



Using electronic questionnaires in healthcare

public consultation events

September 2025

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Key findings

1. Older adults who have not used computers in working or home life need most support

People who did not grow up with computers and the internet may find it difficult to engage with digital healthcare systems. This lack of familiarity can lead to low confidence when completing online forms or navigating digital platforms.

2. Accessibility and health conditions may limit digital participation

People with physical, cognitive, or sensory impairments may struggle with digital tools and often need additional support from family members, carers, or healthcare professionals to engage effectively.

3. Concerns about data privacy and online security

Many individuals worry about how their personal health data will be used, who will have access to it, and the potential risk of online scams. These concerns can deter people from engaging with digital health platforms.

4. Mixed views on the value of electronic questionnaires

While some appreciate the efficiency of digital questionnaires in reducing unnecessary appointments and tracking health changes, others fear it may reduce opportunities for face-to-face interactions with healthcare professionals, which they value deeply.

5. Clarity on how completing electronic questionnaires benefits patients

People want to know their questionnaire responses will lead to meaningful outcomes - timely follow-up, coordinated care across teams, and accessible feedback in an easy-to-understand format. They want to know how their own care and treatment will be improved.

6. Addressing inclusivity through support and accessibility

Offering training, a helpline, and making digital tools simple, intuitive, and available in multiple languages can help address many concerns.

Recommendations

1. Training

Provide community-based training, peer-support and a helpline to support everyone to access and use digital health services.

2. Accessibility

Accessibility needs to be built into online platforms from the start, with alternative methods provided to ensure an equitable service. Monitor for changes in accessibility needs over time.

3. Education

Healthcare staff should explain to patients how filling out questionnaires will contribute to their care and be prepared to answer questions.

Background

Electronic questionnaires can be used to collect information about health directly from the patient.

Research shows that for ongoing health conditions like diabetes, arthritis and cancer, using electronic questionnaires can lead to better symptom management, improved physical function, enhanced quality of life, greater adherence to treatment, and in some cases, even increased survival. They can also help reduce accident and emergency attendance and hospital admissions and save money for the healthcare system.

Electronic questionnaires can help healthcare professionals provide better care and signpost patients to support.

However, not everyone can or wants to fill them out. For example, not everyone has a device or access to the internet; others may have concerns around data security.

To better understand these issues, we spoke with a range of people about their views and preferences regarding electronic questionnaires in healthcare.

We wanted to know what their concerns were, what they saw as the barriers and what might help. We targeted people from groups at risk of poorer health.

These conversations are especially timely following the publication of the Ten Year Health Plan for England.

The plan seeks to shift the NHS from analogue to digital by promoting use of the NHS App for making appointments, getting advice, managing long-term conditions and uploading health data.

What did we do?

We held in person consultation events with four groups:

- 1. Older adults** - We talked to people attending the day centre at Age Concern Hassocks. This independent charity aims to combat social isolation and loneliness in older people
- 2. Women from a South Asian cultural background** - Strategic Health and Wellbeing Services, a Community Interest Company in Camberley which aims to enhance health and well-being in local communities, organised a coffee morning for the consultation
- 3. Members of the LGBTQ+ community** - We attended the regular meet up for people aged 50+ organised by Switchboard, a charity which supports and connects LGBTQ+ people
- 4. People attending the Wellsbourne Health and Wellbeing Café** – This community project, run by the Wellsbourne Healthcare Community Interest Company, is held in Whitehawk, which is one of the most deprived areas in Brighton

During the events, we asked people to share their thoughts on three questions:

1. What are your views about using electronic questionnaires in healthcare?
2. If you had an ongoing health condition, what would stop you using electronic questionnaires?
3. If you had an ongoing health condition, what would help you to use electronic questionnaires?

In total we spoke with 61 people with ages ranging from 20's to 80's and overall, there was a good balance of men and women, although one of the groups was women only and, on the day, the Switchboard group was predominantly male.

What did we learn? Age Concern Hassocks

1. Views on electronic questionnaire in healthcare

- Most attendees had a device from which to access the internet and the internet at home, but a sizable proportion did not and just one used the NHS App
- Almost all preferred to make appointments in person; getting through by phone is challenging and the internet was not considered an option
- People would not mind filling out questionnaires on paper as part of healthcare, it is the online element that some objected to
- Some of those who were confident about using devices and the internet thought the use of electronic questionnaires could be useful in healthcare
- Some thought they were too old to learn a new technology, but others would be interested in having some training (“We ought to learn however old we are”)

2. What would stop you using electronic questionnaires?

- Concerns about being scammed if on the internet
- Suspicions about sharing information online and data security
- Concerns that this might reduce access to doctors, and that this may actually be the goal
- Experiencing other challenges that would make completing electronic questionnaires difficult, such as Parkinsons, dementia, sight impairments or dyslexia
- Frustrations if technology use doesn't go smoothly
- Desire to see a healthcare professional in person if experiencing a problem

3. What would help you to use electronic questionnaires?

- Advice on what device to buy and setting it up
- Lessons on how to use the device
- A clear rationale for why they were be asked to complete the questionnaires
- If healthcare team first acknowledged the questionnaire had been received and then responded with feedback and actions based on the questionnaire responses
- If people could see their responses and track their data – this would help people feel actively involved



What did we learn? Strategic Health and Wellbeing Services

1. Views on electronic questionnaires in healthcare

- All of the women in this group had devices with which they could access the internet and all had the internet at home
- All had experience of using the NHS app and contacting health care professionals online
- This group did not have concerns personally about the practicalities of using electronic questionnaires to help the management of long term conditions, but they could think of people that they knew who might require more support

2. What would stop you using electronic questionnaires?

- People may struggle because of other conditions, such as developing dementia
- Older people in general might have difficulty and may have to rely on help from friends and family
- Having to repeatedly fill out information that does not change (e.g. name, NHS number) takes time and people may lose interest
- Concerns around data for example:
 - How long will the data be stored?
 - Could the data be used for research by pharmaceutical companies?
 - Could the data be shared?

3. What would help you to use electronic questionnaires?

- Questionnaires available in other languages
- Use of simple language in the questionnaires
- Help with device set up
- A quick link to access the questionnaires on a recognised device
- Knowing that action will be taken as a result of completing the questionnaires
- Reminders to complete questionnaires
- Not having to re-enter information previously provided



What did we learn? Switchboard

1. Views on electronic questionnaires in healthcare

- All of the people we spoke with had devices and access to the internet, though some lacked confidence with technology
- Many had used the NHS app or contacted their GP online, but some found it easier to get an appointment if they went in person
- Most did not have major concerns, and some recognised potential benefits, such as to identify important changes or reduce the number of appointments, providing they were confident responses were being monitored
- Some concerns were raised about how this could translate into positive outcomes for patients – for example would all relevant healthcare providers have access? would action be taken in response?

2. What would stop you using electronic questionnaires?

- Some people, while they may have a phone that can access the internet, use these devices only for calls and text messages
- Some people simply prefer face to face interaction, and the value of talking to a real person was emphasised
- Concerns around data sharing and the possibility of data-misuse, scams or being hacked
- If symptoms were reported on the questionnaire and nothing was done about it

3. What would help you to use electronic questionnaires?

- If the questionnaires were simple to use and understand and did not require too much free text
- If it was clear the purpose was care and treatment, and there was access to a staffed helpline
- Technology training and support, such as a helpline or a buddy system
- If questionnaire data is shared back to the patient, it should be in a format that is easy to understand
- It should be clear to everyone who is responsible for monitoring and acting on the results
- Currently several apps are used to support healthcare – if this were streamlined it would help



Photo used by kind permission of Switchboard

What did we learn? Wellsbourne Health and Wellbeing Café

1. Views on electronic questionnaires in healthcare

- 85% of the people in this group had a device and access to the internet at home but most preferred to manage healthcare via the phone
- People's views on using electronic questionnaires were mixed and were often related to their confidence about using technology or accessibility concerns

2. What would stop you using electronic questionnaires?

- Reluctance to submit personal information online because of concerns about being scammed
- Frustrations if technology use doesn't go smoothly and lack of confidence
- Visual impairments or other accessibility or health concerns may make completion difficult for some people
- Some people may struggle to fill out questionnaires and forms generally and so may need family members or friends to help them
- Some people expressed concerns about filling out surveys with negative responses in case this affected their care

3. What would help you to use electronic questionnaires?

- A clear purpose for completing them, supporting healthcare while not reducing contact with healthcare professionals
- A direct link to questionnaires rather than a complex authentication process which can be off-putting
- Classes to teach digital skills with access to or provision of devices to practice
- A support phone line – with a real person
- People should be asked about their preferred form of communication and the service provided should be equitable regardless of the format selected “we can't all fit in the same box”



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Contact Us

If you would like to know more about our work on the use of electronic questionnaires in healthcare, if you have any questions about the consultation events or if you would like to share your views on this topic, please get in touch

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