

Digital Access & Barriers to NHS Services in Rochdale

Survey of Rochdale Residents

November 2025

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About us

Healthwatch Rochdale is the local independent health and social care champion for the Rochdale borough. We are here to listen to local people's experiences of using health and social care services and we use those experiences to help improve services locally and nationally.

Acknowledgments

Healthwatch Rochdale wishes to thank Rochdale residents who took part in this survey, those who attended the Focus Groups and those who additionally gave feedback. Also the Rochdale voluntary sector organisations who supported us, shared the survey and allowed us to hold space with their service users.

Introduction

Healthwatch Rochdale – Barriers to Healthcare Focus

At Healthwatch Rochdale, we are committed to tackling the barriers that prevent local people from accessing health and social care services. This report presents the findings from residents across the Rochdale borough and highlights the priorities for improving digital access to NHS services.

This year, our priority is to listen closely to residents' experiences, highlight the inequalities they face, and make sure their voices influence local, regional and national decision-makers.

By working with partners across the system, we are striving to ensure that services in Rochdale are fair, accessible, and equitable for everyone in our community.

Kate Jones, CEO
Healthwatch Rochdale

Barriers to using the NHS APP – lived experience voices



"Digital transformation should improve access for those who want it, without removing choice or creating barriers for those who cannot or prefer not to use it. The system must work for everyone, not just the digitally confident."

Summary

Why We Did This Research

- We wanted to identify and understand the problems Rochdale residents face when accessing NHS services through smartphones, tablets and computers. As healthcare services increasingly move online, it is essential to make sure that digital changes do not leave anyone behind.
- This work is directly relevant to one of the three major shifts outlined in the NHS Ten Year Plan (July 2025): This is the move from phone calls and letters (analogue) to online access (digital).
- The survey looked at a range of potential challenges as highlighted in our Quarter 1 report, including:
 - Technical problems with the NHS App and how it works on different devices
 - Difficulties booking health care appointments through online systems
 - Problems accessing personal medical records digitally
 - Challenges using online prescription services e.g. carer access, older family members struggling
 - Navigation problems on NHS websites
 - Login and password-related issues
 - Access for those without reliable internet connections or suitable devices
- The information from this survey helped Healthwatch Rochdale identify specific problems in the digital healthcare journey and to push for meaningful improvements. By understanding where the system is failing residents, we can work with NHS service providers to create more accessible and user-friendly digital services that meet the needs of our entire community.

What We Did

- We carried out the survey between August and September 2025 using two methods: an online and paper survey with 100 complete responses, plus four focus groups with Rochdale residents. This gave us both statistical data and detailed personal experiences about accessing the NHS using digital services.

What We Found

- This report provides Rochdale residents lived experiences about digital access barriers around health care. It:
 - Identifies specific problems that residents face with digital NHS services
 - Gives a voice to digitally excluded groups
- Provides evidence for improvements to ensure digital transformation does not widen health inequalities in Rochdale borough

Barriers faced by Rochdale residents:

Digital Poverty	Digital Skills & Confidence	System Problems
Old phones Poor internet No data No smartphone Device incompatible	Not confident online Limited digital skills No training/Need help Need one-to-one support Rely on family/carers	Multiple systems Don't link together Technical problems Information missing Not user-friendly
Access and Functionality	Language and Understanding	Security and Privacy Concerns
Can't download app Can't book appointments Can't cancel online Registration/login difficulties Confusing notifications	English only Language barrier Medical jargon	Hacking fears Data breaches Privacy concerns Security worries
Training and Support	Personal Preferences	
Need printed guides Need help Need one-to-one support No training	Prefer phone calls Want face-to-face Prefer human contact Forced to use digital	

Next Steps

Healthwatch Rochdale recommendations are shared with NHS commissioners to help improve services, reduce missed appointments, and ensure equitable access to healthcare.

How this report fits in**The NHS 10 Year Plan¹**

- The NHS aims to allow people to manage their care as easily as they bank or shop online. The NHS App is central to this vision and is set to provide access to prescriptions, test results, appointment reminders, mental health support and more Digital Health. The NHS App should be live by 2028 with a target for 70% of routine appointments bookable via the App by the end of 2025.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/10-year-health-plan-for-england-fit-for-the-future>

Survey findings

Results from 100 respondents from the digital and paper-based survey.

Q1 How often do you use NHS services ONLINE e.g. For appointments, prescriptions?

This question looked at how often people use online routes for NHS services.

Approximately two thirds said two to three times a month, once a month or now and again. One in ten never use online applications. Over half were infrequent users.

This clearly identifies a key challenge as we are expected to move to a move digitalised NHS service.

Comments

- *Only a basic user of IT as elderly. If/when it goes wrong there is no one to help me as live alone with no relatives/friends.*
- *Use every 3 months for repeat prescription. Also now and again for appts.*
- *As required so could be every few days, or not, for a few weeks.*
- *Only use it for prescriptions. Can't do appointments or see my health records.*

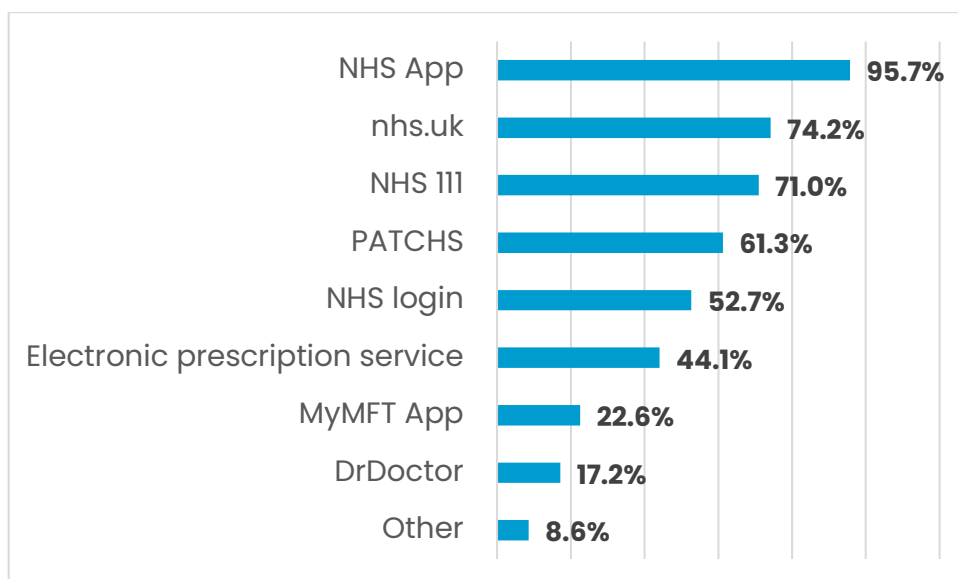
Q2 Which NHS services do you use, or try to use, on your phone, tablet or computer?

Our survey results showed that overall Rochdale residents used the NHS App most for easier, transactional services e.g. repeat prescriptions. Eight in ten were for prescriptions, with just over half looking at their medical records, Four in ten looking for reports and for test results. Four in ten booked GP appointments (many said that nurse appointments were not available.)

Very few used for registering with a GP practice and only 2% went online to cancel or change appointments, as they said it was difficult to do it.



Q3 Which of these online NHS services have you heard of?

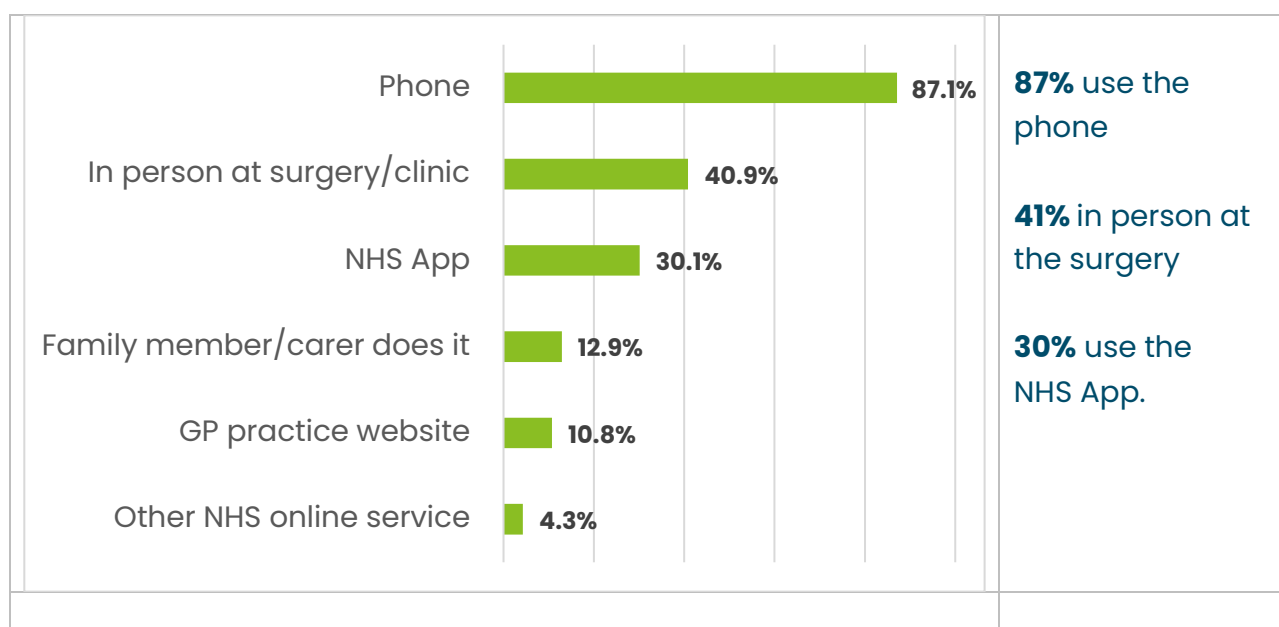


96% had heard of the NHS App

80% knew about the GP online services (PATCHS or DrDoctor)

70% of people knew about NHS 111.

Q4 How do you book appointments or access NHS services?



87% use the phone

41% in person at the surgery

30% use the NHS App.

Based on the results of our survey, the responses showed that given a choice, people still prefer to access in a more human way either face to face or via telephone directly to the service e.g. GP practice.



Q5 How do you prefer to book appointments or access NHS services?

Respondents were asked to rank the options in order of their preferred way to book appointments. There is a preference to face to face or telephone booking.

Rank	
1	Phone call
2	In person at the surgery/clinic
3	NHS App
4	GP practice website
5	Family member or carer does this for me

Comments:

- Would do it online if it was possible, complete waste of time on the phone!
- I always just get my mum to do it, as I don't have the patience. The receptionists or booking in people don't listen when I say I don't drive, I work and need advance notice of appointments. I also don't have time to be waiting on the phone for ages. My mum doesn't mind doing it, but they have said in the past that as I am over 18 I need to book myself and now I'm 18 she can't access my NHS app that she had linked to hers...
- I would prefer to do it on the app, but this service isn't available at my GP, I have to ring.
- GP website for booking appointment no longer available- and I miss this service.
- I can **only** get an appointment by telephone or in person at the surgery.



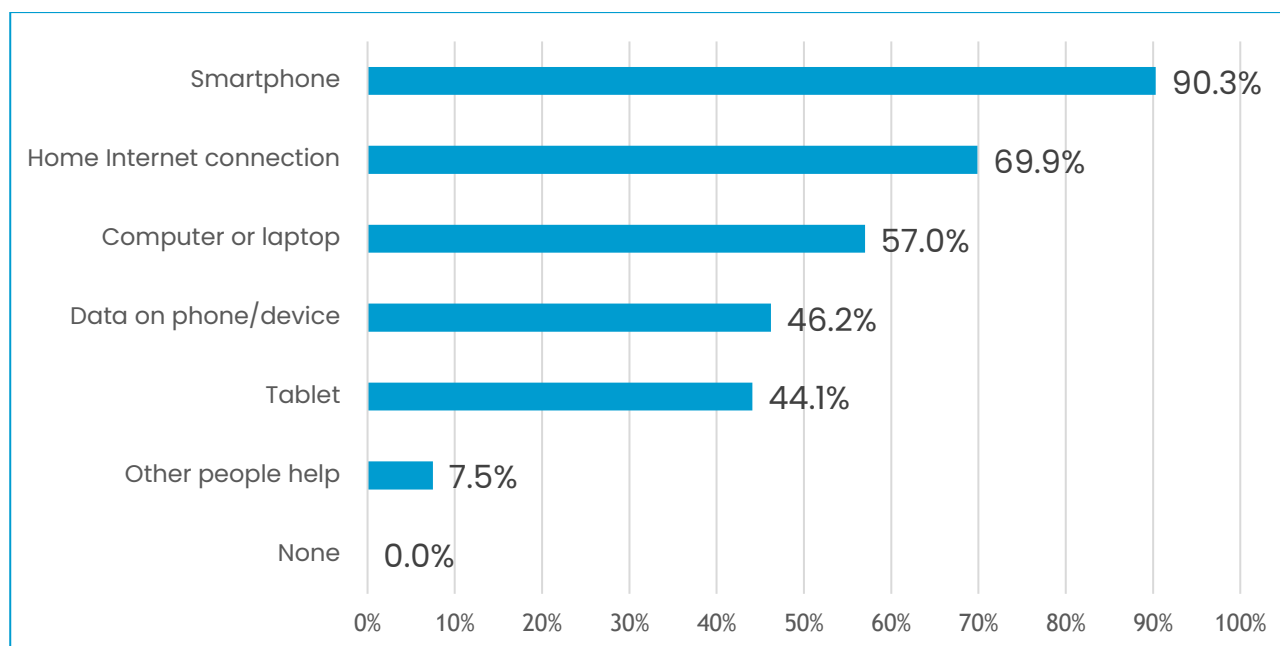
NHS Digital Services

How do you prefer to book appointments or access NHS services?

"Sometimes I have had a direct link to my mobile which has been easier – as it takes you direct to a booking calendar and you can see all your options."



Q6 To use online services, which of these do you have?



90% have a smartphone though more information needed on whether the phone is new enough to download and utilise the NHS App and other digital routes. This could be another barrier to accessing health services without further details.

There is a reliance on using data from their device which could lead to digital poverty if someone does not have sufficient data.

Comments:

- ☛ *My phone is not a fancy one – I have NHS app, but I don't log in, my granddaughter does it for me...*

Q7 How confident are you at using phones, tablets or computers for everyday tasks?

When looking at everyday online tasks rather than NHS specific access. **73%** of respondents were very confident or quite confident at using their devices.

Several respondents said they were confident online in their own language – pointing out a challenge with the NHS APP which is only in English. This is another barrier to the future of how health services will be accessed.

Comments:

- ☛ *I am confident in my own language.*
- ☛ *I'll make a phone call or speak to somebody face to face at the surgery that's the way things are going to be, no changes for me because I won't put up with that!*
- ☛ *Only got a laptop which I cannot use very well as never been taught.*

Q8 Have you faced any barriers when using NHS services on your phone, tablet or computer?

Barriers	%
Couldn't find the service I needed	30%
Don't trust links so don't click them/Privacy/Security concerns	29%
Technical errors or crashes	28%
Difficulty navigating websites or apps	26%
Difficulty creating an account/registration	25%
Didn't know had to go to GP practice to get code	25%
Problems with identity verification	23%
App doesn't do enough of what I need it to do	23%
NHS App too complicated to find what I needed	18%
Lack of confidence/knowledge on phones internet	13%
Poor design for neurodiverse users (e.g. autistic people)	6%
Using an old device/sharing device so can't access new apps	7%
Not compatible with assistive tech e.g. screen reader and lack of alternative formats e.g. audio, large print, easy read	7%
I don't have enough data to go online	3%

The survey results showed a wide range of barriers. Some easy to rectify, others that require more training or system support.

Comments:

- I have ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder) and I do not have the patience to be faffing with things online. I need a quick and easy way to get in touch with the GP or my consultant and book an appointment there and then.*
- Difficult managing multiple accounts. My parents can't use apps/websites any longer. Drives me insane when I get a text saying you have a message but it doesn't say which person it is for.*

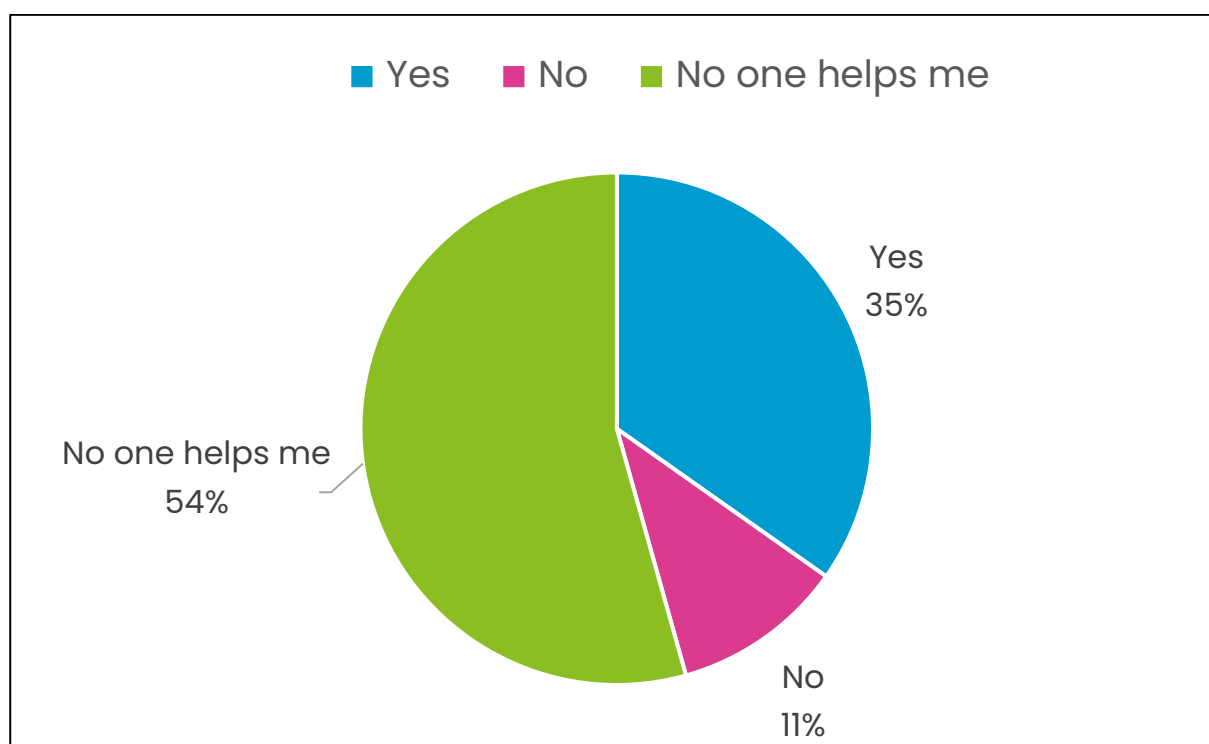
Q9 What kind of help do you need to use NHS apps and websites?

Looking at the help needed to use NHS Apps and online portals, residents said they needed different formats rather than a digital offer to solve a digital challenge. Suggestions made included printed step by step guides, support at the GP practice or local library on a one-to-one basis, a simpler registration process, training in different languages and accessible formats. Again, residents had problems with incompatibility of older phones, poor internet connection or lack of data.

Comments:

- ☛ *I need printed step-by-step guides with images of the steps to take.*
- ☛ *videos on how to do things in the NHS app, what it can do.*
- ☛ *Easier by phone, got enough to deal with without looking at change.*
- ☛ *Someone in an ESOL class helping. We use one in Rochdale. This help would be good as someone there knows my language.*
- ☛ *I don't see why things all need to be all technical. The system worked fine before. Now it's a mess!*
- ☛ *None of this applied to me because I won't be doing changes in my life things are staying as it is. I'll speak to the receptionist face to face or on the telephone and that's it!*
- ☛ *NEED HELP ALL THE TIME!*

Q10 If someone has to help you to use online services, are you happy with that?



Q11 Concerns about using online services to manage your health care.

- Confidentiality
- Security/Hacking
- Data breaches or my data sold by NHS
- Systems don't link
- Not computer literate
- Prefer to deal with people
- Access difficult
- Passwords compromised
- Too many websites

Q11 Please tell us anything else you want to say about using NHS online services.**POSITIVE**

- ✓ *PATCHS is good.*
- ✓ *It's good if I had forgotten something a GP has said, I would then go online and review my appointment notes.*
- ✓ *I'm sure that used properly the NHS online will be a wonderful way to accessing medication and doctors etc.*
- ✓ *Good service as far as it goes.*
- ✓ *The app is a great idea in practice and once all NHS services use it fully, then it will be very effective.*

NEGATIVE

- ✗ *It's basic and standard, could be so much better.*
- ✗ *My mum is in Oldham- I am in Rochdale, which adds to difficulties.*
- ✗ *Some have a lot of processes to do before you can get your information.*
- ✗ *Not all hospitals and services put their appointments or letters on the NHS App.*
- ✗ *I don't use them. I cannot access many systems!*
- ✗ *PATCHS is really poor, and too clunky and awkward to use.*
- ✗ *Time consuming. Unreliable.*
- ✗ *Too much that doesn't link in. Too many systems not compatible with each other.*

OTHER (Patient Choice Concerns)

- *Why do I need to use digital? My choice is to ring my doctors, so why are you making it harder for patients to do this?*
- *Patient choice should still be number one and not being forced into using something they don't like.*
- *We shouldn't be forced to do everything via text and apps and online.*
- *I couldn't be honest as they might not like what I say then will hold it against me.*
- *Please don't try and force me to do things that I don't want to do.*
- *I want to stick with the telephone or face-to-face.*
- *I don't like changes in my life.*
- *Prefer human contact.*



Focus Group Findings

Healthwatch Rochdale held focus groups and one-to-one interviews over an 8-week period with Rochdale residents to learn more about their experiences with NHS digital services and to capture valuable insights – from downloading apps and booking online to digital barriers they had experienced.

Thank you to HMR Circle, a local Rochdale based charity, for hosting us with a safe space for older Rochdale residents to speak with us and share their experiences. Thanks also to Rochdale Carers Hub and Rochdale Borough Council Adult Care Carers Coproduction Network for facilitating a large group for unpaid carers to have their say especially around the barriers they face.

Demographics: 29 residents participated in the focus groups.

4 – English not first language	20– female 9 – male
21 – White/ British	2 – Age 19 (young adults)

What people like about NHS digital services.

1. Convenience and Easy Access to Prescriptions

- “I just use the NHS app for everything, because it's easy. I'm glad they made me use it now, because it's just so easy.”
- “Set up repeat prescriptions on NHS app with help of Receptionist at GP Practice. Easy and don't have to worry as auto renews each month and then delivered.”
- “I use the app usually weekly, fortnightly ordering for myself and other family members. I get the letters from the hospital.”

2. Text Notifications and Reminders

- They do send messages on my phone, which is great. I like that and it's got the written word, then there's no messing.
- When you go to an appointment, as I'm leaving, they'll say, 'Here's your next appointment, and I'll send it to you.' So it's there straight away.
- I like the idea, because when any message comes in, if it's highlighted in blue, you see that's it.

3. Having a Record and Being Able to Look Back

- All of them work because they're there in front of you all the time. There's a record of everything for reference.
- You can store it and look back and think that was when that happened.”
- Found the NHS app helpful as they had been having cancer screening. Could see all information from appointments to results on the app. Although no one told them they could see all that, found by chance when perusing the app.

Top five areas of concern.

1. Security, Privacy and Scams. Fear of hacking, data breaches, scams, and personal information being accessed by others.

- *I don't trust the NHS app or any of the digital systems.*
- *I was security conscious. It bothers me that information is out there and people that are really handy can get into it easy.*
- *I get so much scam especially phone calls. I feel sorry for people with illness who think, Oh, I should respond to that.*

2. Carer Access and GDPR Barriers . Unpaid carers unable to manage appointments and information for people they care for due to data protection rules.

- *I care for my mum with dementia. If she has an appointment (and there are many) the text goes to her phone, she just deletes it. I have asked numerous times for my number to be main one. They always say they cannot do this due to data protection. Makes no sense as it is costing the NHS in wasted appointment as she deletes them and wasting our time always chasing things.*
- *I am a carer for my father he got the NHS app set up with his GP practice. This was before he was poorly. For some reason they set up a two-step authentication thing where every time you log in to his account, it sends a text to his mobile with a code. Now that would be OK if 1 – he didn't just delete or ignore texts, 2 – I am with him when I am trying to get on his app and 3 – he set that up which I am sure he didn't. It's another barrier in place as a carer I don't have time for...*
- *My daughter has serious mental health problems. She will not use the internet when she's having an episode. She won't tell you she's got appointments. She's missed so many important appointments.*

3. Technical Difficulties and Lost Confidence. System complexity, navigation problems, and loss of confidence after technical failures.

- *I don't use it enough, because I lost my confidence in it because I had to keep going down and the number they gave me wasn't compatible.*
- *I've got the app on my phone. And every time I look at it, I think, I'll do something wrong.*
- *I used to use the patient access app but then was told from my GP practice to use the NHS app, now I have registered but I can't view any of my patient records, it says 'you need to give your practice permission to view your records'. This is not helpful; I have a lot of conditions and need to be able to access my records...*

4. Digital Exclusion and Generational Barriers. Older people and those without digital skills being left behind.

- *I feel sorry for people that haven't got digital. My husband wouldn't have a clue, because he's got dementia. Those are the people that are getting left behind.*
- *For someone like me who hasn't been brought up in a digital world, it is so much harder to use it all and understand it. I just don't think there is a need to make everything all technical...*
- *Elderly people don't know how to use the NHS app, they are not used to it, are of a different generation!*

5. Preference for Human Contact. Strong preference for face-to-face or telephone contact over digital services.

- *Felt that a mobile phone was for conversing and connecting to people with. You want reassurance when you are using the NHS and having someone to talk to is the best way to verbally give you appointments or test results. Computers cannot give reassurance.*
- *Don't want to go digital, don't like it!*
- *I just won't do it, if it's online.*



Conversations with unpaid carers over coffee and cake at St George's Hall, Rochdale.

Thank you to Gareth for helping facilitate, Rochdale Carers Hub.

Conclusion

1. **People Use the NHS App, But Only for Simple Things.** Most people use the NHS App just for ordering repeat prescriptions. When it comes to booking appointments, they'd rather phone or go to the surgery in person. People aren't exploring what else the App can do.
2. **Some People Are Being Left Behind.** From our survey findings, 1 in 5 people need help now. They struggle with:
 - Setting up their account.
 - Proving who they are.
 - Understanding what's changed.
 - Knowing if their phone is good enough.
 - Many rely on family or carers to do it for them.
3. **Hospital and GP Systems Don't Talk to Each Other.** Information from hospitals often doesn't appear in the NHS App. Different hospitals use different Apps and GP surgeries seem to do things their own way. Nobody seems to be responsible for making sure your records are complete and up to date for continuity of care.
4. **People Worry About Their Information Being Safe.**
 - Residents worry about being hacked or their information being stolen or sold by the NHS.
 - Residents are scared about unknown text message links.
 - Nobody has explained properly how their data is protected, or who can see it.
 - People get confused when managing accounts for family members.
5. **The NHS App Is Hard to Use.** Residents told us the homepage is cluttered, and the messaging feature doesn't work well. People don't know who to ask for help. Additionally there are no options to enlarge the text making it hard to read.
6. **Communications Don't Arrive How People Asked Or Opted For.** When patients ask for letters by post instead of online, they often still don't get them, or they are delayed in the post. Some patients prefer text or email and still get letters.
7. **Some Ethnic Minority Groups Can't Access It At All.** Our research suggests that some people who don't speak English or from diverse backgrounds aren't using it much. Problems include can't afford Wi-Fi or phone data, phone is too old, don't know about free SIM cards that are available.
8. **Test Results Use Words People Don't Understand.** This means patients often call their GP to ask what things mean when they see it on their app, creating extra work for surgeries. It isn't clear who is responsible for explaining results to patients.

9. **Too Many Different Apps Cause Confusion.** People don't understand the difference between the different Apps and don't know which one to use for what.

Survey Recommendations

Healthwatch Rochdale requested a response to our findings and these can be found below.

	Healthwatch Rochdale Recommendation December 2025	National NHS Digital Team	Update/Actions/Comments Date
1.	To provide an easy read leaflet on how to use the NHS App.	National NHS Digital Team	No response received
2.	To provide assurance that the NHS App user experience aligns with the Accessible Information Standard (AIS) e.g. translate into other key languages, talkback for d/Deaf users, screen reader access.	National NHS Digital Team	We hold ourselves to a high standard on accessibility, inclusion and ease of use, which is often cited on App Store Reviews and user feedback, but we know there is more to do. We undertake research in partnerships with disability charities and organisations with access to underserved communities, as well as doing periodic external accessibility audits. We are looking to grow those relationships following recent analysis of the NHS App's impact on different protected groups. The NHS App will be extending its capabilities in the coming year with the further roll out of a feature that lets parents and carers manage the health the person that they care for. There are also some technical changes planned that will make it easier for people take advantage of their phone's accessibility features when using the NHS App and improving the standards of the locally commissioned services that plug into the NHS App, like online consultations. NHS England also recognises the need to support community organisations, local GP practices and trusts to help members of the public build the capability and confidence to take advantage of the NHS App's benefits.

			This is why we are undertaking a range of partnerships with organisations from outside the NHS to engage people in their communities. This includes our Public Libraries Partnership which is in place in over 1,400 libraries, supported by the 2,700 strong App Ambassador community, who also work across care settings.
3.	To simplify the NHS App registration and login processes.	National NHS Digital Team	The Department of Science, Innovation and Technology has recently awarded funding for a range of NHS App focused digital inclusion initiatives, that will allow us to do more to help people to overcome barriers to accessing digital health tools.
4.	To provide more assurance about confidentiality, hacking and data breaches through clear communication about security measures.	National NHS Digital Team	No response provided
5.	To make appointment cancellation easier. Patients need a simple, visible way to cancel or change appointments online.	National NHS Digital Team	We have over 93% of hospitals now integrated into the NHS App for appointment management and are refreshing the way people navigate the NHS App over the next few months. Recent and ongoing improvements have made it easier for people to request and manage GP appointments in the NHS App and improvements have recently been made to the NHS App Inbox for messages (the most secure way to receive all your messages in one place), with more to follow.

	Healthwatch Rochdale Recommendation December 2025	Greater Manchester ICB <i>Ben Squires</i>	Update/Actions/Comments Date
1.	To continue to offer telephone and in person options for booking appointments and managing repeat prescription alongside digital routes. This will ensure there is patient choice for those who prefer phone or in-person contact.	<i>Ben Squires Primary Care Director</i>	Currently, both telephone and digital routes remain available for patients. Appointment slot management is controlled locally by practices; however, practices are encouraged to promote digital access methods such as Online Consultation tools and the NHS App where appropriate. In addition, Cloud Based Telephony (CBT) systems can support prioritisation of patients based on clinical need and improve access management, while still maintaining non-digital access options for patients who prefer telephone or face-to-face contact.
2.	To integrate all apps into one system where all appointments, letters, test results and prescriptions appear in one place.	<i>Ben Squires Primary Care Director</i>	This is aligned to wider NHS England digital transformation objectives rather than a specific GM Locality IT programme. National platforms such as the NHS App continue to evolve to provide patients with more integrated access to appointments, test results, prescriptions, and communications. At present, there are no additional locality-specific developments planned outside of nationally directed programmes.

	Healthwatch Rochdale Recommendation December 2025	Primary Care Heywood Middleton Rochdale Locality <i>Sarah Crossley</i>	Update/Actions/Comments Date
1.	To improve communication about hospital appointments. Ensure all hospital appointments are sent via letter and appear on the NHS App. Stop using withheld or private numbers, which patients are missing, leading to missed appointments.	<i>Sarah Crossley</i> Head of Primary Care NHS Heywood, Middleton and Rochdale Clinical Commissioning Group	This recommendation primarily relates to acute trust operational processes and national NHS App functionality, which are outside the direct control of GM Locality IT. Currently, there is no locality-wide agreement or programme in place regarding hospital appointment communications or the use of withheld/private numbers. Visibility of information within the NHS App is managed through national NHS England systems and integration arrangements.
2.	To put in place contractual arrangements for uploading of patient information for appointments etc. onto NHS app to ensure test results follow up appointments etc are ready for patients to review without having to keep chasing both primary and secondary care providers.	<i>Sarah Crossley</i> Head of Primary Care NHS Heywood, Middleton and Rochdale Clinical Commissioning Group	This is a complex area involving multiple systems, providers, and national NHS App integrations. Much of the functionality and information visibility within the NHS App is managed at a national NHS England level, meaning GM Locality IT has limited direct control over what information is displayed. Currently, relevant information should be available where systems and integrations are in place. Locality IT can continue to provide guidance, support communication with practices, and share updates where national changes or improvements are introduced. Providing primary care records access (appointments, test results, consultations etc) via the NHS app has been contractual for GP practices since October 2022
3.	To have a communication campaign in 2026 to promote the use of the NHS App and other	<i>Sarah Crossley</i>	GM Locality IT and the wider GM Digital Facilitators Programme are already actively supporting

	digital services e.g. free SIM cards and free Wi-Fi locations.	Head of Primary Care NHS Heywood, Middleton and Rochdale Clinical Commissioning Group	and promoting the use of the NHS App across Rochdale and HMR practices. A number of engagement events and promotional activities have been carried out within practices, which has contributed to increased NHS App usage figures locally. This work remains ongoing, with continued communication, guidance, and engagement sessions provided to practices to encourage patient uptake of digital services. Promotion has also been supported through practice websites and Cloud Based Telephony (CBT) IVR messaging where appropriate. Free simcards and devices are available via Good Thing foundation and National data Bank .A national DHSC NHS app promotion campaign ran from Jan-Mar 2026.
4.	To offer NHS App training sessions at GP practices, libraries and community hubs in the Rochdale Borough.	<i>Sarah Crossley</i> Head of Primary Care NHS Heywood, Middleton and Rochdale Clinical Commissioning Group	Current NHS App promotion programmes already include staff training, patient support, and end-user engagement sessions delivered at practice level and within community settings where possible. Practices are also encouraged to take part in the NHS App Ambassador Programme, which provides additional resources, guidance, and support materials to help increase confidence and uptake of the NHS App among both staff and patients.
5.	To support practice receptionists to provide more help to patients with the NHS App.	<i>Sarah Crossley</i> Head of Primary Care NHS Heywood, Middleton and Rochdale Clinical	Support for practice staff is already included within ongoing NHS App promotion and Digital Facilitator activities across GM and HMR. Guidance, training sessions, and communication materials are shared with practices to help reception and

		Commissioning Group	administrative staff support patients with NHS App registration, access, and general usage queries. Additional national resources and NHS App Ambassador materials are also promoted to practices to further support staff confidence and patient engagement.
6.	To provide non-digital help for digital problems e.g. printed step-by-step guides, one-to-one support at GP practices and libraries, and training sessions.	<i>Sarah Crossley</i> Head of Primary Care NHS Heywood, Middleton and Rochdale Clinical Commissioning Group	Support for patients who require non-digital assistance is already delivered in collaboration with GP practices, local authorities, libraries, and community support services. As part of the GM Digital Facilitators Programme and NHS App promotion activities, printed guidance materials, one-to-one assistance, and face-to-face support sessions are made available to help patients access and use digital services confidently.
7.	To support patients with older devices and poor connectivity. Provide alternative access methods for those experiencing digital poverty through lack of data or incompatible devices. E.g. Tablets or cheap mobile phones available in GP surgeries for easy access, as the NHS App does not work on laptops.	<i>Sarah Crossley</i> Head of Primary Care NHS Heywood, Middleton and Rochdale Clinical Commissioning Group	There are currently no directly funded GM Locality IT resources to provide devices such as tablets or mobile phones within GP practices for this purpose. However, information and guidance have been shared with practices to support patients experiencing digital exclusion. Where eligible, patients may be supported through national schemes such as the National Data Bank and other charitable initiatives (e.g. Good Things Foundation), which can provide access to data and devices. Practices are also encouraged to signpost patients to these services where appropriate. Rochdale Library services loan digital devices as part of their digital upskilling services.

8.	To integrate all Apps and digital platforms (e.g. PATCHS, DrDoctor) into one system so appointments, letters, test results and prescriptions appear in one place.	<i>Sarah Crossley</i> Head of Primary Care NHS Heywood, Middleton and Rochdale Clinical Commissioning Group	This aligns with wider NHS England digital transformation objectives rather than a specific GM Locality IT programme. National platforms, including the NHS App, continue to develop towards more integrated access to healthcare information and services. At present, there are no additional locality-specific developments planned outside of nationally directed programmes and system integrations.
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Next Steps for Healthwatch Rochdale

To work with GP practice Patient Participation Groups to deliver NHS App training.

Demographics

SURVEY RESPONSES

Gender

Female 76.1% Male 19.6% Non-binary 2.2% Prefer not to say 2.1%

Is your gender the same as you were assigned at birth?

Yes 97.8% Prefer not to say 2.2%

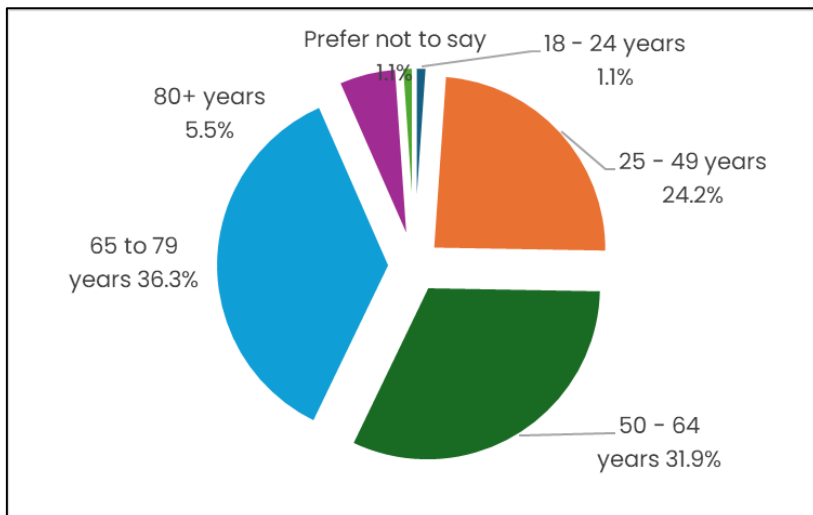
Do you have a disability or long-term health condition?

Yes 63.7% No 30.7% Prefer not to say 5.4%

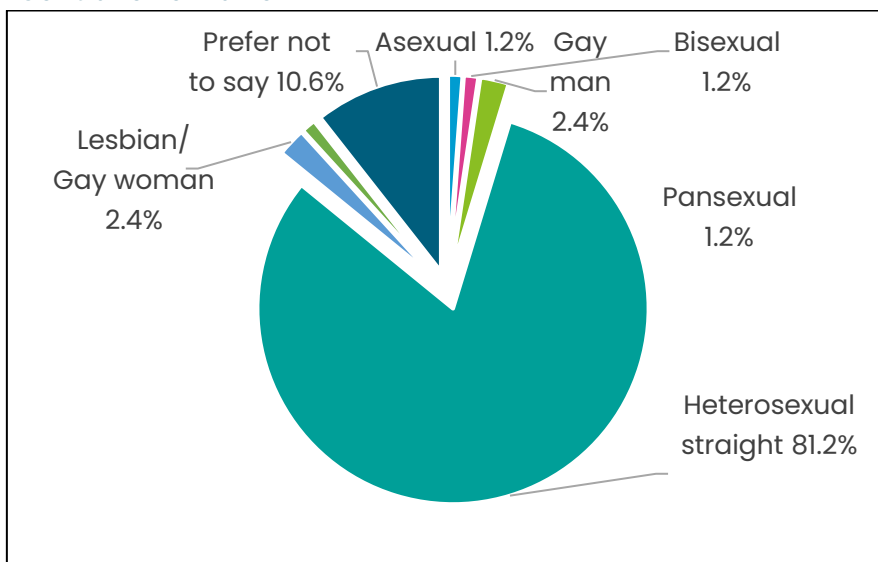
Are you a carer for a friend or family member whether paid or unpaid?

Yes 34% No 63.6% Prefer not to say 2.4%

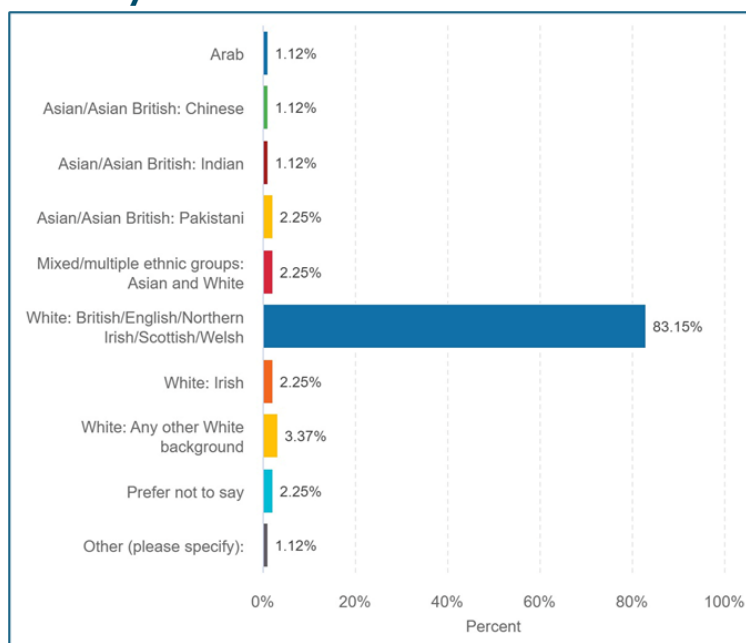
Age range



Sexual orientation



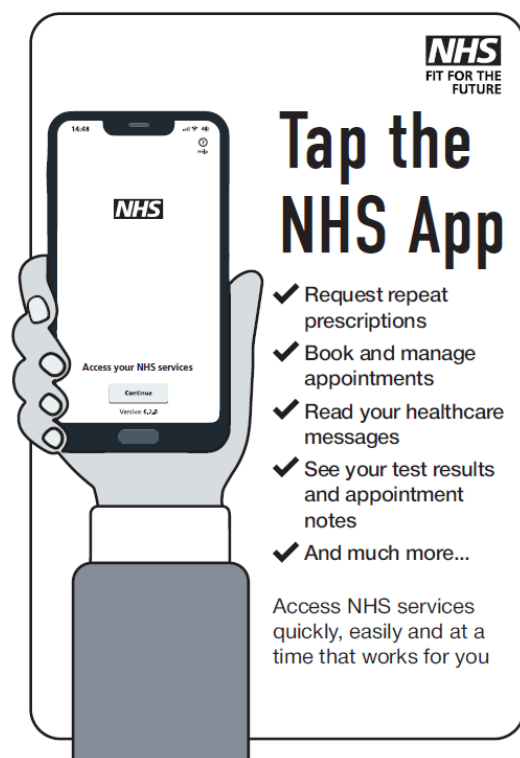
Ethnicity



Appendix

Healthwatch Rochdale is your local health and social care champion.

We can help you to find reliable and trustworthy information and advice.



Test results

- see your latest results and your test history
- you may be able to see trends over time, with visuals to help explain what they mean



Vaccinations

- check and book vaccinations
- see your vaccination history



Health conditions

- see information about your health conditions, allergies and adverse reactions



Documents

- see letters and documents from your GP surgery or hospital

Find trusted NHS information and support

- check your symptoms using 111 online
- use the NHS Health A to Z
- find NHS services near you

Messages

- read messages from your GP surgery, hospital or specialist doctors
- get appointment reminders including vaccination and screening invitations
- you may be able to send or reply to some messages
- **turn on notifications so you know when you get a new message in the NHS App**

Family and carer access

You can switch profiles in the NHS App to help manage health services for an adult or child you care for.

You must both be registered at the same GP surgery. You can then do things like request repeat prescriptions for them.

What is the NHS App?

The NHS App is provided by the NHS. It gives you easy access to NHS services and health information on your phone or tablet. You can also log in on a computer at nhs.uk or contact your GP in the usual ways.

You can use the NHS App if you are aged 13 or over and registered with an NHS GP surgery in England or the Isle of Man.

To get full access to the growing number of services in the NHS App, you will need to prove who you are. Go to nhs.uk/nhs-app for help setting up the app.

Not all services are available to everyone. What you can access depends on the services offered by your GP surgery.

What you can do in the NHS App



Prescriptions

- request repeat prescriptions
- check if medicines are ready to collect
- see past and current medicines
- choose a pharmacy
- use a digital barcode instead of a paper prescription



Appointments

- ask your GP about a health problem
- check for GP surgery appointments
- change or cancel appointments
- see your appointment notes
- request a letter or information, such as a fit note (sick note)
- see some hospital and specialist referrals and waiting list information

Your personal details

- update your contact details
- easily see your NHS number, when you need it
- record your organ donation decision
- sign up to be part of research

Your data and permissions

The NHS App does not store any patient data. It lets you securely view health information held by your GP surgery and other NHS services.

It uses secure login, including fingerprint, face recognition and passkeys, to keep your information safe. You can manage these settings in your profile.

Help and support

If you need help using the NHS App, you can:

- select App help in the top right corner of the app
- visit nhs.uk/nhs-app
- ask at your GP surgery for help

Download the NHS App from the Apple App Store or Google Play, or scan here:



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Mencap NHS Easy Read NHS App Resource

<https://www.mencap.org.uk/easyread/nhs-app>

Focus Group reports are available separately on our website with this report.

www.healthwatchrochdale.co.uk

References

- www.gov.uk/government/publications/10-year-health-plan-for-england-fit-for-the-future
- The Equality Act (2010)
- Accessible Information Standard (AIS) updated July 2025
<https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/accessible-information-standard/>

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