

How digital healthcare can support the needs of complex and elderly patient populations

A Livi short report



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Introduction

When it comes to digital healthcare, convenience and access are, of course, well- known and widely discussed benefits. But what you might not know, is that digital can also greatly benefit those living with long-term conditions and the elderly.

Indeed, any notion that digital healthcare is only reserved for the young, those with minor infections or 'the easy stuff' should be dispelled. Livi truly bucks this idea, supporting a wide range of demographics in the UK. Today, more than 30% of Livi patients in the UK are seen for a long-term condition (either related to management or exacerbation) and we serve patients aged 90 and above.

In this Livi short report, we explore just some of the ways digital healthcare can serve the needs of those living with multiple long-term conditions as well as the elderly. And along the way, we share how Livi is doing just that through the voices of patients who utilise Livi services.



Providing additional clinical capacity

With demand rising across health and care in recent times, one of the core ways digital can support these patient groups is by providing additional clinical capacity at a time when it is desperately needed.

Certainly, digital can assist in situations where a patient might be unable to obtain an appointment or get through to their practice. It can also serve patients who have mobility issues that prevent travel, or who require regular appointments for long-term condition management. Taking the latter as an example, [John](#), who is living with diabetes, Bell's palsy and skin cancer shares his story with Livi:

"Having multiple complex conditions meant I was back and forth to the doctors all the time. I felt like a bit of a hypochondriac and a nuisance. That's when I discovered video appointments. Now, if I have anything out of the ordinary, all I have to do is open the Livi app and I get to see a doctor face-to-face on the same day, without even having to leave my flat."

Other patients like [Colin](#) have shared similar experiences of using Livi when they were unable to obtain an appointment. In Colin's case this was key to helping obtain a bowel cancer diagnosis in the early days of Covid-19:

"I struggled to get seen by a doctor at my own surgery, so I booked a video GP appointment through Livi. The GP responded at the promised time, and I was able to have the appointment at my desk at the motorcycle dealership where I work....I feel lucky and eternally grateful. Looking back, that Livi doctor quite possibly saved my life."

An added benefit of digital of course is the capability to 'shield' the clinically vulnerable from in-person attendances to doctor surgeries and A&E where potential overcrowding can pose a significant risk. A sentiment echoed by John who notes, "I can pick up anything and be very ill, so sitting in the surgery isn't the best place for me."

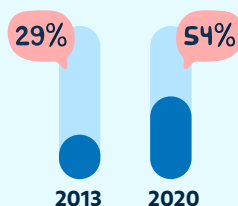


*"Looking back, that Livi doctor
quite possibly saved my life."*
- Colin, Livi patient

A closing generational gap

Both Colin and John are not alone in their experiences and illustrate a closing generational gap when it comes to utilisation of digital healthcare. Indeed, the idea that older people do not use technology is increasingly losing merit.

Commenting on the most recently published dataset on internet usage in the UK, the [Office of National Statistics](#) reports that the proportion of people aged 75 years and over who are recent internet users nearly doubled since 2013 from 29% to 54% in 2020.



This can be tempered by the recent impact of COVID-19, but the fact remains that the elderly are engaging with digital more and more. An article from 2018 by the [Nuffield Trust](#) remarked that even pre-covid in primary care, "awareness of online services, such as the ability to book an appointment or order repeat prescriptions, is highest in the 65-74 age group, with nearly half of people aware of these services."

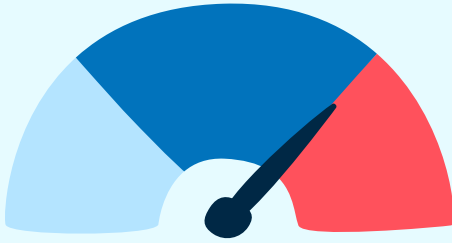
While the latest [NHS England GP patient survey](#) data also shows an upward trend in areas such as utilisation of online consultations, ordering prescriptions online and accessing medical records, in both patients groups aged 65 and over and those with long-term conditions.

It has been argued that we must recognise this growing trend and facilitate even greater digital inclusion as a society, otherwise we risk furthering health inequalities. Something which geriatrician, Dr James Woods notes in an article published by the [British Medical Association](#):

"Like much in geriatric medicine, we need to be enabling rather than disabling, and we need to make sure we are not worsening inequalities further by just assuming that older adults can't or won't use these services."



"Having multiple complex conditions meant I was back and forth to the doctors all the time... now, if I have anything out of the ordinary, all I have to do is open the Livi app."
- John, Livi patient



Supporting risk stratification

So we know usage is growing but what specific applications can digital have for these patient groups? Risk stratification is one key area. Digital has been increasingly used for remote management of complex patients, one invaluable tool being clinical questionnaires to support periodic reviews.

Sent proactively prior to an appointment often by text message, direct links allow patients to quickly engage and send responses on their symptoms and other key information. Care teams are then able to prioritise and manage patients accordingly.



Clinical questionnaires have had some great success. Indeed, an [NHS case study](#) reported completion rates of 96% compared to letters that were previously sent to patients. And a study from the [British Journal of General Practice \(BJOGP\)](#) reports clinicians citing their usefulness for the risk-stratification of patients with long-term conditions.

Enabling assessment and treatment

Alongside questionnaires, the combination of digital photographs and teleconsultations can also facilitate clinical assessment and treatment. The aforementioned [BJOGP study](#) reveals a preference from GPs for this combination approach, noting time efficiency gains. While for patients, there are also benefits.

In the case of [Derek](#), aged 65, who had previously struggled with psoriasis for a number of years, he recalled how a Livi consultation helped him find the right treatment through such a combination:

"I moved the camera around to show him my skin, letting him see the areas that were red raw. He recommended the right cream and it made me feel better within hours."

Other Livi patients also report similar experiences in this regard and a sense of relief at how ['they are able to actually show the doctor things'](#) through Livi. Here we see digital's power to remove barriers, stigma and embarrassment in these situations, and how it can facilitate collaborative conversations involving the patient in their own assessment and treatment. This can be empowering.



Dr Bryony Henderson, Livi UK Lead GP, says,

"I have worked in geriatrics within secondary care and I know how important it is to involve all patients, but particularly the elderly, in their treatment plan. Digital medicine makes this easier to facilitate. Not only can they consult from the safety and security of their own home but other healthcare professionals can be involved virtually in their care."



"I moved the camera around to show him my skin, letting him see the areas that were red raw. He recommended the right cream and it made me feel better within hours."

- Derek, Livi patient

Delivering personalised care

Certainly, one need only look to the successes of virtual wards as to the potential of digital to support wider involvement of multidisciplinary teams in management of these patient groups. This can also have positive impacts for the wider health system too. A [recent study](#) on integrated approaches to virtual wards for COPD management reveals a 54% mean reduction in admissions and 4.5 fewer occupied bed days per patient each year.

While the involvement of multidisciplinary teams in virtual wards can also help remove the need for patients to repeat medical histories, support care continuity and personalisation of care.

An [evidence briefing](#) commissioned by the Personalised Care Institute on the impact of remote consultations notes these positive impacts and discusses how personalised care can be “most beneficial” for patients who have ongoing and changing support needs. Furthermore, as there is a need for patients to attend multiple consultations to review management of conditions, the briefing cites how remote consultations can “offer advantages to people with long-term conditions who need urgent advice when their condition changes.”

Personalisation of care is so very vital, and here at Livi, it's central to our approach in how we support patients. As noted by [Sam](#), who shares her experience of using Livi:

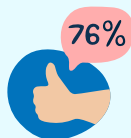
“I talked to another amazing doctor. We were on the video call for a long time – so much came out. She just listened. She managed to reinstate my medication, and she also referred me to a mental health service for more support. It doesn't sound like much, but it's just the fact she listened, learned my whole backstory and dedicated that time to me. For so long I hadn't been able to put a face to my doctor. But this felt personal.”

"For so long I hadn't been able to put a face to my doctor. But this felt personal."
- Sam, Livi patient



Conclusion

The aim of this report is not exhaustive, but illustrates how the needs of complex and elderly patient populations can be served by digital healthcare with many positive impacts. From increasing access for patients who need to utilise health services frequently, through to supporting risk stratification, assessment, treatment and personalisation of care.



Furthermore, as we have seen, there is a growing appetite to use digital. A public engagement survey by [Near Me](#) reports 76% of respondents aged over 75 are supportive of video consulting. While utilisation of services in these groups is on an upward trend.

We must continue to encourage it as we become more digitally enabling and inclusive as a society.

John says, "Lots of my fellow residents say they struggle to see a doctor. I'm trying to get them more comfortable with using the internet so they can see how it's such a simple process."

Indeed, the goal on the journey ahead must be making technology as simple to use and as accessible as possible for all patients. And that's exactly what we're doing here at Livi through our platforms and solutions. Because we believe digital skills can not only be empowering for individuals, but can also support better population outcomes as illustrated by the many positive experiences shared by Livi patients here in this report. Their stories serve as a testament to the quality of care Livi provides and why we're rated CQC Outstanding.

Read more patient stories [here](#)

Watch patient stories [here](#)

Need support?

Livi can deliver digital clinical capacity to ICSs, general practice, PCNs and urgent care and has a proven track record in areas with low GP-to-patient ratio. We're making healthcare more accessible to all, serving the needs of patients with complex health conditions and elderly patient groups as well the young and those with minor infections.

- Livi Practice provides direct support to practices, serving as an extension of the clinical team, so patients can access appointments through their GP surgery
- Livi Urgent Care delivers additional clinical capacity and can be integrated with NHS 111 and clinical assessment services
- Livi Population enables patients to access care directly through the Livi app
- Mjog is a primary care platform that helps practices send smart messages and clinical questionnaires with responses coded back into clinical system to enable remote management and monitoring
- Our websites platform, helps patients to access services online and can reduce demand on practices

To find out more visit: <https://www.livi.co.uk/nhs-partners/>
Or email partnerships-uk@livi.co.uk

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