



# Appendix A: Digital NHS Health Check FAQs

## Purpose

This document is intended to provide local authority public health teams with an update on the development of the digital NHS Health Check and next steps, as well as information to support these teams plan for the future commissioning of NHS Health Checks. These questions have been collated based on feedback received from stakeholders to date.

Your continued involvement and feedback are key to developing a digital NHS Health Check that works for local systems, commissioners, providers and the eligible population.

Should you have any additional questions, please contact [NHSHealthCheck@dhsc.gov.uk](mailto:NHSHealthCheck@dhsc.gov.uk)

## Background

### Why are you developing a digital NHS Health Check?

Government has committed to developing a digital NHS Health Check.

A review of the programme, published in 2021, found that the NHS Health Check has achieved many of its aims since the programme began in 2013, and millions of eligible people have had their cardiovascular disease (CVD) risk assessed. However, since its inception the 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 programme is not reaching.

The 2021 review 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’, and recommended a digital approach to improve participation and engagement in the NHS Health Check.

The Department of Health & Social Care (DHSC) is developing a national digital NHS Health Check that local authority commissioners can choose to offer alongside the existing in-person offer. Introducing a digital NHS Health Check will 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 primary care where further clinical assessment and treatment is required.

## **What are the anticipated benefits of the digital NHS Health Check?**

Anticipated benefits to the digital NHS Health Check that will be tested through piloting and evaluation include the following:

- By providing people with the choice to complete their NHS Health Check in their home, more people will engage in the life-saving programme, and local commissioners and providers could target their in-person service to those needing or wanting in-person support.
- A digital NHS Health Check may attract people who are otherwise reluctant or find it difficult to engage in healthcare settings.
- The digital NHS Health Check could offer efficiencies for commissioners.
- The digital NHS Health Check has the potential to bolster local capacity to deliver NHS Health Checks.
- The digital NHS Health Check could help to overcome some local variability in delivery.
- Long term, by identifying and managing more people at greater risk of CVD earlier we anticipate that the programme can ease pressure on the NHS.

## **Development and timescales of the digital NHS Health Check**

### **What has been done so far to develop the digital NHS Health Check?**

Significant work has been completed to develop a digital NHS Health Check.

Government digital services must adhere to [specific standards](#) and go through [distinct phases](#) to help departments create great digital products or services. The digital NHS Health Check has completed a Discovery phase, led by NHS England in 2022, and a

digital NHS Health Check pilot was delivered in Cornwall. The findings from the Discovery phase, the Cornwall pilot and a separate pilot led by Southwark Council were used to inform the design and delivery of the Alpha phase.

The Alpha phase focused on testing different solutions to the problems identified during Discovery and was conducted by an external supplier, supporting a DHSC team, in May 2023. Alpha assessment was successfully passed in November 2023 recommending the programme progressed to a Beta phase.

Extensive stakeholder engagement with providers, commissioners and end users has been conducted throughout the Discovery and Alpha phases. This has included in depth interviews, prototype testing, surveys, desk research and engagement with existing programmes. Stakeholder engagement will continue throughout the private Beta phase.

## **What will the digital NHS Health Check be?**

The vision is that the digital NHS Health Check will be a single innovative national digital product, offering participants the same assessment as an in-person check through an additional, flexible alternative model of delivery. By capitalising on digital engagement during the pandemic, we hope to be able to reach more people by enabling people to self-check at home. We predict this new model will also provide local authorities with a new way to deliver in-person checks through allowing checks to be undertaken on the move in community settings.

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
- Provide questionnaires and biometrics, including blood pressure, cholesterol and, if required, blood glucose (HbA1c)
- 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 digital NHS Health Check is being developed as an additional optional mode of delivery, with commissioners given the choice to offer it alongside the existing face-to-face service.

Please note that the above is the end goal for the digital NHS Health Check, and functionality may differ throughout development.

## **What are the next steps for the digital NHS Health Check?**

DHSC is now preparing for the [private Beta](#) phase, where the digital platform will be built and testing commenced with a small number of eligible people so we can get feedback, understand the factors affecting uptake and improve the product. This phase will be led by teams across DHSC, NHS England, and an expert digital supplier. This next phase will help to build and refine the digital NHS Health Check service, validate assumptions and inform the best approach for national rollout at scale.

Once we are confident that the digital NHS Health Check is delivering a high-quality service, all digital standards are met and the platform can run at scale, a phased rollout is planned over the subsequent three years. It is our ambition that all local authorities will be able to offer the digital NHS Health Check alongside their in-person programme by 2027/28, should they choose to do so.

## **How can I be involved in the next phase of the programme?**

As local commissioners of the NHS Health Check, DHSC anticipate working with up to three local authorities during the private Beta phase in 2024/25.

An expression of interest (EOI) process will launch on 27 February and we encourage all eligible local authorities to apply. Applications close on 22 March 2024. Local authorities will be selected April 2024 and onboarded with a view to commence the formal pilot with eligible participants from summer 2024.

For further information about the EOI, please visit the [NHS Health Check website](#).

## **Why are DHSC only working with commissioners and GP providers in the next phase of the digital NHS Health Check?**

The first iteration of the digital NHS Health Check product – the minimum viable product – will require GPs to identify and invite the eligible population to participate in the digital NHS Health Check to ensure the volume of invitations can be tightly managed. These nominated GPs will then receive their patients' digital NHS Health Check results and provide the required clinical follow up.

It is DHSC's intention that, once tested with GP providers, work will progress to adapt the digital service for other community providers.

## **How will the digital NHS Health Check collect eligible participants' information, including blood pressure, cholesterol and blood glucose?**

To complete a digital NHS Health Check, participants must provide a range of data consistent with the existing in-person check, including:

- Demographic information, including age, sex and ethnicity.
- Behavioural information about CVD risk factors, such as smoking status, alcohol use and physical activity through validated tools.
- Biometric information, including height and weight to calculate Body Mass Index (BMI), blood pressure, cholesterol and, for some people, blood glucose.

The ambition is to allow digital NHS Health Check participants to complete all elements of their check at home or in convenient community locations.

- Demographic and behavioural information will be captured in a questionnaire using validated formats and tools in line with the existing in-person offer.
- Most people will have the means to collect and record their height and weight for BMI at home. Information about the importance of providing accurate height and weight information will be presented to users on the digital NHS Health Check platform.
- Those people with access to a blood pressure monitor at home will be encouraged to measure their blood pressure at home and record it in the digital NHS Health Check platform.
- Those without access to a blood pressure monitor at home will be directed into community pharmacies offering the free hypertension case-finding advanced service via the [pharmacy finder tool](#), and will be required to record their readings in the digital NHS Health Check platform. As of early 2024, just over 9,500 pharmacies across the country offer this service.
- DHSC is currently assessing the best way of measuring cholesterol and blood glucose at home and the community, including through point of care testing devices, laboratory services and home self-sampling/testing models. Further detail on the final blood sampling delivery model will follow.

## **Will LAs receive any support or training to rollout the digital offer?**

Yes, the rollout of the digital NHS Health Check will include support for commissioners and providers who wish to offer a digital NHS Health Check alongside their in-person programme. We are currently engaging with commissioners and providers to understand their support and training requirements.

## **How is the digital NHS Health Check funded?**

Government is investing almost £17m to develop the digital NHS Health Check product.

The subsequent private Beta phase in 2024/25 will help to determine the most suitable commissioning and delivery approach for rollout at scale, with a recognition that there is considerable variability across different local commissioners.

## **How will the digital NHS Health Check be evaluated?**

The digital 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 at each phase of the programme.

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.

## **What will the digital NHS Health Check mean for local authorities?**

### **Will the digital NHS Health Check replace in-person checks?**

As recommended by the review of the NHS Health Check programme in 2021, the digital NHS Health Check is being developed as an additional optional mode of delivery, with commissioners given the choice to offer it alongside the existing face-to-face service.

## **What does a national digital NHS Health Check mean for local commissioning of the programme?**

The NHS Health Check remains a part of local authorities' statutory duties. Local authorities should continue commissioning the in-person NHS Health Check as usual.

The digital NHS Health Check is being developed as an additional optional mode of delivery, with commissioners given the choice to offer it alongside the existing face-to-face service.

Subsequent guidance on the impact and implications of the digital NHS Health Check on local commissioning will follow prior to any wider rollout and be informed by further stakeholder engagement.

## **How will we continue to communicate with local authorities?**

DHSC will continue to engage local authorities at key points throughout the course of the development, testing and rollout of the digital NHS Health Check. We will update you regularly through existing channels.

## **Will the digital NHS Health Check be commissioned nationally or locally?**

The subsequent private Beta phase in 2024/25 will help to determine the most suitable commissioning and delivery approach for rollout at scale.

The national digital NHS Health Check will be funded and owned by DHSC and maintained by NHSE.

## **Will local authorities have to pay to use the digital NHS Health Check during the private Beta phase?**

There are no plans to require local authorities to pay DHSC to use the digital NHS Health Check in the private Beta phase. The private Beta phase in 2024/25 will help to determine the most suitable commissioning and delivery approach for rollout at scale.

## **Will local authorities need additional funding to assist with the delivery of the NHS Health Check?**

The private Beta phase in 2024/25 will help to determine the most suitable commissioning and delivery approach for rollout at scale. It is likely that local authorities will need to commission the blood tests required as part of the digital NHS Health Check.

We anticipate that the digital NHS Health Check will offer efficiencies compared with the in-person model. However, this assumption will be further scrutinised in the subsequent private Beta pilot phase.

## **What happens if we think the digital NHS Health Check won't work in our area?**

The digital NHS Health Check will be designed, tested and implemented in line with strict government accessibility standards to ensure it works for the eligible population, is simple to use, and is continuously improved and maintained.

However, we recognise that some local authorities may not wish to use the digital NHS Health Check. The digital NHS Health Check is being developed as an additional optional mode of delivery, with commissioners given the choice to offer it alongside the existing face-to-face service.

## **What does this mean for GPs/providers?**

### **Will digital NHS Health Check results be shared with GPs?**

Yes. In line with legislative requirements, results from the digital NHS Health Check will be shared with GPs. During the private Beta phase, DHSC will be working with clinicians to identify the most appropriate technical solutions to maximise efficiencies that adhere to clinical standards. We are also working closing with Information Governance to ensure appropriate data sharing agreements are implemented.

### **How will digital NHS Health Check results be flagged to GPs?**

Results from a digital NHS Health Check that sit outside of normal parameters will be flagged to the GP to ensure they can easily identify and prioritise participants for follow up. The private Beta phase will test this further to ensure the flags are operating as intended and are fit-for-purpose.

### **Will GPs receive any support or training to rollout the digital offer?**

Yes, the roll out of the digital NHS Health Check will include support as part of implementation. We are currently engaging with commissioners and providers to understand what support and training might be required.

# **How will this work for people eligible for the NHS Health Check?**

## **How will eligible people be invited to and access the digital NHS Health Check?**

For local authorities that are successfully selected for the next phase of testing – the private Beta phase – DHSC will work with local commissioners and GP providers to identify the eligible population and invite them to participate in either a digital or face-to-face NHS Health Check. We will work with local areas to design and implement invite methods for the digital NHS Health Check. This is likely to be dependent on what local areas are currently using to invite people to the face-to-face NHS Health Check.

## **What happens after a digital NHS Health Check?**

People who complete the digital NHS Health Check will receive their results and personalised advice on ways to reduce their CVD risk depending on these results (including individual risk factors and 10-year risk score). Those with results that fall outside of the normal range will be advised to follow up with their GP; this will take place as it does with the face-to-face programme. GPs will remain responsible for providing clinical advice and support after an NHS Health Check as normal.

If someone is unable to complete their digital NHS Health Check for any reason, they will be directed to follow up with their GP to complete their NHS Health Check in person.

Options for communicating results will be tested with users during the private Beta phase.

## **How will we ensure the home blood test is user friendly?**

It is critical that all elements of the digital NHS Health Check pathway are user friendly, effective and efficient, this includes the blood sampling requirement.

DHSC is currently assessing the best way of measuring cholesterol and blood glucose at home and in the community, including through point of care testing devices, laboratory services and home self-sampling/testing models. Further detail on the final blood sampling delivery model will follow.