

# Wakefield Digital Champions

## An innovative approach to digital engagement

February 2025

### AT A GLANCE

The Wakefield Patient Digital Champion Group (WPDCG) was launched in October 2023 by the Primary Care Networks (PCN) Digital and Transformation Team to support general practices in providing high quality digital care and service delivery.

The group brings together patient volunteers from across Wakefield to improve patient digital awareness. The volunteers work in partnership with general practices to increase the uptake and usage of the NHS App.

### EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THE IMPACT OF NHS APP SUPPORT SESSIONS

Following two NHS App drop-in sessions delivered by the D&T team at Newland Lane Surgery in October and December:



113% increase in repeat prescription ordering



87% increase in cancellations of appointments



372% increase in sign-ups

Newland Lane  
Normanton  
West Yorkshire  
WF6 1QD

### OBJECTIVE

The main aim of the champions group is to support the national drive to increase the use of the NHS App across England. The NHS Long Term Plan stated that every patient would have access to digital-first primary care by 2023/24. The NHS Elective Care Reform plan, published in January 2025, also sees NHS App uptake as key driver for change.

### PROMOTION AND RECRUITMENT

To promote the project and recruit volunteers, the Digital and Transformation (D&T) team:

- created a recruitment poster and information leaflet which was distributed across all 35 GP practices in Wakefield
- created an MS Forms (QR code) to allow people to express an interest
- promoted activity on practices social media sites

Once volunteers had expressed an interest, a member of the D&T team had a short introductory call with them to explain the volunteer role, answer questions and agree next steps.

### THE NUMBERS

26

sessions delivered by volunteers between October and December 2024

10

libraries across Wakefield hosting monthly sessions, as of January 2025

52

sessions at libraries planned between January and April 2025

30

Digital Champions already recruited

240

people supported Oct 24 - Feb 25

7

PCN areas covered by the sign up sessions



## STAKERHOLDER ENGAGEMENT ✓

### Community

The D&T team used PCN, GP Practice and community networks to recruit champions supported by a poster and social messaging campaign.

### Wakefield Council

Collaborating with ten different local authority libraries across Wakefield provided accessible and familiar locations for NHS App promotional sessions.



### Citizen Coin

Integration of the WPDCG into the Citizen Coin platform helps to incentivise volunteer participation by rewarding them with virtual coins redeemable for discounts at local businesses. This not only boosts volunteer engagement but also contributes to the local economy.

Find out more about the Citizen Coin: <https://www.citizencoin.uk/>



Lynne Bell and Martin Bell (Crofton and Sharlston Medical Practice)

Featherstone Library  
NHS App event -  
November 2024



## TARGETED OUTREACH AND TRAINING ✓

Recognising the importance of tailored communication, the team developed various strategies to reach and support target populations:

**Face-to-Face Training:** Held in-person training for both volunteers and patients. At the start of any project, it is a more effective way of conveying information, addressing individual needs, and assessing volunteer suitability for the program.

**Diverse Volunteer Base:** The volunteers come from a diverse range of backgrounds, including working and retired people with connections to various community organisations like Age UK and Carers Wakefield. This has led to broader outreach and engagement with different communities across the district.

**SMS Campaigns:** Research has shown that supporting GP practices to send targeted SMS messages to specific patient groups particularly those aged 55-70, has improved volunteer attendance at sessions.

## GOVERNANCE ✓

Clear governance processes are integral to the success of the champion programme. There is a well defined purpose and mission which any interested volunteer agrees to before becoming a member.

Also included are:

- terms of reference
- arrangements for sessions and regular group meetings
- clearly set out roles of members
- how to provide detailed feedback and data from sessions.
- incidents, risk management and escalation



Sessions are fully compliant with the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018)

# DIGITAL INCLUSION AND HEALTH INEQUALITIES



The Digital Champions project was introduced as a key mechanism to address digital inclusion - and exclusion - throughout the district.

It aims to bridge the gap between digital access and health outcomes, as there is a well-established connection between digital exclusion and health inequality.

Digital exclusion is recognised as a social determinant of health, meaning it has a direct impact on a person's ability to manage their wellbeing. This is closely linked to another critical issue: health literacy.

Health literacy goes beyond simply being able to read – it involves having the skills, knowledge, and confidence to access, understand, and use health information effectively.

Addressing digital exclusion underpins the work that the Digital and Transformation team do. You can read more about the NHS approach to this and the key role of libraries [here](#).



Debra Kew (Kings Medical Centre) and Helen Wymer (Chapelthorpe Medical Centre) delivering a NHS App session at Wakefield One Library alongside two of our Digital Support Officers, Hannah Popple and Craig Benn

# CHAMPION FEEDBACK



One of our Digital Champions works for a large financial organisation that employs over 2000 people and she has blogged about her experience of being a champion on her corporate intranet. Her article was also featured in the company UK weekly cascade email and internal social channels.

Back You can benefit from the NHS App

## You can benefit from the the NHS App

By Helen Paterson Senior Digital Experience Strategy Manager - Wed, 22 Jan 2025 00:00

We've probably all been frustrated by wait times linked to managing our health. I've spent hours "on hold" to NHS services, trying to get repeat prescriptions, test results, appointments arranged or even just a triage. Many of these are "life admin" tasks, and although health and wellbeing is a priority, until now the process of getting access to that help has been pretty old school and pretty frustrating.

Last year I saw an ad while waiting in my GP surgery, asking for help with the NHS App. Naturally my curiosity took over and I zapped the QR code... Fast forward to now and I am a local "Digital Champion" of the NHS App.

I attend drop-in sessions in my local community to help raise awareness of the app and troubleshoot for those needing a helping hand. I'm sharing this with you as I've seen how much this service has improved, and I've personally experienced the benefits...

Here are a few of the features you can access directly from your smartphone:

- Manage your own AND dependants' prescriptions (Kids, vulnerable adults)
- Manage appointments with the GP plus any NHS service you've been referred to
- View test results with next steps
- If your GP practice is signed up, you can get in touch about a new health issue rather than calling and waiting in the queue

I have saved so much time accessing the services I need via this app. If you've got a smartphone which has Android v8 and above, or Apple iOS v15 and above you can access this too.

The flyers and FAQs provided by the NHS Digital team are below, please share the info with those who you know will benefit with self-serve.

[Document Preview - NHS App Repeat Prescriptions Leaflet](#)

[Document Preview - NHS FAQs](#)

As new features are launched, I'll share the updates. If you do need any help, please get in touch.



“Not everyone can or wants to sign up to the NHS App, but by supporting and encouraging those people who can, more time is released for the people for whom digital access is not an option”

## NEXT STEPS

The D&T Team are always looking for ways to enhance and develop the Digital Champions project and next steps include:

**The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Process for Volunteers:** The team are planning to introduce DBS checks for volunteers. This will enable volunteers to run sessions independently, reducing reliance on the core team and enabling the programme to scale up more quickly when required.

**Harder-to-Reach Groups:** Work is continuing to develop networks and connections to engage with people and communities that are traditionally harder to reach. Progress will be based on the success with groups like refugees and carers.

**Cost-Effectiveness of SMS Campaigns:** Evaluating the cost-effectiveness of SMS campaigns will help to identify what is working and the type and tone of messaging that has the most impact.

**Quantitative Data Collection:** While qualitative feedback has been positive, processes and analysis for quantitative feedback are being developed so that robust evaluation of the program's impact can be shared.

From Left to Right:

Sara Crowcroft, one of our Digital Champion Volunteers delivering a pop-up NHS App event at Sandal Library;

Ann Marie Maguire, Digital Inclusion Co Ordinator for Carers Wakefield and District who came along to shadow our work with the aim of supporting carers to use the NHS App as part of her brand new role;

and Greg Stringer, Digital Inclusion Officer for Wakefield Council who is supporting some of our WPDCG sessions by offering free sim-cards and data packages to those without mobile data.



If you would like more information about the project or are interested in becoming a digital champion please contact:  
[digitalsupport.wakefield@nhs.net](mailto:digitalsupport.wakefield@nhs.net)

## OUR CHAMPION STORIES

### Why did you sign up to be a digital champion?

I saw the ad at my Drs surgery, and thought it was something I was really suited for. Due to my ailments, I don't get out much, and this sounded like a great opportunity to get out, meet lots of new people, and use my skills to help others take advantage of the NHS app to manage their health issues.



Rob Bell, New Southgate Surgery

### What have you found most interesting/enjoyable about being a digital champion?

The diverse range of people I've met, and the fact I've been able to help them in some small way. It's given me a sense of achievement and a feeling I'm contributing something worthwhile, which is a feeling we don't often get as disabled people. It's also good to feel part of a small group of volunteers who are helping others do something which will simplify and improve a part of their lives.

### What impact has the NHS App had on your life and why is it important for you to share this with others?

I use the NHS App a lot due to having a range of medical issues. It's made it much easier for me to keep abreast of appointments and test results. Although I've had access to my appointments, my Medical Record and been ordering prescriptions online previously, it's been through a number of different apps and websites. The NHS app has given me a single app, a central point that brings all these things together and lets me deal with most things medical related within an easy to use app.

### Have you come across any specific challenges as part of the Digital Champion group or when delivering NHS App sessions?

I've grown up being addicted to computers from a young age, people my age were the very first who were able to own and use home computers like the ZX Spectrum and Commodore 64. I was also part of the first generation to be able to access the Internet in their teens, so tech and the Internet are second nature to me. The sessions at the library have given me a much greater appreciation of the fact that a lot of people, particularly older people, find tech and the Internet very daunting. For a very technically-minded person, it's been a challenge for me to be able to appreciate how difficult and daunting some people find both, and to communicate with people in non-techy language so they can understand what I'm doing and how they can do it for themselves. I hope I've risen to the challenge.

## OUR CHAMPION STORIES

### **Why did you sign up to be a digital champion?**

I find the NHS app a real benefit but I have met a number of people who would like to use the NHS app but haven't the confidence to set it up or use its full potential. I have always enjoyed digital technology and was delighted to find a way to help other people so they can enjoy the same benefits as I do .

### **What have you found most interesting/enjoyable about being a digital champion?**

It's fantastic when you've set up someone up and they explain how this will now make their life some much easier in being able to access repeat prescription , Patches or appointments , rather than having to ring the surgery and wait in a lengthy telephone queue .

### **What impact has the NHS App had on your life and why is it important for you to share this with others?**

It has personally made my life so much easier now I can access my test results, consultant letters and repeat prescriptions without having to involve the GP or healthcares valuable time.

### **Have you come across any specific challenges as part of the Digital Champion group or when delivering NHS App sessions?**

The main challenge, is people aren't certain of their Apple ID or Google passwords and may have difficulty downloading the app . Although with patience and time we can reset these and allow them to download the app. I find they are very apologetic about wasting our time, however this isn't the case and this is why the Digital Champions are there to help!



Sean Sparke

**Why did you sign up to be a digital champion?** I've always been keen to do some sort of voluntary work and have an employer who is supportive of additional duties relating to public service. As a current IT professional, I felt I had skills that could be used and transferred to a different context.

**What have you found most interesting/enjoyable about being a digital champion?** Meeting people and watching them learn and grow in confidence.

**What impact has the NHS App had on your life and why is it important for you to share this with others?** Made life easier, especially with working full time and having caring responsibilities, time is tight. If others can benefit from this technology, then they too may be able to manage their time better.