a guide for understanding and navigating digital health, care and wellbeing tools and services
Foreword

The idea for this guide came from many conversations and insights observed during the Discover Digital events in 2018-2019. We know that simply signposting people to digital tools, however helpful they might be, is not enough. People also need support to develop the skills, knowledge and confidence that they need to be able to use these tools. This is a well-known issue and it is also why the Connecting Scotland programme does not just provide people with devices and connectivity, but also with support from a digital champion.

However, using digital tools and technologies for health, caring and wellbeing purposes is even more complex than just using them for everyday purposes. When things work well, they can be highly beneficial; however, when they don’t they can often cause a lot of stress. We therefore want to build a resource that can support people understand a bit more about how digital tools might play into their lives, focusing on health and wellbeing in particular. This might be used by those who want to use technology in their self management, by carers or by support workers who can help others build up their skills and confidence.

This document is our first attempt at building such a resource. This is very much a first draft and we would sincerely invite as much feedback as possible on it. We know it is by no means perfect; the information provided here is lengthy and at times complex. Not all of it might be relevant to someone just starting out with digital health, care and wellbeing tools. Furthermore, for the time being it is only accessible to English-speakers who have the ability to read the information contained here. These are all issues we want to address.
During the summer of 2021, we will work with a range of organisations to better understand what knowledge, skills and motivations people need in order to use digital tools successfully for their health and wellbeing. We will then also look at whether the information contain here helps address some of these needs. Our aim is to collectively curate a valuable source of information. Once this has been achieved, we will also look at the best ways in which this information can be taught and presented, including how it can be made more accessible.

To summarise, there are three questions that we would like others to help us answer:

- How can people be best supported to use digital tools for their health, care and wellbeing?
- Does this guide provide valuable information that can support people gain skills, knowledge and confidence in using digital tools for health and wellbeing?
- How can people be best supported to take in this information?

We hope that you will find this guide of value, but if there is any feedback or any insights that you can provide us with, please get in touch. The project team can be reached at DHCscot@alliance-scotland.org.uk.
About Discover Digital

'Discover Digital' is a project to raise awareness of digital tools that promote health and wellbeing. Between 2018 – 2019 Discover Digital held events across Scotland to exhibit such tools. On show were:

- digital tools that could help us look after ourselves better *(self management tools)*
- digital tools that help us to look after someone else *(caring tools)*
- digital tools that help us access the National Health Service (NHS) more easily *(NHS tools)*

However, since 2020, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been a growing number of digital tools available for people to use. This increase has made it difficult to keep up to date with what tools are available and how best to use them. For this reason, Discover Digital have created this guide to help people understand how such tools work and where they might find the right ones for them.

We believe digital technology can enable people to live better. Whether it is by being more connected or more informed, digital tools are like any other tools: little aids to help us reach our goals.

We think everyone should be able to access and use digital health and care tools in a way that works for them, to achieve their health and wellbeing goals or to be able to better look after someone they love.

*Discover Digital project is part of Scotland’s Digi Health and Care Fest and is delivered with support from the Scottish Government Digital Health and Care and the Technology Enabled Care divisions.*
How to use the guide

We want this guide to help shed some light on how people might benefit from the various digital tools and services that currently exist. We tried to give an overview of how such tools could help you look after your health or that of someone you care for. You can use this guide yourself if you have little or no experience of digital tools. You can also use it to help someone else better understand what digital health and care tools are.

This guide aims to give you a broad understanding of what is available and how these options might work for you or someone you support. This guide will not recommend specific digital tools or services, but it will let you know where to find such recommendations.

The guide also aims to help you understand a bit more about what the implications of these tools and services are. Who created them? What are they for? What knowledge do you need to have before using them? How can you tell whether they fit your own wellbeing goals? These are just some of the questions we are hoping to answer.

We have tried to make this guide as accessible and easy to understand as possible. The information covered by this is organised into five sections: The big picture, Digital tools for self management, Digital NHS services, Technology enabled care, Safeguarding and self-evaluation.

Under each of these sections there are several frequently asked questions. You can choose which questions are most relevant to you.

*Please note: We are aware that this guide covers a lot of information. This much information can be overwhelming, particularly if you are new to this topic. We would recommend splitting this guide into relevant and manageable chunks, and coming back to it whenever you feel ready to take in a bit more information.*
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The big picture

How can technology help in the context of health, care and wellbeing?
In today’s world, there are many digital tools and technologies that can help with your health, care and wellbeing. They range from the extremely simplistic tools, such as step counters, to very advanced machineries such as those aiding in robotic surgery.
Technology has provided us with new ways to enhance how we live, work and play, as well as how we look after ourselves and each other.

For the purpose of this toolkit, however, we will focus only on those technologies that are available to us on an everyday basis. We want to explore and help you get a better understanding of the digital tools and technologies available at your fingertips that could, in the right circumstances, have a positive impact on your health, care and wellbeing.

Watch: What is Digital Health and Care? (1min 40 seconds). This short video provides an overview of what we mean by digital health tools and technologies.
What technologies are you talking about?

**Apps** (or mobile applications) are programmes that you would install and use on your smartphone. They can fulfil a huge range of tasks and you’ll often hear people say: “there’s an app for that!”

**Wearables** are devices that you can wear on your wrist, around your neck or even on your shoes and ankles in some cases. They usually track steps, heart rate and other activities you might take part in. More advanced examples include patches that can analyse chemicals within your body.

**Online programmes** and **websites** are services or sources of information that you would access through a browser (such as Google Chrome, Safari, Edge, Firefox etc) on any devices that can access the web. This includes computers, laptops, smartphones, tablets and even some e-Readers. You do not need to install anything on your device to use them.

**Sensors** and **home aids** are devices that you can install in your home to help with everyday living or in emergency situations. They can include bed pressure sensors that can detect when you get in or out of bed, smart energy meters and alarms, but also movement sensors, smoke gas and flood detectors or fall detectors.

**Tele-monitoring tools** are devices, apps or services that provide ways for you to monitor certain aspects of your life and transmit this information to your GP or another healthcare professional. For example, there is a text message service widely used in the NHS which people can use to transmit blood pressure readings directly to their GP practice for ongoing monitoring.

Tele-monitoring tools can also help where instead of having to go into a hospital or GP practice for routine checks, you can take your own readings and measurements at home and send them to your health professional through a text or internet app. This is common for things like blood pressure monitoring, oxygen level and other measurements you can easily take yourself.

Some more tools are defined in the [thesaurus](#) section at the end.
How much control do I have over these technologies?

The level of control you have in your interactions with these technologies varies. Some are simply tools for reporting at a distance (tele-monitoring) and some transmit data automatically (sensors). However, some will allow you more choice and involvement, potentially even giving you personalised feedback.

The level of control you have over the technology will depend on two things:

- How advanced the technology is
- Who is providing the technology

Many digital tools are available for free today, in particular apps. More complex solutions or devices can be bought from private providers, or in some cases obtained for free or subsidised through local councils or the NHS.

Make sure to discuss your options with someone you trust before you commit to anything. It is also important that you understand how the technology works and if there are any risks involved in using it. This document aims to raise awareness of some of the key risks so you can identify them and make an informed decision on whether to use a digital tool or not.

It is also worth thinking how much time and effort you are willing to put into your use of digital tools, as it is likely to impact the type of tool that is most suitable to you. For example, there are many apps today that can help people track what they eat. These can be useful for those living with diabetes or looking to manage their weight. However, they can be very time intensive as each meal or snack will have to be recorded in the app. On the other hand, other tools request less of you. Step tracking apps and devices often record data in the background, and all you need to do is remember to charge your devices and take them with you when you go for a walk.
Are there any benefits to using digital technologies for health, care and wellbeing?

There are many benefits to using digital technologies as part of your health, care and wellbeing.

Some technologies can help you do things in a new way. For example, you could find new ways of connecting with some of the people that support you, whether they’re family or medical staff. You can also use technology to communicate information about your health to them. As a result, they can monitor your situation and intervene in the event of an emergency, or simply better understand your life and your needs.

Other tools can be useful if you’re trying to change certain aspects of your life. You might want to understand more about yourself and your condition by tracking aspects of your life. Or you might want tips and easy to understand information available at your fingertips on a phone, tablet or computer.

Studies have found that combining medical advice with the use of interactive digital technology can help people with long term conditions by encouraging them to become more involved in their treatment. As a result, people are more likely to change their behaviours and achieve better outcomes too. Even tools which you use on your own, without the contribution of a health professional, can be beneficial.

Evidence: In early 2020, NICE released a draft guideline that confirmed that digital interventions may help people achieve health goals. This includes helping people to be more active, manage their weight, quit smoking, reduce alcohol intake or reduce unsafe sexual behaviour.

Another benefit of digital technologies is that sometimes face-to-face support doesn’t suit everyone. If you have caring responsibilities or work commitments that are hard to
shift, for example, you might struggle to find the time to attend support sessions. Or if you live with mobility issues, fatigue or anxiety, you might also prefer accessing support in the comfort of your own home. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted how online options could offer a suitable alternative to certain groups.

It is important to remember that digital tools or services are not meant to fully replace the care and support you receive. You should always be able to choose to access care and support in the way that best suits you and your needs at any given time. But monitoring your own condition and participating in a digital programme can sometimes give you a better degree of self-awareness and the motivation to adopt better habits. Studies have also shown that people who use digital technologies in their self management are more likely to adopt an active role in consultations with their GPs or specialists.

Tele-monitoring tools can help you self manage better, become more independent and better informed about your condition. More specifically, some digital solutions may detect gas leaks, fire and floods; call for help in emergencies; schedule automated reminders for medication or activity; detect falls etc.

Remote monitoring can also give carers peace of mind, freedom and confidence. If you receive care in your home, there are some technologies which might be able to save your carers or support workers some of the time spent on routine tasks. This could allow them to use that time in a more valuable way, such as finding out what matters to you.

**Watch:** [What is Technology Enabled Care?](#) (6min 59seconds) This short video from NHS Forth Valley shows seven examples of how technology could help a range of individuals with varying needs.
Who can use digital tools and services?

Everyone should be able to use digital tools for their health, care and wellbeing. But the pace of learning will depend on both the tool and your own level of comfort with technology. Some tools you will find easy to use and operate quickly. For others, however, you might need a bit of time and effort to get to grips with them fully, no matter how much experience with digital tools you might have.

There are a few things which can help a tool to work for you:

- You must understand your condition (if you have any), your own goals and how the tool might benefit you, alongside other support you may be receiving.
- You must be open and motivated to change your behaviour to manage your condition or situation.
- The tool must become a natural part of your routine.

But don’t feel disheartened if you come across a tool that’s too complicated or too hard to use. You can discuss the options available to you with someone you trust, such as a support worker or family member. They might be able to recommend a tool that is more suitable to you.

It is also a common misconception that some assistive technologies are for elderly or frail people only. On the contrary, tele-monitoring and assistive technologies are suitable for a wide range of people, as noted in this comprehensive list from NHS Highland:

- Older, vulnerable or frail people who are living alone or spend long periods of time on their own
- People living in isolated areas
- People living with medical conditions, such as epilepsy, mental health problems or dementia
People in need of extra security and fire safety
- People who experience domestic abuse or burglaries
- Disabled people, people who have restricted mobility or are unwell, and may need assistance in an emergency
- People in need of extra support after a stay in hospital
- Carers

Think about your general situation and what your own goals in terms of your health, care and wellbeing are. Think about what you want to achieve and what help you might need to get there. Then you can start thinking about what tools might fit those needs.

For the purpose of this guide, we describe tools within three main categories: digital self management tools, digital NHS tools and technology-enabled care tools. It is likely that one or more of these types of tools could be of benefit to you. Read on to understand more about them.
Digital tools for self management

What is digital self management?

First of all, what is self management?

Self management is a lot like self care. It is made up of the different actions and decisions you take to look after yourself. The only difference is that self management is talked about in the context of managing a long term condition.

Long term conditions are health conditions which last for a long time or indefinitely. Long term conditions come in all shapes and sizes and include depression, dermatitis, diabetes, chronic pain, and many more. What connects them all is that there is no simple cure and the actions you take in your everyday life can make the condition better or worse.

So self management refers to those actions that you take to make yourself better: whether it’s being careful about what you eat, being more active, taking your medicine regularly or even ensuring you spend enough quality time with family and friends. It can be about knowing your symptoms and your triggers, as well as what helps. Whatever helps you cope, or even thrive, can fall under self management.

Self management doesn’t mean managing by yourself. Self management is most effective when it’s done with the support of health professionals and others that can help. You could be working with a health coach to achieve better wellbeing, attending support groups or going for organised walks to manage your health better. You could also be accessing more specific support, from peers or professionals, that is related to your condition.

So self management is a partnership, but it equips YOU with the skills and knowledge to be in the driving seat. Because on average, people who have one or more long term conditions spend less than 3 hours a year with their healthcare provider. The rest are spent self managing.
Self management can mean people being:

- better informed about their condition(s)
- better prepared for everyday challenges
- better supported when they need it [1]

Watch: Self Management in Practice (6min 24seconds) In this video, three health professionals share some self management stories from their work and personal lives.

How is self management using digital tools different from everyday, offline self management?

As we’ve explored in the previous sections, self management can take various forms. And there are different technologies that can potentially help too, but the concept is not that different.

Just as you might use a paper calendar to keep track of your symptoms or triggers, a community notice board to find out about support groups in your area or a diary to keep track of your sleep and activity patterns, digital self management largely means taking the same type of actions but with the help of technology. So you might use an app to track symptoms, an online search engine to find out what is available around you or an activity tracker to monitor your sleep.

These technologies, devices and digital services are intended to do some of the hard work for you, so you can focus on what matters to you.
Watch: A digital story: self management (2min 50seceonds) In this video David Garrell talks about My Diabetes My Way, an interactive diabetes website to help support people who have diabetes by providing them with access to their diabetes data.

What tools are available for self management?

There are a lot of online tools available for self management today. Some have been developed in collaboration with the NHS, some have been developed by charities and some are from private companies. Some tools are free and others will incur a cost. If you want to understand more about the tools that are available and the differences between them, we have an additional resource in the Appendix to this document which offers a bit more information.
How can I choose the right tool for my needs?

There are various places online where you can go to find some recommendations as to what digital tool might be of benefit to you.

**ALISS (A Local Information System for Scotland)** is a tool which can help you find information on local and national services that might help you to live well. On the ALISS website, you can search for the information, services and resources available in your area by using your postcode. You will be offered a list of suggestions, both local and national. Some of the national services might include digital tools. [Go to ALISS](#)

**NHS inform** is Scotland's national health information service. Their aim is to provide the people in Scotland with accurate and relevant information to help them make informed decisions about their own health and the health of the people they care for. They also provide a list of self-management tools and apps that have been developed or approved by NHS Scotland. [Go to NHS inform](#)

**ADAM (About Digital and Me)** is a platform provided by Alzheimer Scotland which can help you to find the right pieces of technology at the right time. It is intended for families and carers who would like to try using digital products and services to look after their health and wellbeing, but worry about making the wrong choices or don't have time to go looking for something that will work. [Go to ADAM](#)

**ORCHA** is an organisation that reviews commercial health, care and wellbeing apps to see whether they are safe and effective. They have created an App Library which gives access to thousands of independent health and care app reviews. In order to access the library, you must have a paid for account. The cheapest option is £4/year but there is a two-week free trial available. [Go to the ORCHA App Library](#)

**The Carers UK Ask Sara** platform aims to offer advice, support and products that make daily living easier. It is an online self-help guide that provides advice and information on products and equipment for carers, disabled people and older people. [Go to Ask Sara Carers UK](#)

**The NHS UK App Library** aims to help you find online tools and apps to help you manage your wellbeing. [Go to NHS UK App Library](#)
Digital NHS services

What are digital NHS services?

To help you look after your health and wellbeing, the NHS will offer you a wide range of services, depending on your needs. Some of these services you can access by going to your GP practice, such as GP consultations, routine health checks and advice from a nurse or even a Community Links Practitioner in some cases. Other services you would need to travel to a hospital or health clinic for, such as a podiatry service, eye care or more specialised treatments.

And then there are some services which you can access online or through an app on your phone. These are called digital services, eHealth services or digital health and care services. Scotland has a Digital Health and Care Strategy, published in 2018, which sets the national vision that:

“as a citizen of Scotland I have access to the digital information, tools and services I need to help maintain and improve my health and wellbeing. I expect my health and social care information to be captured electronically, integrated and shared securely to assist service staff and carers that need to see it and that digital technology and data will be used appropriately and innovatively”.

Please forward any feedback on this guide to DHCscot@alliance-scotland.org.uk
How are digital NHS services different to regular, face-to-face services?

The aim of digital NHS services is to make some processes and interactions easier, or to use information better, so that your care is the best you can receive.

For example, you might be able to book an appointment online instead of having to call or visit your GP practice. You might also be able to order a repeat prescription through the web or even have a video consultation from the comfort of your home.

The examples above are new ways of doing routine tasks, using the internet and digital technology.

There are, however, also new technologies which can enable you to do things which would not be possible otherwise. For example, you might be able to track certain aspects of your health or symptoms and automatically share this data with health professionals. You might also be able to access certain services which are online only.

So digital technology can either allow you to do the things you’re used to in a better way or to do new things, which weren’t possible before. What digital technology does not mean to do, however, is replace any face-to-face services completely. We believe digital technology should do some of the hard work for you, so you can focus on what matters to you.

Watch: [Home and Mobile Health Monitoring](#) (2min 45seconds). This animation from NHS Scotland describes some of the benefits of being able to monitor blood pressure from the comfort of your own home. It is an example of how the NHS is using new technologies to provide you with a more convenient and medically accurate service.
What digital NHS tools and services are available?

There are a lot of online tools available in the NHS today. Below we give an overview of a few of the ones available to the public.

But before you go on to the list, take some time to understand the different tools that are available. This could help you avoid being overwhelmed by the multitude of tools available.

- **Primary care tools**: these are tools which you would use in your interactions with your GP and they can include appointment booking, repeat prescriptions and other tools they might refer you onto. Some you might use as a one-off, other you might use on a continuous basis.

- **Secondary care tools**: these technologies you would use if advised by a consultant for a specific condition. They might be more advanced and your use of them might be one-off rather than continuous.

- **Self management tools**: these digital tools are intended for you to use as part of your self care. While they might have some level of interaction or a two-way communication between yourself and your GP or a specialist, ownership over the use of the tool stays with yourself.
What services are available in primary care?

- **GP practice website**
  Your GP practice may have a website where you can find specific information related to the practice where you are registered. You can find this by searching the internet with a web browser, typing the name of your practice. This website might detail opening hours, location and contact details, as well as services and clinics available or practice news.

- **Repeat prescription ordering** *(only available in some practices / for some types of medication)*
  If you receive medicine on repeat prescription, there are now ways to order your repeat prescriptions online. You can have your prescription sent electronically to a pharmacy or dispenser of your choice. This means you no longer need to collect a paper prescription from your GP surgery. You can then collect your medicines from a pharmacy or have them delivered to your home (where available).
  Check with your GP to see if they offer this service.

- **Online appointment booking**
  Your GP practice might offer you the option to book, check or cancel an upcoming routine appointment online. This could be for an appointment with a GP, nurse, or other healthcare professional. You will have to ask your GP practice whether they offer the service and then register for it by completing a form. The practice will then issue you with further instructions.

- **Video consultations**
  Near Me is a video consulting service that enables people to have health and social care appointments from home or wherever is convenient. All you need is a device for making video calls like a smartphone and an internet connection. Near Me is a secure form of video consulting approved for use by the Scottish Government and NHS Scotland. You do not need to download an App or create an account.
Near Me video consulting is not suitable for all consultations, for example, if you need a physical examination or a procedure. Your health or social care provider can advise you on what is appropriate for you.

**Watch:** [How to use Near Me](#) *(3min 36seconds)*. This video will give you an overview of how video consultations through Near Me work.

- **Remote monitoring**

  Some NHS health boards use a text message service to help you and your clinician monitor and manage your health and wellbeing. The system most commonly used in Scotland is called Florence, sometimes referred to as ‘Flo’ for short. Flo can be used for many reasons such as: Monitoring the effects of new treatments or stopping treatments; Reminding or encouraging you to do something to take care of yourself; Monitoring the status of your blood pressure, weight, blood sugar glucose or other measurement; Identifying flare-ups of your condition so that you get the right treatment sooner.

**Watch:** [A digital story: remote monitoring and diagnosis](#) *(1min 58seconds)*. Robert Blackmore talks about using Flo, a text message based tool, to monitor his hypertension and help his GP practice prescribe him the right medication.

- **Online mental health support**

  The computerised Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (cCBT) service is a highly effective intervention now available throughout Scotland in various forms. It is used to offer cognitive behavioural therapy to people with mental health concerns. Speak to your GP to find out what is available in your area.

  NHS Inform also offer an online self-help tool to enable you to find the right help for your mental wellbeing. [Go to the NHS Inform mental wellbeing self-help tool](#).
- **Personalised information**

In some areas in Scotland, a service called ‘No Delays’ allows a GP or a specialist to ‘prescribe’ a video package so that when you return home after a consultation you receive a personal email that follows up the medical discussion. This digital postcard contains short videos introducing the condition and the team who will be working with you. No Delays videos feature patients who have had the same condition explaining in personal terms how they have coped.

- **Online triage**

A number of GP practices in Scotland use various online triage services, such as eConsult or AskMyGP. This service gives you the option to fill in an online consultation form with details of your symptoms or requests. Some will also allow you to give this information by phone. You then send this form to your GP for their review. In return, you will get NHS self-help information or signposting to services instantly, but also bespoke advice from your GP once he has reviewed your submission.

- **Test results over the phone**

For some test results, you don’t need to wait for a letter to come by post or call the GP practice within working hours to get your results. Instead, a service called ‘Netcall’ enables you to ring a number to find out about results of any recent medical tests, at any time and from any phone. The service is fully confidential and can help save valuable time for nurses to call those whose test results raise concerns or who might need additional support.
What services are available in secondary care?

- **Video camera (capsule) endoscopy**
  A Pillcam is a small video capsule the size of a large vitamin pill. It is used to provide endoscopies for people with gastrointestinal bleeding, unexplained abdominal pain and conditions such as Crohn's disease. After you swallow the video capsule, it will be transported naturally through the stomach and intestine, capturing pictures of the lining of the large intestine.

- **Video diaries**
  Some hospitals use a service called ‘vCreate’, which provides secure video messaging that lets hospital staff record and send secure video updates to parents when they’re unable to be by their child’s side. There is no cost to parents or the unit as vCreate work with hospital charities to secure sponsorship from local businesses.

- **Booking sexual health services**
  The sexual health services online appointments booking system, called ‘NaSH’, provides an easy way for you to find and book an appointment at sexual health clinics across Scotland. It will help you to book an appointment that is most convenient for you by allowing you to search for an appointment based on: gender, age, type of appointment or service you require and location.

- **Maternity records**
  Maternity Notes allows women real time access to their maternity records over the internet through their PC, tablet device, or mobile phone. The information that appears is generated in real-time from your hospital based maternity system using details entered by your midwife or other health professionals involved in your care.

- **Near me**
  Near Me can also be used for secondary care appointments and it works exactly the same as it would for a consultation with your GP.
What services are available for my self management?

The following digital self management tools have been developed by NHS Scotland:

- **NHS inform**
  For anyone based in Scotland, NHS inform is the best source of health information. You can access it at [www.nhsinform.scot](http://www.nhsinform.scot). Here, you can find information about illnesses and conditions, symptoms and self-help, tests and treatments, advice on healthy living or even information on care, support and your rights. There is also seasonal and topical information that is refreshed frequently.

- **Scotland's Service Directory**
  Through Scotland's Service Directory you can find the names, addresses, opening times and service details for thousands of health and wellbeing services in Scotland. You simply choose the type of service you are looking for and then search using your postcode. [www.nhsinform.scot/scotlands-service-directory](http://www.nhsinform.scot/scotlands-service-directory)

- **My Diabetes My Way**
  *My Diabetes My Way* is an online self-management platform for people with diabetes that has been running in NHS Scotland since 2008. It provides access to leaflets, videos, education tools and games containing information about diabetes. The website can also be used by individuals to view up-to-date diabetes clinic results, share stories with other people with diabetes and develop a social support network.

- **NHS 24 MSK App**
  The NHS 24 MSK Help app was developed with the help of Scottish patients, doctors, musculoskeletal therapists, pharmacists and employment services. The information contained in this app is linked to muscle, bone and joint self-management information on NHS inform.
Commercial tools

There are a lot of other online tools available for self management today. Some have been developed in collaboration with the NHS, some have been developed by charities and some are from private companies. Some tools are free and others will incur a cost. You can use ALISS, ADAM, the ORCHA App Library, Carers UK Ask Sara or the NHS UK App Library to find some suggestions.

How can I find out what services are available to me?

NHS Digital services vary by health board and GP practice. Not all services described here are available throughout Scotland and some might have additional eligibility criteria. It is best to speak to a healthcare professional if you are unsure of what support you might be able to access.

If you think you would benefit from a tool which currently isn't offered in your area, it's always worth asking for it. In a recent study, almost 9 out of 10 health care professionals said that ‘patients asking for the service’ would make it more likely that they would wish to provide the service.

Giving feedback on NHS services

Care Opinion allows you to share a specific experience of health care or social care. You can say what happened, what was good, and what could have been better. The story is then published (if possible) and shared with staff in the services who need to see it. Often, staff will reply and you will be emailed their response.

So you can use Care Opinion to pass praise on a service you experienced, suggest changes or even just to review other people’s experiences. This can all allow you to make an informed choice on the service you decide to visit.
How is the NHS using my data collected through these tools and services?
In the UK there are a number of laws that protect personal data:

- Each organisation holding health or care data has responsibility for the data they collect and store and have a legal obligation to keep confidential information stored securely.
- Only a health professional directly involved in the care of the patient has permission to access their full health data – however, this doesn’t mean that these health professionals will access the full health dataset as records are not always shared between the various systems, including primary care, secondary care and speciality clinics.
- GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018 and Freedom of Information Act 2000 protect the confidentiality of personal information.
- All NHS organisations and local authorities which provide social services are required to have a Caldicott Guardian – a senior person responsible for protecting the confidentiality of people’s health and care information and making sure it is used properly.

NHS data can be shared for research purposes, but the following rules apply:

- Patient identifiable data cannot be passed on unless explicitly approved through a consent process at point of data collection.
- Where data is shared with a third party, legal contracts are required which set out strict rules about what the organisation can or cannot do with data.
- Organisations such as local and national public health services, charities, academic researchers and private companies may be given access or anonymised or pseudo-anonymised data.

Scotland has some of the best health service data in the world. Few other countries have information which combines high quality data, consistency, national coverage and the ability to link data to allow patient based analysis and follow up. The Information
Services Division (ISD) is a division of National Services Scotland, part of NHS Scotland. ISD provides health information, health intelligence, statistical services and advice that support the NHS in progressing quality improvement in health and care and facilitates robust planning and decision making.

Below are some examples of how data is used in the NHS in Scotland.

- **SHARE**

SHARE is a Scottish initiative created to establish a register of people willing to be invited to take part in medical research projects. Participants have allowed researchers to use any left-over blood following routine clinical testing for approved research. Over 275000 people have signed up so far. [Register for SHARE](#)

- **SPIRE**

**SPIRE** (Scottish Primary Care Information Resource) is a Scottish initiative that allows small amounts of information from GP practice records to be used to help doctors’ surgeries, NHS Scotland and the Scottish Government to improve care and plan services. SPIRE can also help with research into new treatments for particular conditions or diseases, to monitor outbreaks and to develop new medicines.

It allows this information from GP patient records to be securely transferred and safely processed by NHS National Services Scotland (NSS), the organisation responsible for Scotland’s health statistics. It started in May 2017 and is introduced in phases across Scotland. Individuals will not be identified from this information as the data are encrypted before leaving the GP practice.

SPIRE will not routinely collect patient information or extract information unless it is needed for a specific, approved purpose. SPIRE will not store information for longer than necessary, and any information is safely destroyed after use. SPIRE will not
produce one big database of patients from all over Scotland. Patient information is automatically shared, unless individuals choose to opt out.

**Watch:** [Health and care data](#) *(1 min 46 seconds)* This video explains why data is a vital resource. It also cover how through technology, it’s being increasingly shared and used (securely) by the healthcare professionals that support us, to improve wider NHS/care services and for research.

- **My Diabetes My Way**

  My Diabetes My Way is an example of where data is directly shared between patients and healthcare professionals.

  **Watch:** [A digital story: self management](#) *(2 min 50 seconds)* David Garrell talks about My Diabetes My Way, an interactive diabetes website to help support people who have diabetes and their family and friends by providing them with accurate information and access to their diabetes data.
Technology enabled care

What is technology enabled care?
Technology enabled care means the ‘use of telehealth, telecare and telemedicine in providing care for people that is convenient, accessible and cost-effective. These services use technology to support people to live safely and independently in their own homes.’ (NHS Inform)

So technology enabled care (TEC) is an umbrella term for the following:

- Telehealth: technology that aims to help you with your health needs specifically.
- Telecare: technology that can help with your wider needs.
- Telemedicine: technology that focuses on helping you take medicine correctly and as prescribed.

**Watch:** What is Technology Enabled Care? (6min 59seconds) This short video from NHS Forth Valley shows seven examples of how technology could help a range of individuals with varying needs.

How are telecare, telehealth and telemedicine different to receiving care in my home?

The aim of TEC is to help you to live safely at home. It might be that you live with a long term condition or disability that can make being independent difficult. It might be that you have started to feel frail or at risk of falls. Or, it might be that you are temporarily unable to do certain things in your home because of an injury or other life circumstances.

Whichever the case, TEC is aimed at helping you overcome some of the barriers you encounter in day to day life so you can stay safe, independent and in control. If you receive support in your home from a carer or support worker, TEC is not there to replace the support you receive completely. Rather, TEC is there to aid both yourself and your carers be more informed and in control.

Most of TEC consists of technologies that you would use in the home, but some can provide support outside the home too.
What technology enabled care tools are available?
There are a lot of online tools available through TEC packages today. Some are being offered through the NHS or local councils. Some tools will be free and others will incur a cost. There are also tools aimed specifically at carers.

TEC also makes use of technologies you might already have, such as phones (both smart and non-smart phones), tablets, computers and even TVs or smart speakers.

Before you go on to choose a TEC tool or package for yourself or someone you are looking after, take some time to understand the different tools that are available. This could help you avoid being overwhelmed by the multitude of tools available.

What is the difference between different types of TEC tools?

Basic or enhanced TEC?

TEC can range from basic equipment such as a pendant or a smoke detector linked to a central alarm point, to more developed technology which can include anything from medication dispensers to infra-red sensors.

Basic TEC equipment works great for those who are mostly independent but are seeking extra security and peace of mind. Enhanced TEC is aimed at individuals with more complex needs, who might benefit from technologies specifically targeted to their needs.
Which needs are you looking to address?

Carers UK have created a great resource which categorises the technologies currently available by the various aspects of an individual’s health and lifestyle that they target:

- **Everyday needs**: various apps and online websites can help with daily tasks such as shopping, managing finances or keeping in touch with friends and family.
- **Environmental monitoring**: nowadays, there are many devices you can use to manage your home environment using apps, smart home controls or even voice activation. This can include controlling your heating, lighting or even door entry.
- **Remote alerts**: this technology can be used to check whether a person at risk is safe in their own home. If something goes wrong, automated alerts can be sent to carers or to 24-hour monitoring and response centres.
- **Monitoring vital signs**: technology can now be used to measure blood pressure, blood glucose, heart rate or even sleeping patterns. This can be done through apps or bespoke devices and can raise alarms or help avoid lengthy hospital visits for routine checks.
- **Accessing remote healthcare and advice**: especially in light of COVID-19, some services can take place remotely. This means that you might be able to receive advice via telephone, email or video sessions online, without having to leave your home.
- **Medication management**: managing medications can be stressful, but there are devices that can help keep track and offer reassurance.
- **Self-enhancement**: there are various tools you can use to improve your skills and abilities, from hearing aids to fitness apps.
Who are the tools for?

TEC offers benefits to both people receiving support and their carers. If you are a carer yourself, finding the right TEC for the person you support give you peace of mind while also helping them stay independent.

But it is worth knowing that there are also a lot of tools which are aimed specifically at carers, to make caring easier. So when you’re looking for a tool, consider your needs alongside those of the person you support and check which technologies tick both boxes.

Everyday tools or bespoke devices?

You might already own a tool such as a smart phone, a tablet, a computers or other types of electronic devices. These can be used as TEC tools with the rights apps or software installed on them.

There are various apps nowadays designed to help families organise care, manage emergencies and have an overview of the wellbeing of the person they look after. There are also tools aimed at the person receiving support, sometimes provided through housing associations or care providers.

How can I find out what is available in my local area?

The Telecare Self-Check Online tool is available for anyone in Scotland to use. The tool allows you to check if telecare would benefit you, while also recommending specific types of equipment that might help.
The services offered will depend upon where you live. Select the area in which you live and click the 'Go to local area' button. This will take you directly to the relevant local service who will help you work out what to do next.

The tool will also offer you helpful advice based upon your answers.

www.telecareselfcheck.scot

Charges and type of equipment available will vary by health board and service provider.

How can I choose the right tool for my needs?

While the Telecare Self-Check tool should be your first stop, there are other useful sources of information you can try too. The following online platforms can offer advice, information and useful product reviews and comparisons:

**ADAM** is a tool developed by Alzheimer Scotland to help people living with dementia and those around them find the technology they need. However, their tool is free to use by anyone and can offer very useful prompts and advice. Simply answer some questions about what you would like help with and in return receive recommendations tailored to your needs and preferences.

**AskSARA** is an online self-help guide providing advice and information on products and equipment for older and disabled people. AskSARA is easy to use. Simply choose which subject you would like help and support with, answer some questions about yourself and your environment and then receive a free personalised report including an impartial list of products and equipment.

Some of the products aimed at supporting people with health needs could qualify for VAT relief, which means that someone with a chronic disability does not have to pay VAT on these products.
Safeguarding and self-evaluation

How can I protect myself and my information when using digital tools?
Before you start using a tool to help you with your health, care and wellbeing, it is important to make sure that it is safe to do so. This includes checking that the information the tool provides and any activities it might recommend are suitable for you, but also that the tool itself comes from a reputable source and the information on it is trustworthy.

How can I tell if a tool is authentic, safe and right for me?
Any digital health and care tool should make it obvious who developed it, what its purpose is and who it is for. You should take special care if the tool is asking you for very personal or sensitive information. In this case, you might want to check the privacy statement for this tool (more on this below).

If in doubt, it is best to discuss it with someone you trust or your healthcare provider who may be able to offer some support. Certain charities also have Digital Champions who might be able to advise whether a tool is suitable for you or not. Check ALISS to see if any organisations around you offer digital skills support.

If the tool you are using is an app, NHS England have developed an app library. In order for an app to be published on their library, it needs to pass certain tests:

“For example, if an app reminds patients to take their medication, developers must give evidence to show that any risk of reminders being incorrect has been completely removed or made as low as possible.”

They also ensure that the information on the apps is easy to understand.

They also check that the any personal information collected, used or shared by the apps is processed in a safe, fair and lawful way.
How can I tell whether my information is safe?

Under the Data Protection and GDPR regulations, any digital tool must tell you how your information and any data you provide will be used. They must give you this information before you download or access the tool. They need to provide you with enough information to allow you to make an informed choice. Unfortunately, this is often presented in complicated legal language in privacy policies.

We suggest you take the time to review what information different tools request of you. The more sensitive the information, the more care you should take when reading the privacy notice that you are happy with the measures they take to keep your information safe, secure and private.

Unfortunately, not all developers will process your data lawfully and there have been cases where information was shared with third parties not disclosed in privacy notices. This data is usually sold for targeted advertisements, but other data abuse might be even more dangerous. So always consider what you may want to disclose in the first place and who with.

How can I tell if the tool I’m using is working for me?

If you’re not sure whether the tool you are using works for you, it’s worth revisiting the questions you asked yourself at the beginning, when choosing the tool. Any self evaluation needs to be against your own goals and the tool must fit with where you are on your journey.

And be prepared for things not to always go perfectly instantly. Sometimes too much tracking can lead to increased anxiety. Or too much information can be overwhelming. Or if you already know you’re not feeling well on a particular day, to have to get similar feedback from an app can be frustrating.

Some less obvious benefits that people have reported after using digital health and care tools are:
Better understanding and acceptance of a certain condition

A tendency to be more proactive about your own wellbeing

Feeling more in control and less anxious

Improved self management skills

And be prepared for things not to always go perfectly instantly. Sometimes technology can be overwhelming, or it can fail. Not all digital systems will be designed to be easy to use, from a citizen perspective.

So if you’re not sold on an app, try considering what you liked and what you didn’t like about it. Make a note on it and revisit the questions we proposed earlier and our list, either by yourself or alongside someone you trust. And if you want to, you can always give another tool another go.

Otherwise, there might be other sources of support elsewhere. If there is a charity or a dedicated service relevant to the condition you are living with, try asking them about it, reflecting on your experiences with the tool. Or even try discussing your experiences with some of your peers.

All self management work is valuable work, and even just by trying a new tool you will have learned something about what works, what doesn’t, what you liked and what you’d rather give a miss. So use this information in the future, whether you’re accessing face to face support, an online tool or simply doing your day to day self management.

Good luck and should you want to let us know how you got on, message us at DHCscot@alliance-scotland.org.uk.
Thesaurus

**Digital tools** are those devices, apps or services that involve or relate to the use of computer or online technology.

**Apps (mobile applications):** programmes that you can access on smartphones or tablets.

**Games:** interactive activities, that are often fun to engage in.

**Home adaptation:** assistive technologies that can help people with limited mobility or additional needs live more independently or safely at home.

**Home sensors:** devices that can monitor aspects of your environment (movement, air quality etc)

**Online counselling:** individual or group counselling that you can access on the web.

**Online peer support:** advice and support from other individuals like you which you can access on the web, on platforms such as discussion forums or blogs.

**Online programmes:** structures activities that you can access and take part in on the web.

**Online training:** structured and guided activities that you can access and take part in on the web that have a learning outcome associated with them.

**Tele-monitoring tool:** devices, apps or programmes that you can use to transmit information about your health and wellbeing to a support worker or health professional.

**Virtual reality:** an immersive environment created with the help of special goggles that can make you feel like you are in a virtual space.

**Wearables:** devices that you wear and which track certain aspects of your lifestyle or health (steps, heart rate etc)

**Websites:** online pages or portals with relevant information.
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Carers UK. Where to find technology
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Health Foundation. A practical guide to self-management support
Near Me Scot
NHS Apps Library. Guidance for health app developers, commissioners and assessors to get trusted digital tools assessed and published on the NHS Apps Library
NHS Ayrshire and Arran. Florence telehealth Monitoring
NHS Highland. Technology Enabled Care

Please forward any feedback on this guide to DHCscot@alliance-scotland.org.uk
NHS inform. Sexual health services online appointments booking system
NHS inform. Technology Enabled Care
NHS inform. Tools and apps
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NHS UK, The Atlas of Shared Learning Case Study
Public Health Scotland. How we share data and intelligence
RNIB. Technology support we offer
Telecare Self-Check Online Tool
Appendix: What is the difference between different types of self management tools?

There are several ways to categorise digital tools for self management.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is the tool’s purpose and what are your outcomes?</th>
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<td>There is a theoretical model (known as the Corbin and Strauss’ model) which describes three types of work people who self manage need to do: illness work, everyday life work and biographical work. These link to different aspects of self management:</td>
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<td>• <strong>Clinical management</strong> – taking medication as prescribed, meeting health professionals, taking actions to live more healthily linked to diet, exercise and habits;</td>
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<tr>
<td>• <strong>Emotional management</strong> – managing all the emotions that come along with having a long term condition and looking after your mental wellbeing;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Role management</strong> – negotiating the disruptions that having a long term condition brings to your identity and sense of self.</td>
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Digital tools can fall, broadly speaking, within these three areas. For example:

- Activity trackers, diet advice, medication reminder apps fall under clinical management;
- Mood trackers, meditation and mindfulness apps fall under emotional management;
- More specialised apps, developed for specific conditions such as [...find examples, potentially stroke, diabetes, arthritis...?] often include advice and articles to support role management.

So perhaps you are excelling at self managing in one area, but could do with some support in one of the other two areas? Once again, it’s best to have a think about what support you might need and discuss this with someone you trust.
How does the tool work and what will your role be?

Other models consider how advanced the technology is and how much input is required from the user. It can be useful to think about how much effort you’re ready to put in when using the app and how comfortable you are with technology – more advanced tools might collect more data.

### What type of technology are you looking for?

There are all sorts of technologies available nowadays and it can be hard to know which one is most appropriate to you. The list below covers some of the most well-known technologies that have been used in digital interventions so far.

- **Apps (mobile applications)**: programmes that you can access on smartphones or tablets.
- **Online programmes**: structures activities that you can access and take part in on the web.
- **Wearables**: devices that you wear and which track certain aspects of your lifestyle or health (steps, heart rate etc)
- **Websites**: online pages or portals with relevant information.
- **Games**: interactive activities, that are often fun to engage in.
- **Virtual reality**: an environment created with the help of special goggles that can make you feel like you are in a virtual space.
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- **Home sensors**: devices that can monitor aspects of your environment (movement, air quality etc)
- **Home adaptation**: assistive technologies that can help people with limited mobility or additional needs live more independently or safely at home.
- **Tele-monitoring tool**: devices, apps or programmes that you can use to transmit information about your health and wellbeing to a support worker or health professional.
What condition are you self managing?

Charities, the NHS and private companies might also develop tools for specific conditions. Some might come with bespoke support or training, particularly if they come from a third sector or public organisation. Some NHS and private tools might also be integrated with your wider care.

For example, My Diabetes My Way is the NHS Scotland interactive diabetes website to help support people who have diabetes and their family and friends. On it, you'll find leaflets, videos, educational tools and games containing information about diabetes. You can also create an account and use this website to view your up-to-date diabetes clinic results to help you manage your condition more effectively.

There are other technologies and other ways to categorise technologies too, but these are some good ones to consider if you are just starting out.
About the ALLIANCE

The Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE) is the national third sector intermediary for a range of health and social care organisations. We have a growing membership of nearly 3,000 national and local third sector organisations, associates in the statutory and private sectors, disabled people, people living with long term conditions and unpaid carers.

The ALLIANCE vision is for a Scotland where people of all ages who are disabled or living with long term conditions, and unpaid carers, have a strong voice and enjoy their right to live well, as equal and active citizens, free from discrimination, with support and services that put them at the centre.

Since 2018, we have managed the Discover Digital project, with support from the Scottish Government Digital Health and Care and the Technology Enabled Care divisions.