

Developing a national digital NHS Health Check

Market Engagement Brief

1. Executive Summary

The NHS Health Check programme aims to prevent heart disease, stroke, diabetes and kidney disease, and some cases of dementia among adults aged 40-74 years. The Department of Health & Social Care (DHSC) is looking to develop a digital version of the NHS Health Check that will give users more choice about where and when to have a check and empower people to take action to improve their health independently. It will enable people to self-check at home, only directing people to primary care where further clinical assessment and treatment is required.

The check, which will be available via mobile phone, tablet and computer, will ask patients questions about, for example, how active they are, collect measurements of height, weight and blood pressure, which people can record at home or in a range of convenient locations in the community, and take a home cholesterol test.

The results from the assessment will be fed back online with personalised advice on what action can be taken to reduce the risk of a heart attack or stroke. It will provide a direct referral to services such as stop smoking and weight management where appropriate and a referral to their GP practice for further tests and treatment as needed. The results from the assessment will be added to the electronic patient record so can be viewed by health professionals involved in the patient's care and will alert the NHS if urgent action needs to be taken following the assessment. The digital check will be delivered alongside the current in-person service and is not a replacement for the face-to-face offer.

The roll out will take place from Spring 2024 and over the course of 4 years we will deliver at least one million digital checks. People who do the check will understand their risk of heart disease, stroke, diabetes and kidney disease and be able to take action to reduce their risk.

We are undertaking market engagement to understand if there are existing products in the marketplace that can deliver the minimum requirements to support a roll out of a digital product by Spring 2024.

2. Background

2.1. Background, policy context and evidence base

Cardiovascular Disease (CVD) is the second biggest killer in England. It affects around 6.4 million people, is the largest contributor to disability adjusted life years and accounts for around a quarter of the life expectancy gap between the richest and poorest in England.

The NHS Health Check is a key part of the CVD prevention pathway. The programme, established in 2009, aims to prevent heart disease, stroke, diabetes and kidney disease, and some types of dementia. Since 2013, local authorities in England have been legally responsible for commissioning the NHS Health Check programme as set out in the [Local Authorities Functions Regulations](#). The Government's Public Health Grant to local authorities is used to enable its provision, with general practice most commonly commissioned by local authorities to provide the service.

The regulations require adults aged 40 – 74 years, who do not have an existing diagnosis of CVD, to be invited for a free check every 5 years. During an NHS Health Check, six risk factors: blood pressure, cholesterol, physical activity, smoking, alcohol consumption and

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body mass index, are assessed. Where appropriate, blood sugar is also assessed in some people. This information is then used to calculate a person's diabetes and 10-year CVD risk.

As part of an NHS Health Check, all eligible individuals are made aware of their results and are supported to consider behavioural changes that will reduce their chance of heart attack or stroke within the next 10 years. Attendees over 65 years are also told about the signs and symptoms of dementia and signposted to memory services, where appropriate.

The results from a check are recorded onto medical records and shared with individuals to raise awareness of the risk factors and support behaviour change. Where appropriate, individuals are also supported to access further clinical diagnostic tests and drug treatment, for example diagnosing and treating hypertension.

NHS Health Check attendance is broadly representative of the general population across ethnic groups. However, participation is lowest across all ethnic groups in the most deprived decile..

On average, modelling suggests the programme could prevent 1,600 heart attacks and strokes and save at least 650 lives a year. It also has the potential to prevent over 4,000 people a year from developing diabetes and detect at least 20,000 cases of diabetes or kidney disease earlier.

An [evidence-based review](#) of the programme, published in 2021, found that the NHS Health Check has the potential to achieve greater impact through use of a digital approach to 'transform all aspects of the NHS Health Check, including accessibility, scale, conduct and delivery'. The review recommended a digital approach to improve participation and engagement in the NHS Health Check.

The Government's commitment to develop a digital NHS Health Check has since been announced, with a commitment to deliver by Spring 2024 and forms a part of DHSC's [Plan for Digital Health and Social Care](#).

2.2. NHS Health Check Delivery

Not enough eligible people are completing the NHS Health Check and participation has been declining year-on-year since 2014-15. Consequently, the programme is not contributing as much as it could to reducing premature CVD mortality and morbidity because of conditions such as high blood pressure (hypertension), heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, kidney disease and some types of dementia.

Between April 2015 and March 2020, around 41% of the eligible population completed a check. This dropped to 33% (5,253,116) between April 2016 and March 2021. The change in level of activity largely because of extended periods of suspension during the COVID-19 pandemic, in line with NHS guidance,. However, Local Authorities and the NHS are making good progress with getting delivery activity back on track and are expected to have recovered by June 2023. Data on the current levels of NHS Health Check activity can be found on [Fingertips](#).

There are significant variations between local authorities in terms of offered and completed NHS Health Checks. Between 2015 and 2020 across different local authorities, the proportion of people completing an NHS Health Check varied from 10% to 80%.

2.3. Digital NHS Health Check vision

The vision is that the digital NHS Health Check will be a single innovative national digital service, offering patients the same tests as set out in legislation through an additional, flexible mode of delivery. By capitalising on digital engagement during the pandemic, we want to improve and increase participation and reduce variation between areas by enabling people to self-check at home or to complete online with the support of friends and family, carers, health care professionals or volunteers. The check will empower users to take actions to improve their health independently, link to national services, and enable general practice to initiate clinical care where appropriate.

The intention is to launch a digital NHS Health Check which meets the existing [legal requirements](#) for the NHS Health Check, which covers the following elements:

- Identify eligible population
- Invite eligible individuals
- Questionnaires and biometrics
- Communicate results to the end user and their general practitioner
- Provide personalised advice on actions people can take to reduce their risk of CVD
- Refer people for clinical follow up and to prevention services

The intention is that the digital check can be self-completed independently by eligible citizens and used by providers to facilitate delivery of high-quality in-person checks in community and primary care settings according to local commissioning models.

Our ultimate aim is to develop a digital solution that, in combination with a face-to-face option, can help to transform the way users engage with and deliver a NHS Health Check, and provide end-to-end data on patient journeys enabling us to understand opportunities for improvement.

2.4. Current status of the Digital NHS Health Check

The digital NHS Health Check underwent a Discovery phase, led by the NHSE Transformation Directorate, which completed in September 2022. The discovery highlighted some key dependencies and risk areas that require further exploration but showed that end users and key stakeholders are supportive of a digital NHS Health Check. It recommended that DHSC progress the project to the next stage, alpha.

Based on prioritisation of the recommendations from discovery, we developed a set of core objectives for alpha. These are currently being progressed by our delivery partner, Kainos, with an initial focus on:

- Exploring and providing recommendations for the feasibility, acceptability and implications of potential solutions for integrating a national digital service with local General Practice systems to deliver the digital NHS Health Check, including:
 - Identifying the eligible population
 - Issuing invites and reminders
 - Returning data from digital checks, including those delivered opportunistically, to patient's clinical record
 - Flagging any results that fall outside clinically acceptable parameters to support optimal clinical management
 - Calculating QRISK and diabetes risk score
 - Communicating results to the end user

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- Provide personalised advice on actions people can take to reduce their risk of CVD
 - Refer people for clinical follow up and to prevention services
- Exploring and providing recommendations for the feasibility, acceptability, and implications of providers of NHS Health Checks controlling the volume and profile of invitations to a digital NHS Health Check.
- Exploring the feasibility, acceptability and support needs of enabling people participating in the digital NHS Health Check to perform biometric tests in community settings or at home.
- Exploring and providing recommendations for the feasibility, acceptability, and implications of the potential routes for:
 - Issuing invitations and reminders,
 - Accessing a digital NHS Health Check,
 - Completing a digital NHS Health Check
 - Sending users their results following completion of all elements of the digital NHS Health Check.
 - Including with and without an NHS log in to facilitate uptake and participation in the NHS Health Check.
- Defining the minimum viable product (MVP) that can be delivered based on the current technical architecture and user needs.
- Identifying existing products and services on the market that could meet the requirement of the MVP and/or existing providers that may be equipped to fulfil a tender for a digital service

Alongside the alpha phase, we are internally exploring how digital technology can be used to improve the management of behavioural risk factors for people completing the NHS Health Check, either via face to face or digitally. This approach will enable us to explore how digital follow up can enhance the current in-person programme, extend the digital journey once the digital NHS Health Check has been developed, and reduce the burden on primary care.

3. Overview of draft product requirements

As outlined above, we are currently developing an outline for a minimum viable product (MVP). Based on our work undertaken to date, we anticipate the MVP will require the following functionality:

- A secure, online service available via national digital channels that can be sign-posted to via appropriate invitations
- Ability to undertake participant triage and eligibility checks
- Integration with NHS login and NHS App
- Completion of a questionnaire that meets the [national legislative requirements](#) for the NHS Health Check
- Initiate access to appropriate testing in the home and/or community
- Completion of biometric testing at home or in the community, with results being returned to the product for blood pressure and cholesterol
- Ability to calculate QRisk
- Notification of the result to the patient with personalised recommendations and referral to GP for other tests if appropriate
- Notification of the result to the GP
- Clinical safeguards for high-risk results
- Follow-on signposting to national services

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- Medical device status

The MVP is part of a broader roadmap, which we also anticipate requiring the following functionality:

- Ability to create cohorts, send invitations and reminders
- Ability to integrate seamlessly with all potential follow-on pathways

As this is an emerging piece of work, we will provide more information on the MVP at the market engagement event.

4. Market engagement event

DHSC will be holding an online market engagement event on Tuesday 4th July 2023 at 2pm for interested suppliers to find out more information about the work undertaken to date and our plans for next steps. There will be an opportunity for suppliers to ask questions.

If you would like to join the online market engagement event, please get in touch with us at nhshealthcheck@dhsc.gov.uk

5. Request for further information

Following the market engagement event, we will be issuing a request for further information for interested suppliers to complete. The request for further information is an opportunity for DHSC to understand the potential solutions in the marketplace that might meet our requirements for a national digital NHS Health Check (see point 3). DHSC will use the responses to inform an options appraisal to guide our next steps.

Not submitting a response to our request for further information will not impact your ability to engage with any future formal commercial process should there be one which would be fair, open and transparent.

If you would like to join the online market engagement event and receive a copy of the request for further information document, please get in touch with us at nhshealthcheck@dhsc.gov.uk. Please return completed documents to nhshealthcheck@dhsc.gov.uk

6. Timeline

Launch of Prior Information Notice: Friday 30th June 2023

Market Engagement Presentation (Online): Tuesday 11th July 2023 14:00

Launch Request for Further Information: Tuesday 11th July 2023

Closing Date for Responses to Request for Further Information to nhshealthcheck@dhsc.gov.uk: 28th July 2023