

NHS Digital Pathfinder

Mobile health for adults who have sight and/or hearing loss

A project in collaboration with West Yorkshire and Harrogate Partnerships

Public report
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Introduction

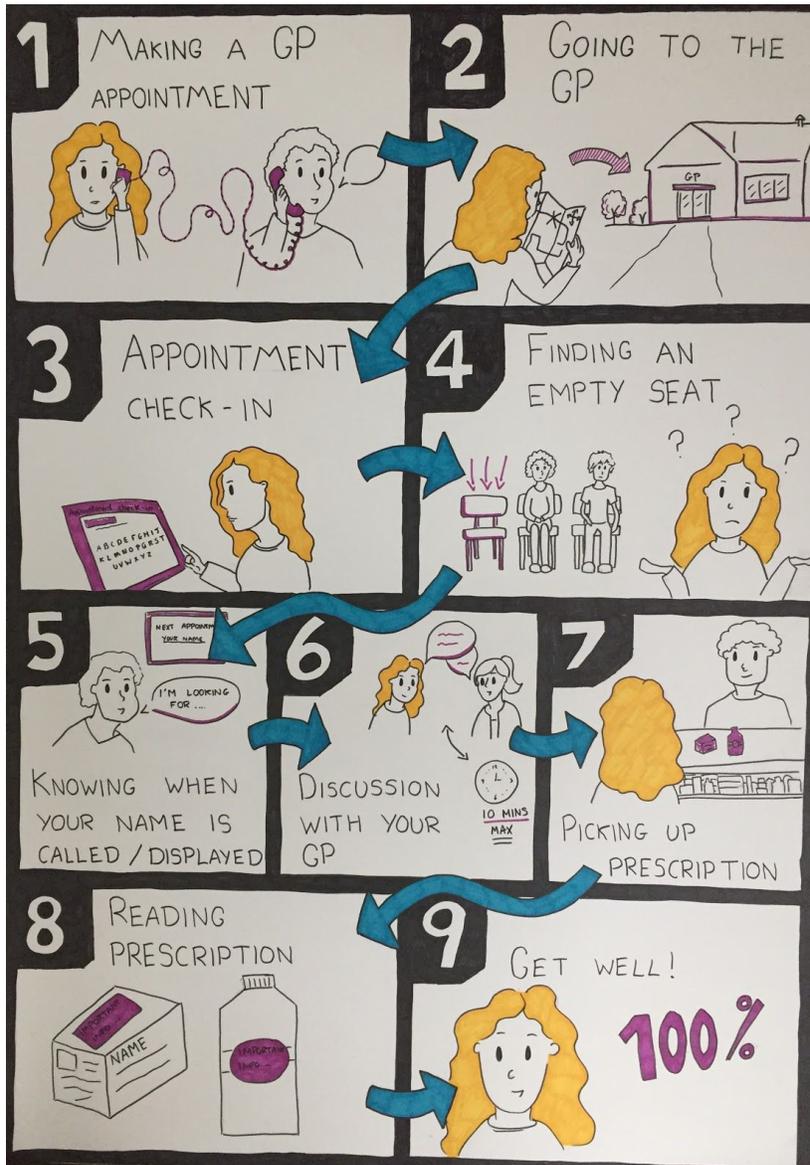
[Widening Digital Participation](#), funded by NHS Digital and led by [Good Things Foundation](#), aims to reduce digital exclusion in the UK, and ensure people have the skills they need to access relevant health information and health services online.

Phase 2 of this programme is working with 20 Pathfinder projects across England up to March 2020. A pathfinder is a bespoke, 12 month, funded project to co-design new ways of helping the most excluded people in England improve their health, or access to health, through digital

mHabitat were asked by South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust to support their local pathfinder project. The project aimed to support improvements in accessing health and wellbeing services with citizens in the Kirklees area who have hearing and/or sight loss.

Our engagement process

The mHabitat team were tasked with undertaking discovery and engagement work with this people who have hearing and/or sight loss and staff at local GP centres. During the early stages of discovery, we reviewed the literature and evidence around specific challenges faced by people who have hearing and/or sight loss when accessing health services. We found that there are a number of digital aids, such as accessibility apps and assistive technologies, that have the potential to help. Molly, from the [Molly Watt Trust](#), hooked us up with some of her community so we could learn how they use digital and what the benefits and challenges were for them. We found a range of supporting materials for health and care professionals and we made these available to all seven GP practices in the Kirklees area, 16 charities, local clinics, colleges, Kirklees Government, and the West Yorkshire and Harrogate Partnerships (WYHP). We ran a series of workshops to share what we had found in the evidence review and earlier discovery workshops. We took all of the information we had gathered and shared this with the local people of Kirklees who have hearing and/or sight loss.

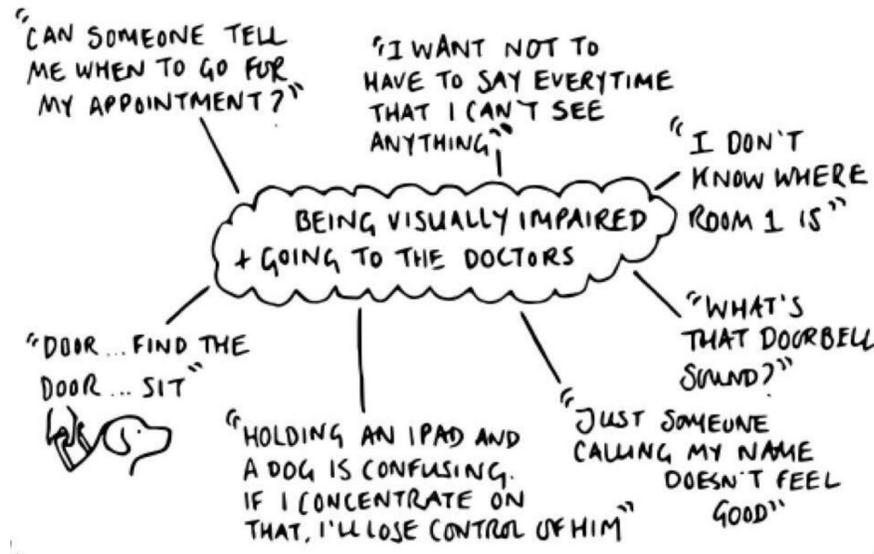


One of our workshops was run at The Grange Group Practice, and we were delighted that staff there got involved too, sharing first hand their experiences and ideas about how things could be changed around the environment and journey through services.

We reached out to a number of charities in the local area and some of them were able to actively support us at the two show and tell workshops. We are grateful to David from [KVIN](#) (Kirklees visual impairment network), Dinos from [RNIB](#) (Royal national institute for the blind), Sean [Action on Hearing Loss](#) and Jo from [BTM](#) (Bradford Talking Media). Molly from [Molly Watt Trust](#) also joined us for our GP based workshop.

Our learning

Drawing by Emily Redmond - Good Things Foundation



During our workshops we uncovered some of the complexities and challenges for people, given their diverse and changing requirements, cost, and personal preference. For example, we demonstrated a text to speech app to a group of people who use British Sign Language, and found that for those who are born deaf, the written word may not be a language they can use. Another

participant explained that they could text, but as they were quite slow it would make conversing in this way inappropriate for for a health related appointment. [Seeing AI](#) was another app we demonstrated, for some this was a very exciting find, however, it only runs on iOS at this time so anyone with Android or Windows could not use it without investing in an iPhone. We also discovered that for those who have complete sight loss, using a smartphone app to navigate or recognise a face, for example, can be problematic if they are commanding a guide dog at the same time.

- ❖ Inclusion is the word to keep in mind when getting things right for everyone who accesses health and care services. For example, something as simple as having information in different formats for those with sight loss, and highlighting important information that might not otherwise be seen.
- ❖ Co design of the smallest things will help inclusivity. One participant talked to us about the environment, and how signs and notices that are laminated reflect light that makes them difficult to read. Another person explained that even a small change in the layout of the room can make it difficult to navigate.
- ❖ Using GP systems to flag where people need support would save the embarrassment of having to ask each time, for example needing help to find a seat or being notified when their name appears on the sign to go through to the GP.

Here is a summary of what the people told us, who spent an afternoon at The Grange Group practice, navigating the space:

- Finding a button that opens a door is harder than just finding the door's handle
- Signing in on the computer at the GP surgery presents more challenges than talking to a receptionist
- A visually impaired person may find it hard to initiate a request for help for personal reasons (such as perceived loss of independence) or physical reasons (not knowing where reception staff are located)
- A consistent room layout is helpful for patients with sight loss
- Room Lighting and reading signs can be an issue for people with sight loss, particularly where the light causes glare or shadows
- Finding a chair can be challenging
- Knowing when your name has been either called or put up on the board is an issue, and responding to visual cues summoning patients.
- Waiting a long time to get BSL interpreters can cause anxiety and additional health problems
- When clinicians don't verbalise what they are doing or going to do, including the various steps in procedures and leaving the room, this is an issue
- Appointments may have to take longer, so that the clinician is able to explain verbally what other patients would receive as a letter or leaflet and ensure the patient has understood and somehow made a record if necessary
- Good communication empowers patients and enhances their contribution to managing their condition.

Accommodating requirements for people with differing levels of sight and/or hearing loss needs to be carefully considered. This is what Molly Watt told us regarding her own lived experience:

"Reliance on visual clues on a one to one basis is always much easier than a two, three or more way conversation, something to bear in mind."

"Being deaf means concentrating really hard on all visual clues to aid with listening, and communication and is very tiring."

"Environment can make a big difference, quiet or noisy, light or dark can affect communication and patience is always appreciated".

The outcome

We worked with different parties throughout the project, these are some of the outcomes and stories.

The Participants

Here's what two of our participants had to say about the impact the pathfinder project had for them.

- ❖ Ada's story - [read](#)
- ❖ Mark's story - [read](#)

NHS England

Following the discovery and engagement, the Chief Digital Officer for NHS England was keen to have those apps that we reviewed and showcased fast tracked onto the NHS apps library, as well as linking to them in the accessibility guidance on NHS.UK.

Digital Champions

Recruiting 'Digital Champions' was another key component of the project. We worked with the champions so that we could leave a legacy of doers, thinkers, and shapers that would carry on the good work. Our Digital Champions come from all kinds of healthcare organisations, but it didn't stop there - others got involved too including local charities, Kirklees Council and local education services.

Here we introduce two of our digital champions, with a snippet of what they had to say about their involvement:



After our first visit back in May, the staff at The Grange Group Practice have continued to support this cause by signing up as Digital Champions. As well as sharing information, they are actively considering accessibility more broadly across their communication platforms, activities, and environment.

Pictured left to right: Kelly and Lisa

“We want the people who come to us to feel cared about. We’re committed to doing what we can to support everyone. We’ll be making some simple changes straight away as well as sharing information about digital products that are available to help, and which charities can support them further. It really helps when people let us know that they would like support, we can then put it on our system so that the next time they come in we can be better prepared”

Lisa - Reception Manager, The Grange Group Practice

Sharon Morgan (Senior Disability Advisor at Huddersfield University), joined us at one of our workshops and was keen to ensure students at Huddersfield University benefited from whatever supporting information we could offer. Here’s what Sharon had to say about her involvement as a Digital Champion.

“We were pleased to work with other agencies in the community to consider the challenges faced by those with visual or hearing difficulties and consider the range of supportive technology that is available. We will be sharing information from the project with students at our student support fayre next week and on our website.”

Sharon Morgan - Senior Disability Advisor at Huddersfield University



The outputs

During our wide search we found an abundance of guidance and supporting materials from arms length bodies such as NHS England and the Department of Health, local charities (aforementioned), and a forward thinking national charity called [AbilityNet](#). The charitable arm of this organisation will help people of any age and with any disability use technology to achieve their goals at home, at work and in education. There's a good range of self-help information and fact sheets, both for people with accessibility needs and for those designing products and services for those people.

We curated the resources we found and added our own from our research and workshops.

Resources

- Healthcare staff Info pack - [open](#)
- Inclusion - Hearing - [open](#)
- Inclusion - Vision - [open](#)
- Accessibility Apps-Support - Hearing - [open](#)
- Accessibility Apps-Support - Vision - [open](#)
- Mobile Health digital pathfinder report - [open](#)
- Patient online services - [open](#)

Case studies

- Case Ada - [read](#)
- Case Mark - [read](#)

'My Experience' stories

- Richard's story - [read](#)
- Kay's story - [read](#)
- Mario's story - [read](#)
- Susannah & Alice's story - [read](#)

Project engagement stories

Stories gathered during the 'patient pathway' workshop - [read](#)