

Digital Technology for Mental Health: Asking the right questions

#DigitalMHQ

November 2017 Update

This MindTech-led project is seeking to identify the top 10 unanswered questions about using digital technology for mental health.

From 1,500 to 130 - time to choose your top 10

When we asked for your questions about [Digital Technology for Mental Health](#), we didn't know how many people would respond or how many questions would be submitted. We now know that over 600 of you had around 1,500 questions! Wow - that's a lot! It's now time to choose the 10 questions you think are the most important.

[Go to the survey now.](#)

From April through to June, we heard from people with personal experience of mental health problems, people who care for others with mental health problems and the clinicians and practitioners who work in services. Many people wear two or three of these hats. We've questions sent in from all parts of the UK (and beyond) and from people from all walks of life. Not everyone feels confident with digital technology and not everyone uses it regularly. But everyone had important questions to ask.

Apps, apps and more apps...

There were loads of questions about apps, but not just apps. In the mix are questions about a wide range of technologies. Some everyday things like SMS text messaging and email, video calling; social media and online forums through to more cutting edge innovations such as computer games; artificial intelligence and chatbots; virtual reality; wearables and sensors and robots. There is even a question about the role of 'white noise' in mental health care.

A key challenge was how to get from the 1,500 questions down to a sensible number where we can ask you to select the 10 questions you think are the most important. We did this in a number of stages.

First, all the questions asking the same thing or something very similar were grouped together and turned into one summary question. Many questions were unique and only asked by one person - you might spot yours in the survey! - so we still had over 400 questions.

Questions about other things, not research

Right from the start the goal has been to find the most important 10 questions for research. Some of the questions sent to us asked about other things, such as how to find and use technology, what happens when it's hard to access to technology and about the best ways to provide digital services and interventions for mental health (for example, data protection, regulation, guidance, quality assurance). So the second stage was where we put most of

these questions to one side (but have plans for them...) allowing us to focus on the questions that need research to answer them.

The third stage was to find out if research has already been carried out that could answer any of the questions. We checked the evidence published in Systematic Reviews (research that brings together a number of other research studies) and found - what we already knew, really - there is not much research evidence about digital technology for mental health (yet!). We did find answers to three of the questions which were also put to one side.

Crowds needed to reduce bias

There's still lots of unanswered questions about using digital technology for mental health - 134 to be precise. To focus down even further, we're asking you to pick your top 10 questions from this longer list. Each person will have a personal view on the important areas to focus on - that's ok. The questions cover lots of issues, so there's bound to be ones that are important to you. And to make sure we are getting to those that most people think are the most important, we'll need lots of people to take part. The more people who pick their top 10, the more confident we will be that the questions ranked the highest will be those that are important to lots of people.

Designing the survey

We're using a neat tool from [Optimal Workshop](#) called Card Sort. This lets you 'drag and drop' digital cards from one pile to another. We thought it would be pretty tough to look at all 130 questions, so when you go to the survey, you'll get a random selection of 45 questions. From these you can pick up to 10 that you think are the most important. If one, two or three really stand out to you, you can put these in a top 3 pile. There's no right or wrong answers - it's your own personal short list. It takes about 10 minutes to do.

What happens next?

Once we've heard from everyone again - hopefully at least 600 people again - we'll count up the votes for each question to find the 25-30 that are deemed the most important by the most people. These questions will be discussed, debated and ranked at the one day workshop in March 2018. A group of around 30 people with a range of experiences and perspectives will work together to agree which of questions are the 10 most important for research. The final stage will be widely publicising these questions so that researchers and research funders know where to focus their attention. We'll update you on the workshop and final top 10 in spring 2018.

[Go to this survey to pick your own top 10.](#)

At the end you can enter a prize draw for one of three fab prizes - £50 to spend at Amazon, a subscription to the [Mental Elf](#) (three available) or a subscription to the [Evidence Based Mental Health](#) journal (three available).

Thank you from all at the DigitalMHQ team!