications did not understand the contents and had to ask for help from a third party or relative/friend to read and explain the details as evidenced by *“Sometimes my confidence level would be low and I would not read them; I would pass them to my daughter to deal with”*, *“I live in supported accommodation, and I do not always understand letters, so I get workers to read it and explain it to me”* and *“I think I usually understand but wouldn't know what to do next if I didn't understand”*.

Just under seven percent of respondents, 6.8% (n=5) expressed a concern at the lack of detail supplied for who to contact if they have any queries or do not understand their communication as evidenced as follows: *“No opportunity to reply with any queries”* and *“I sometimes receive letters which say additional information is included (for example, maps, parking instructions etc) but it is not. There is no real way to contact anyone and ask about anything you don't understand”*.

More than 5% of respondents, 5.4% (n=4), indicated that they had various impairments including mental health issues, learning disabilities memory issues and visual impairments, and reported difficulties in dealing with digital communications. Comments supporting this included *“I cannot read due to being partially sighted - my family have to read everything for me”*, *“I have a learning disability”*, *“I sometimes have memory issues”* and *“Due to mental health I'm not with it all the time”*.

Three people (4.1%) expressed a preference to able to talk to someone face to face as they felt it was more personal and facilitated a better environment for discussion. Comments included *“Communication needs to be open to discussions or questions. You may need face to face opportunities to talk”*, and *“For appointments with healthcare professionals, I prefer to meet facemask to facemask. As body language is 85% of the way that we communicate. Emails are*

*not secure, so I would not like to receive 'NHS Confidential' information this way. My GP practice is good at sending out text messages, but these can only contain a limited amount of information. If clarification is needed, there may be a waiting time of more than 1/2 hour when people ring the practice before anyone answers”.*

One person indicated that they were happy to train to use the internet as evidenced by the following quote - *“I am happy to learn and have a go to try new things on the internet”*, whilst another respondent stated that they did not have the equipment to use it - *“Don't understand Internet and had been told that I should have some equipment to help due to my disability which effects my way of learning and also holds me back from most things”*.



## Conclusions

The main findings of this survey were that nine out of ten respondents have access to the internet, eight out of ten own a smart phone/tablet and seven out of ten use applications on these devices.

Furthermore, over half of participants would like to access GP appointments via online video and monitor their health conditions online or access a link to local services or support.

Although nearly two thirds of people already access GP appointments by booking them over the telephone a further quarter of respondents would like to.

However, the way in which information is provided is not always easy to understand, with one fifth of people reporting that they only understand health and care information sometimes. Therefore, it is important that health information avoids jargon and a plain English summary is always provided.

In addition, there were challenges for users with various impairments including learning disabilities, dyslexia and visual impairment.

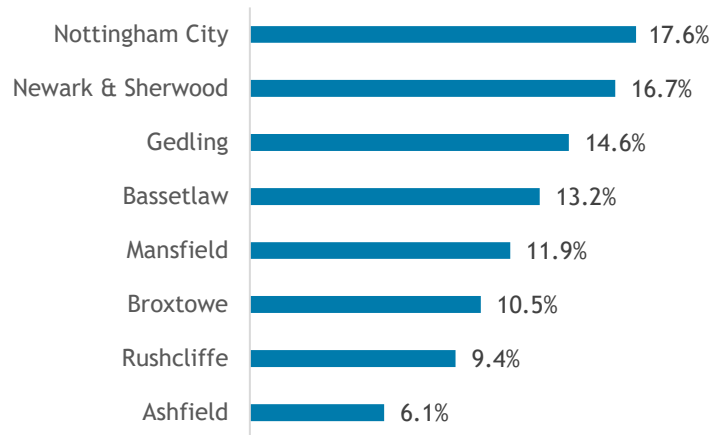
## Recommendations

- To increase the use of technology to access health and social care information while maintaining face-to-face services to ensure equal access for all.
- To further explore the reasons why people are reluctant to use online video links (Skype, Facetime etc.) to access GP appointments.
- Providers to ensure that health and care information is easier to understand for all and consider providing plain English summary.
- Promote the use of technology to access health and social care information by supporting training especially for specific cohorts for example, older or disabled people. Information on reliable website will also be very beneficial for patients, especially to allay fears of fake news or unreliable information.

## Who answered our Question of the Month?

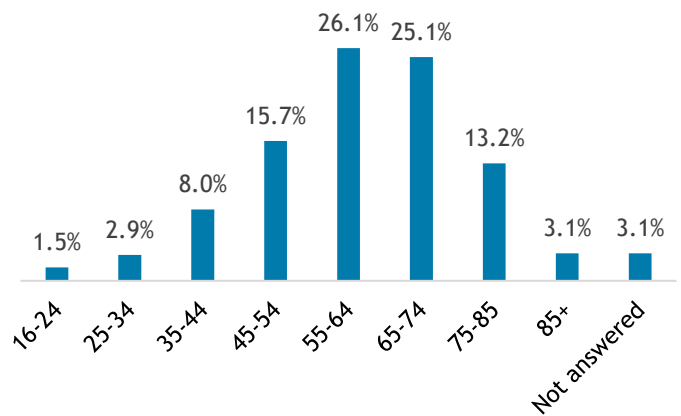
District	No	%
Nottingham City	92	17.6%
Newark & Sherwood	87	16.7%
Gedling	76	14.6%
Bassetlaw	69	13.2%
Mansfield	62	11.9%
Broxtowe	55	10.5%
Rushcliffe	49	9.4%
Ashfield	32	6.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>522</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 13: source: all respondents (n=522)



Age Group	No	%
16-24	8	1.5%
25-34	15	2.9%
35-44	42	8.0%
45-54	82	15.7%
55-64	136	26.1%
65-74	131	25.1%
75-85	69	13.2%
85+	16	3.1%
Not answered	23	4.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>522</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 14: source: all respondents (n=522)



Gender	No	%
Female	365	69.9%
Male	141	27.0%
Not answered	12	2.3%
Prefer not to say	4	0.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>522</b>	<b>100%</b>

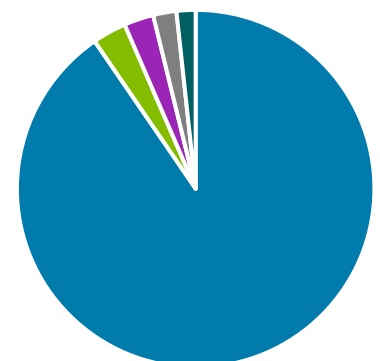
Table 15: source: all respondents (n=522)



Ethnicity	No	%
White	456	87.4%
Other	15	2.9%
Mixed/Multiple ethnic	12	2.3%
Asian	11	2.1%
Black	8	1.5%
Prefer not to say	12	2.3%
Not answered	8	1.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>522</b>	<b>100%</b>

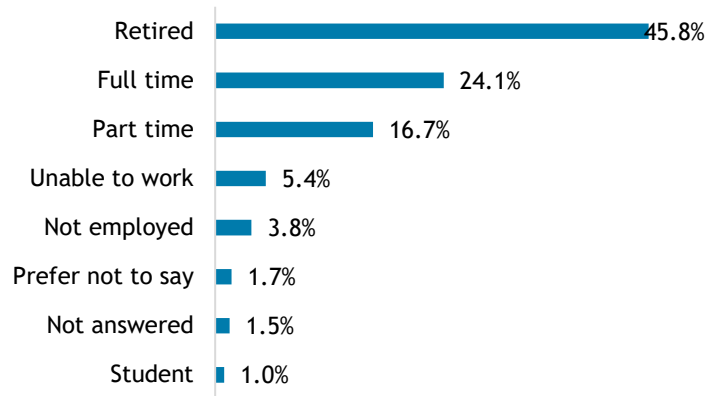
Table 16: source: all respondents (n=522)

'Prefer not to say' & 'not answered' are removed from graph



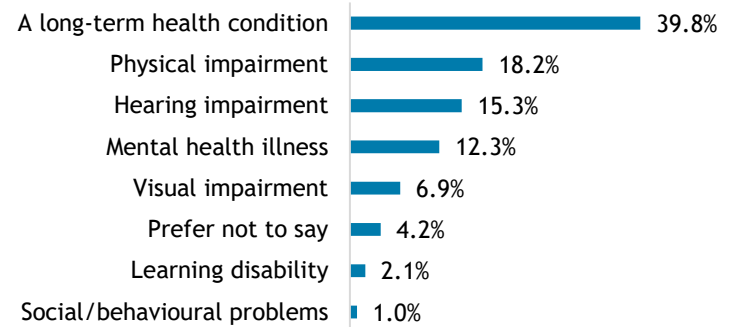
Employment status	No	%
Retired	239	45.8%
Full time	126	24.1%
Part time	87	16.7%
Unable to work	28	5.4%
Not employed	20	3.8%
Prefer not to say	9	1.7%
Not answered	8	1.5%
Student	5	1.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>522</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 17: source: all respondents (n=522)



Disability	No	%
A long-term health	208	39.8%
Physical impairment	95	18.2%
Hearing impairment	80	15.3%
Mental health illness	64	12.3%
Visual impairment	36	6.9%
Prefer not to say	22	4.2%
Learning disability	11	2.1%
Social/behavioural	5	1.0%

Table 18: source: all respondents (n=522)



Disability count	No.	%
People -with >=1 disability	283	54.2%

Table 19: source all respondents (n=522) - number of respondents who indicated they had at least one disability/

## Contact Us

Healthwatch Nottingham and Nottinghamshire  
 Unit 1, Byron Business Centre  
 Duke Street  
 Hucknall  
 NH15 7HP

www.hwnn.co.uk  
 t: 0115 956 5313  
 e: [info@hwnn.co.uk](mailto:info@hwnn.co.uk)

@\_HWNN  
 Facebook.com/HealthwatchNN

Report signed off by

Name	Position	Date
Ajanta Biswas	Trustee	05/07/21