

# Work underway in the digital mental health landscape

A summary of what is already underway and in the public domain, to help build shared knowledge and understanding of the digital mental health landscape and the platform that can be built on.



Organisation	Initiative
<b>Department of Health and Social Care</b>	<p><b><u>A plan for digital health and social care.</u></b> This strategy published in June 2022 and includes a three-year strategy for digital transformation in healthcare.</p> <p>“Emerging examples in mental health demonstrate how digitally-enabled interventions can be used to augment care pathways to provide productivities to release clinician time for care, while enabling a more personalised and responsive care offering in between traditional care contacts.”</p> <hr/> <p><b><u>Data Saves Lives: Reshaping Health and Social Care with Data.</u></b></p> <p>This strategy was published in June 2022 and sets out ambitious plans to harness the potential of data in health and care in England, while maintaining the highest standards of privacy and ethics.</p> <hr/> <p><b><u>Case for Change and Strategic Framework: Major Conditions Strategy.</u></b></p> <p>In August 2023 the Department for Health and Social Care published this policy paper setting out a summary of what they learned through the engagement period so far and sharing next steps. The strategy focuses on six groups of conditions: cancers, cardiovascular disease (including stroke and diabetes), musculoskeletal disorders, mental ill health, dementia, and chronic respiratory disease.</p> <hr/> <p><b><u>Office for Life Sciences</u></b> (part of the Department of Health and Social Care and the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology). The Office for Life Sciences champions research, innovation and the use of technology to transform health and care service. The Life Sciences Council set up an advisory group in November 2022 to provide initial proposals to government on the regulation of medical devices in three priority areas: international recognition, routes for innovation, and system capacity. Their priorities were published in March 2023.</p>

## Organisation

NHS England

## Initiative

**Priorities for Digital Mental Health**. These priorities have been co-developed with stakeholders across the mental health system. They provide a clear set of digital priorities for how ICSs, NHS mental health trusts and other provider organisations and regional and national teams can work together to deliver on the NHS Long Term Plan commitments for mental health using digital as an enabler, and enhance mental health outcomes for people across England.

There is a suite of resources and guidance available on the NHS Future's Mental Health, Learning Disability and Autism Resource Hub to support providers with designing and delivering digital mental health services.

**Digital Technology Assessment Criteria (DTAC)**. The DTAC gives staff, patients and citizens confidence that the digital health tools they use meet standards for clinical safety, data protection, technical security, interoperability and usability, and accessibility. The DTAC brings together legislation and good practice in these areas. It is the national baseline criteria for digital health technologies entering and already used in the NHS and social care.

**What Good Looks Like Framework (WGLL)**. The WGLL framework has seven success measures which are applicable to all care settings.

“The What Good Looks Like programme draws on local learning. It builds on established good practice to provide clear guidance for health and care leaders to digitise, connect and transform services safely and securely. This will improve the outcomes, experience and safety of our citizens.”

**Mental Health Digital Playbook**. This resource provides support to clinical teams and organisations looking for digital tools that support the delivery of patient pathways. Key learning is highlighted across a range of areas including stakeholder engagement, governance, usability and system readiness for change.

**Operational Planning Guidance 2023/24**. This planning guidance built on the commitments in the NHS Long Term Plan and the priorities for delivery related to digital in 2023/24.

Organisation	Initiative
<p><b>Academic Health Science Networks (AHSNs)</b></p>	<p>AHSNs, which will be known as Health Innovation Networks from October 2023, have a unique and important role to bring together the NHS, industry, academic, third sector and local organisations to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>identify innovation and improvements</b> to specific problems within the NHS, creating an innovation pipeline</li> <li>• <b>empower innovators and those developing improvements</b> to further their ideas and get them in front of the right people</li> <li>• <b>advance the uptake and spread of innovation and improvements</b> by delivering national programmes and local initiatives within the NHS and social care</li> </ul> <p>Their role is central to digital innovation and testing and scaling effective and appropriate digital tools.</p> <p>The AHSN national innovation pipeline features 9,000 innovations that are in development or ready to deploy. Of these, 293 have a mental health focus with 56 per cent of those mental health innovations being digital. The AHSN Network is developing a curated pipeline of innovations against key strategic clinical themes, which will be accessible to view digitally. Mental health will be one of these themes.</p>
<p><b>National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE)</b></p>	<p><b>Evidence Standards Framework.</b> This framework is a set of evidence standards for a wide range of digital health technologies (DHTs). Evaluators and decision-makers in the health and care system can consistently use to help them identify DHTs that are likely to offer benefits to users and to the health and care system. NICE has also developed an early value assessment (EVA) approach to help assess digital health technologies. The assessment focuses on unmet need, assessing existing evidence and gaps in evidence. Mental health is being selected as an initial topic for consideration.</p>

## Organisation

**Medicines and Healthcare products  
Regulatory Agency (MHRA) and  
Wellcome Trust**

## Initiative

**Funding to explore regulation of digital mental health tools.** The Wellcome Trust is providing grant funding of £1.8 million over three years to the MHRA in partnership with NICE to work on digital mental health regulation. This was announced in October 2022 and is in the early stages of development. The project is looking at a number of areas, including what qualifies as a medical device in digital mental health; how to use clinical evidence; how to report on patient outcomes; and how to assess whether a digital intervention helps alleviate strain on the system. The work will have an international component and will seek to capture patient experiences and the views of people with lived experience. The aim of the work is to help raise the bar for digital product development on quality, safety, evidence and assurance. The focus is very much on what need does the digital product meet. The MHRA is a body with a remit that only covers medical devices. However, the MHRA and NICE are keen that the work has an influence on broader standards that will encompass, non-medical mental health digital products, particularly in ways that help bring a sharper focus to the distinction between what is and what is not a medical device and for products that are not medical devices an assurance through standards and regulation that they do no harm. This work is important and will be a great addition to other work already underway in this space.