

Truly digitally inclusive services

Making digital health accessible to everybody



Background

Nobody should be excluded from digital health because of the access they have to technology.

Health and care technology needs to be designed with the user and the user's experience at its heart. If a digital service doesn't improve the way a patient can access care or information, it will fail.

For digital health to be truly inclusive and accessible to all patients, the full choice of communication channels for patients to submit their readings to healthcare professionals must be available – simply providing an app is not enough.

The digital divide is worse for those who are disadvantaged, according to the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology:

6% of UK adults do not have access to the internet at home. This increases with age, with a fifth of those aged 65+ not having home internet access.

7% of those aged 65+ are also the most likely to say that they have access to the internet but do not use it, indicating that they either do not feel the need to use it or lack the necessary skills.

14% of people in DE households do not have internet access at home compared to **2%** of people in AB households.

The proportion of those with access to the internet at home remains unchanged since early 2021 for UK adults (**94%**).

In rural areas, access to online services can also be difficult. Nearly 600,000 "forgotten homes" in remote locations are unable to get sufficiently fast broadband to meet a typical family's needs, according to the Defra select committee.

For these people, a telephone landline is still essential and can be a lifesaver.



"Because I don't have a smartphone I got stressed about reporting my readings but the Covid@home team were great and they'd call me on my home phone three times a day so I could report my results."

Sussex Covid Oximetry@Home patient



Solution

Our approach is to provide patients with a choice about how they would like to interact with their healthcare professional, and to provide really simple, easy ways for individuals to access services without the need for a smartphone or even an internet connection. And the landline is still important given that 87% of those aged 55 and above still have a landline at home.

This is why, at Inhealthcare, we offer the full choice of communication channels for patients. Options include smartphone, apps, emails, online portal, video conferencing and Amazon Alexa as well as text messages, automated calls and the ability to speak to someone on the telephone and give staff readings to input manually.

Providing all these channels, including landlines, enables patients without the internet or smartphones, as well as those who are not tech savvy or live in rural locations, to access digital care.

Taking accessibility seriously

Patient-facing software should offer enhanced readability and navigation - nearly half of all pension-age adults are disabled. We work hard to make our services as accessible as possible to support health and wellbeing at home and we continuously make improvements to our communication channels.

Our patient-facing portal is easy to read and accessible for all users and our software reflects the latest government thinking on digital inclusion, including:

- Use of colour combinations to enhance contrast and readability.
- Navigation for screen reader software.
- Styling for links to enhance usability.
- Use of headings to better inform users.



"We know that many patients for varying reasons may not be able or want to engage with digital solutions when it comes to their care.

A key principle of our solution was to ensure we didn't exclude anyone from the service: we wanted to provide options based on patient need and preference but have a consistent service provision regardless of the method they chose to interact with us."

Dr Caroline O'Keeffe, GP, North Hampshire Hot Hub