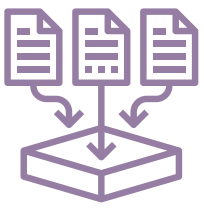


# Using digital technology to support physical health

## About the project

We wanted to find out how people who use community mental health services use digital technologies such as smartphone apps, trackers and wearables to help manage their physical health. Our study involved three stages: an online survey, one-to-one interviews and stakeholder workshops. We found that people are using widely available devices for a range of different purposes, including sleep monitoring, period tracking, medication, exercise and diet management. Some frequently used devices included Fitbit, MyFitnessPal and Apple health. The recommendations from the stakeholder workshops are outlined below.

## Data sharing



- People wanted to see engagement with digital devices by health services;
- There was interest in the sharing of data between service users and care teams;
- People wanted to see built-in functions for data sharing in the devices;
- People thought it was important for service users to have control over which data they would like to share.

## Guidance on device use

- Device recommendations from trusted clinicians, or alternatively devices which are purpose-built or approved by services;
- Empower and train healthcare staff to feel confident in recommending devices;
- Possibility of popular/useful devices list for use by service users and clinical staff.



## Training, support and access



- Devices need to be easy to use and accessible to avoid exclusion;
- Ensuring that digital tech is an optional addition to clinical care rather than a 'must-have';
- Training in device usage for service users, carers and staff alike- potential for 'peer support' type networks.

## Future research

- More research, on a much greater scale.
- Participants thought that research could look at device usage in different age groups.
- Participants wanted research findings to be considered in future development of devices.



## Key findings



- Participants recognised there was a strong link between physical and mental health. Using devices to monitor their physical health could have positive impact on their mental health and vice versa.
- It was recognised that motivation to engage with devices could also fluctuate depending on mental health.
- All participants stressed that devices could be a positive aid or addition to clinical care, but should not be replacement. When used as an accessory, participants found devices could have very tangible benefits for their physical health.

Find out more

You can find out more about the IMPHS Digital Devices project by visiting [bit.ly/Digital-Devices](https://bit.ly/Digital-Devices) or scanning the QR code.

