



Guidance: Call for expression of interest for local authorities to participate in the next phase of the digital NHS Health Check

Purpose

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) is seeking expressions of interest from local authorities interested in collaborating on the next phase of the development of a digital NHS Health Check. Specifically, we are looking to work with up to three local authorities and their NHS Health Check GP provider/s to pilot the first iteration of the digital NHS Health Check platform in a small-scale, private Beta phase.

This document sets out the background, guidance, eligibility and selection criteria for local authorities who wish to work with DHSC during the private Beta phase, and broadly sets out expectations and requirements for key stakeholder groups.

Applicants are urged to read the Guidance note and associated appendices carefully before applying.

Background

The NHS Health Check programme – England’s flagship cardiovascular disease prevention programme commissioned by local authorities since 2013 – aims to prevent heart disease, stroke, diabetes and kidney disease, and some cases of dementia among adults aged 40-74 years.

Each year, the NHS Health Check programme engages over 1 million people. A national evaluation of the programme estimated that at current statin prescribing levels, over 5 years, 2,500 people will have avoided a heart attack or stroke ([NHS Health Check Programme review - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)).

However, overall national uptake of the NHS Health Check has never exceeded 50%, meaning there is still a large proportion of the eligible population that the existing in-person programme is not reaching.

An evidence-based review of the programme, published in 2021, recommended a digital approach to improve participation and engagement in the NHS Health Check. Government has since announced a commitment to develop a digital NHS Health Check from 2024.

The vision for the digital NHS Health Check is to increase the flexibility and reach of the NHS Health Check through the creation of an innovative, accessible national digital service, that can be delivered alongside local face-to-face offers, that helps people understand and take action to engage with their cardiovascular health. The aim is that the digital NHS Health Check will offer participants the same assessment as set out in legislation through an additional, flexible mode of delivery.

Delivering a digital NHS Health Check

DHSC is investing almost £17m in the development of a digital NHS Health Check platform, accessible to eligible invitees through a web browser via the NHS App. Local authority commissioners can choose to offer the digital check alongside the existing in-person check, to give users more choice about where and when to have a check and empower people to take action to improve their health independently. A digital NHS Health Check will enable people to self-check at home, only directing people to their GP where further clinical assessment and treatment is required.

For further detail on the digital NHS Health Check, please see the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document at Appendix A.

Private Beta Phase

DHSC is now preparing for the [private Beta](#) phase, where the digital platform will be built and commence testing with a small number of eligible people. As local authorities commission these services locally, DHSC would like to engage up to three local authorities and work with select GP providers in their areas in this next private Beta phase in 2024/25.

This next phase will help to refine the solution, validate assumptions, and inform the best approach for national rollout at scale.

The private Beta phase will:

1. Build an end-to-end digital NHS Health Check available via a web browser and integrated with the NHS App, GP IT systems and users' GP records, and signposting to national support and follow-on advice, to meet all existing legislative, technical, and clinical requirements, optimise user journeys and meet relevant medical device certification requirements.
2. Test the implementation and feasibility of the initial (private Beta) digital NHS Health Check service with a small number of end users in a range of GP providers across up to three local authorities.
3. Continually evaluate the usability, acceptability, effectiveness, and uptake of the digital NHS Health Check platform for different user groups.
4. Iterate the solution to improve and optimise it for user groups.
5. Determine the most suitable commissioning and delivery approach for subsequent rollout.

Roles and responsibilities

As commissioners of the NHS Health Check, DHSC would like to collaborate with up to three local authorities and GP providers in their areas to pilot the digital NHS Health Check in the private Beta phase. We are seeking to blend the use of a digital product with existing local NHS Health Check care pathways and deliver it alongside the face-to-face health check thus embedding the new digital NHS Health Check within existing programmes.

To summarise the expected roles and responsibilities for the private Beta pilot phase:

Local authorities will:

- continue to be responsible for commissioning the NHS Health Check.
- be responsible for agreeing suitable remuneration with their GP providers for the digital NHS Health Check.
- continue, together with their GP providers, to be responsible for identifying and inviting eligible people to participate in the NHS Health Check – this includes providing people with invites to participate in the in-person or digital checks.

DHSC will:

- Cover the cost of building the digital platform and the testing phase.

- Cover the cost of community or home-based blood sampling for cholesterol and HbA1c for participants of the digital NHS Health Check.
- Coordinate the programme evaluation to be undertaken by an external supplier for the private beta phase.
- Notes:
 - No additional funding will be made available for local authorities taking part in the pilots.
 - DHSC is currently considering options for procurement of blood sampling products for the home blood sampling element of the digital NHS Health Check. If a procurement is not feasible in the timescales available, DHSC may require the local authority to use locally commissioned services for point-of-care blood sampling. In such event DHSC shall be responsible for, and shall reimburse the local authority for, any costs properly and reasonably incurred by the local authority in relation to procuring the relevant blood sampling products for the purpose of the digital NHS Health Check.

DHSC, NHS England and an expert technical supplier will:

- build the digital NHS Health Check private Beta platform.

DHSC, NHSE and partners will:

- work with local authorities and GP providers to deliver the service, including identifying community pharmacies participating in the hypertension case finding advanced service where blood pressure can be accurately measured and recorded in the digital NHS Health Check.

The roles and responsibilities will be set out in a memorandum of understanding between DHSC and each of the successful local authorities.

Benefits of being involved

Being part of the private Beta phase of development for the Digital NHS Health Check presents the following benefits:

- Being part of an exciting, innovative digital project and being an early adopter of the digital NHS Health Check, helping to refine and shape the solution prior to rollout across the country.

- As digital approaches become increasingly part of the future direction, participation in this pilot phase will place successful local authorities in a strong position to rollout a digital NHS Health Check at scale ahead of other local authorities, leading the way for other areas.
- We anticipate the digital NHS Health Check will be cheaper for local authorities to deliver than the face-to-face service, allowing the overall delivery of a greater number of checks within existing local authority NHS Health Check resource.
- DHSC will provide the infrastructure and shall be responsible for any costs in relation to procuring the relevant blood sampling products for the purpose of the digital NHS Health Check, helping to bolster local capacity to deliver the NHS Health Check.

Eligibility and selection

We welcome EOIs from any individual local authority in England who fulfils the following eligibility criteria:

1. The local authority is delivering a sufficient level of NHS Health Checks, as determined by whether the local authority has provided at least the England-average of NHS Health Checks in 2022/23. A list of those local authorities eligible based on this criterion is available at Appendix C;*
2. The local authority can identify GP providers who are using the EMIS IT system who are willing to be engaged in the pilot for a period of at least 6 months;
3. The local authority can commit staff time and resource to support the private Beta phase (dedicated resource with a good level of programme knowledge and experience for no more than one day a week over the proposed 12-month private Beta phase);
4. The local authority has the agreement of their Director of Public Health;
5. The local authority can provide a named clinical lead on behalf of the ICB; and
6. The local authority can provide a named Data Protection Officer or equivalent.

* There may be instances where this data is not fully complete or reflective of local authority delivery, for example where there have been recent changes to local authority boundaries. Where a local authority is not listed in Appendix C but can produce compelling evidence that this criterion is otherwise fulfilled, and is interested in applying, please contact us at NHSHealthCheck@dhsc.gov.uk well in advance of the deadline to discuss eligibility.

Local authorities that meet the eligibility criteria will then be assessed against the selection criteria set out in Table 1 below. Table 1 also confirms the relative weighting applied to each selection criteria. The weightings reflect the relative importance of the criteria. Where specified, a minimum pass mark applies to the selection criteria. DHSC may reject any application which does not meet the relevant minimum score in respect of one or more criteria.

Table 1: Selection criteria and weighting

Selection criteria	Weighting	Minimum score
1. Demonstrable experience and commitment to strong partnership working with NHS Health Check providers.	30%	Local authority must achieve a minimum score of 1
2. Can evidence that the local population eligible of for the NHS Health check covers a broad range of population groups by age, sex, deprivation decile, ethnicity, and risk factor prevalence.	30%	Local authority must achieve a minimum score of 1
3. Has established pathways and services available to support behaviour change after participants complete their NHS Health Check.	20%	Local authority must achieve a minimum score of 1
4. Can evidence local infrastructure available to support participants to carry out blood pressure checks and point of care testing for cholesterol and blood glucose in the community, including community pharmacy.	20%	Local authority must achieve a minimum score of 1

Each response to the scored questions (see Appendix C: Expression of Interest form, Section 3) will be marked out of a possible score of 3. The scoring will be based on the general principles and descriptions shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Scoring matrix

Score	Criteria for awarding score
0	Response does not provide any relevant evidence and there is no confidence they meet the criteria.
1	Response provides minimal evidence and there is a low confidence they meet the criteria.

2	Response provides acceptable evidence and there is good confidence they meet the criteria.
3	Response provides exceptional evidence and there is high confidence they meet the criteria.

Once each question has been scored, and the relevant weighting applied so as to produce a total overall score for each application, applications will be ranked based on that total overall score with priority given to those with the highest score. The three highest ranked applications will then be taken forwards to a final assessment stage as described below.

In the event that the third and fourth ranked applications achieve the same overall score, whichever of the two local authorities that has the greater level of NHS Health Check delivery in 2022/23 will be taken forwards to the final assessment stage described below.

Final assessment stage: DHSC reserves the right to select up to three local authorities for the private Beta phase of the digital NHS Health Check. In making its determination as to which of the three highest ranking applications DHSC will select to take part in the private Beta phase, DHSC will consider:

1. The regional geographic spread of the local authority pilot sites across the country; and
2. The size and diversity of the local population eligible for the NHS Health Check, ensuring the final selection includes a diverse mix of people by age, sex, deprivation decile, ethnicity and risk factor prevalence.

For the purposes of the final assessment stage, the previous rankings will be disregarded. DHSC reserves the right to select any or all of the three local authorities.

Should those local authorities who are selected for the private Beta phase fail to provide the required information after selection, or wish to withdraw their application altogether, DHSC may approach the next highest ranking local authority based on the above evaluation process.

For further details on the eligibility and selection criteria and expected response format, please see Appendix B: Local authority Expression of Interest Form.

How can we apply to be a Beta phase pilot area?

All local authorities interested in participating in the private Beta phase of the digital NHS Health Check who fulfil the eligibility criteria are encouraged to submit an expression of

interest form (Appendix B). Those applications that meet the eligibility criteria will then be assessed to determine the most suitable areas.

The expression of interest process will be open on 27 February 2024 and will close 11.59pm on 22 March 2024. Applications received after the deadline will not be considered.

Please send a completed form as a single document (with no attachments) from a recognised local authority email address to NHSHealthCheck@dhsc.gov.uk by 11.59pm on 22 March 2024. All the information you want us to consider must be included in the EOI form provided. Additional documents will not be considered.

The subject line of your email should be as follows: 'Digital NHS Health Check Private Beta Phase EOI: [local authority name]'

Evaluation of pilot

The application will be governed, monitored and assessed according to the [Government Functional Standard for Digital](#), and accompanying [Digital Assessment Framework](#).

We will also assess the clinical safety of the digital NHS Health Check throughout the private Beta phase.

A formal independent evaluation of the digital NHS Health Check is planned, to gather insights on its implementation and impact. More details on the formal evaluation will be provided in due course.

Local authorities will be required to support the collection of quantitative and qualitative data to ensure the programme is appropriately evaluated against the aims of the programme.

Assurance

The roles and responsibilities will be set out in a memorandum of understanding between DHSC and each of the successful local authorities.

Timeline

An indicative timeline for the project is outlined in the table below.

Stage	When	What
Local authority selection	27th Feb 2024	EOI open for applicants
	5th March 2024 at 14.30	Webinar with Q and A session for applicants
	22nd March 2024	Closing date for EOIs
	w/c 25th March 2024	Moderation and selection
	w/c 8th April	Notify local authorities of selection & commence formal agreement.
	w/c 8th April	Shortlisted authorities to provide additional information as specified in Appendix B, including: Name/s of the relevant GP providers and eligible population list sizes in 2024/25, and name of dedicated staff member.
	May 2024	Commence onboarding for Build phase
	May – July 2024	Build, integration & onboarding with local authority providers.
Delivery	From July 2024 – February 2025	Commence inviting eligible invitees.
		Delivery of digital NHS Health Check
		Data collection
Evaluation	From March 2024 – Late 2025 (exact dates TBC with evaluator)	Interim & full evaluations of processes and outcomes, across each phase of the programme

Further information

Webinar

DHSC will host a webinar and Q & A session on the expression of interest process and private Beta pilots at 14.30 - 15:30 on Tuesday 5 March 2024. If you are interested in attending, please contact NHSHealthCheck@dhsc.gov.uk to confirm your attendance and event details will be shared.

You are welcome to send any questions ahead of the session to NHSHealthCheck@dhsc.gov.uk by midday on Friday, 1 March 2024. DHSC will provide responses to the questions received in the session and via a Q&A document which will be circulated to all attendees within one of week the webinar. If, for any reason, you are unable to attend the session but wish to receive the Q&A document, please contact NHSHealthCheck@dhsc.gov.uk

Questions

If you have any questions about the expression of interest more generally, please contact NHSHealthCheck@dhsc.gov.uk. We will aim to respond to all queries in a timely manner.

Appendices

- Appendix A: Detailed FAQ on the digital NHS Health Check
- Appendix B: Local authority Expression of Interest form
- Appendix C: Local authorities eligible for the digital NHS Health Check