Appendix 3: Summary of Focus Group Sessions (including demographic breakdown of participants)

Age

Age	% of participants
0-18	3%
19-30	33%
31-40	19%
41-50	17%
51-60	11%
61-70	6%
71-80	8%
81+	2%

Ethnicity

Ethnicity	% of participants
English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	52%
Any other White background	0%
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups	10%
Asian/ Asian British	24%
Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British	10%
Any other ethnic group	3%
Prefer not to say	2%

Gender

Gender	% of participants
Male	56%
Female	41%
Non-binary	0%
Prefer not to say	3%

Faith

Faith	% of participants
Christian (including Church of England, Catholic, Protestant, and all other Christian denominators)	32%
Buddhism	2%
Hindu	0%
Muslim	22%
Jewish	0%
Sikhism	5%
No Religion	29%
Any other religion (please specify)	5%
Prefer not to say	6%

Sexual Orientation

Sexual Orientation	% of participants
Bisexual	5%
Gay	10%
Lesbian	3%
Heterosexual or Straight	57%
Other	5%
Prefer not to say	17%

Health Condition/s (if applicable)*

Health Condition	% of participants
Vision (e.g. blindness or partial sight)	8%
Hearing (e.g. deafness or partial hearing)	11%
Mobility (e.g. walking short distances or climbing stairs)	16%
Dexterity (e.g. lifting and carrying and carrying objects, using a keyboard)	5%
Learning or understanding or concentrating	11%
Memory	10%
Mental Health	46%
Stamina or breathing or fatigue	13%
Socially or behaviourally (e.g. associated with autism, attention deficit disorder or Asperger's syndrome)	3%
Other (please specify)	5%

Note: percentages do not add up to 100% as participants allowed more than one option

Thematic Topics

The everyday use of digital technology to improve participants' health

- Anxiety and frustration with using digital technology/ go online to book a GP appointment; "*I feel dependent as I can't do it myself*" "*It is embarrassing having to ask my children*"
- Digital technology as a means for improving mental wellbeing. One participant said "*I listen to music on Apple Music every single day and music for me is therapeutic, so that improves my mental health*"
- Those who were more committed to activity goals were more likely to use digital technology to boost their ability to track metrics like step count and weight; "*it tells you how many steps you've done and I've come to rely on that… I'm borderline diabetic and I've been told to lose weight*"
- Quality and intuitiveness to websites and applications can encourage or dissuade people from using them; "*there was a stark basic engagement with the NHS in comparison to using my private healthcare provider to book and conduct an online appointment leading to swift treatment*"
- In terms of activity, younger participants thought that digital technology helped because "*it is easier than going to the gym and paying someone*"
- The expectation that everyone uses digital technology and/or are digitally engaged can cause issues; "*they assume everybody has something in their house (that can connect to the internet) and that isn't the case*"

Participants' attitudes towards digital technology and their own health

- Some participants spoke about how digital technology is a good motivator but can also be obsessive and intrusive; "*My daughter is obsessed with getting her target steps in and will often just walk around the house to ensure she gets to 10,000 steps*"
- Positive attitude towards digital technology removing barriers and increasing access to information; "*it pushes me to be more active and find likeminded people*"
- Concerns around over-reliance on digital technology leading to limited face-to-face interaction.
- Some participants noted the easiness that digital technology has introduced when dealing with their health but reflected that it can only travel in one direction and make a person more reliant on technology than before; "*it make us lazy*" "*it's hard to reverse… it's only going to get worse*"
- Other participants said they were sceptical of health information being promoted online because it was difficult to differentiate between experts and non-experts; "*everybody seems to be an expert, but they're not trained… they could just be someone messing about*", "*Who monitors the information that's online and who puts information on there initially?*"
- Participants were worried about being overwhelmed by information on social media platforms and how that can have a negative effect; "*there is too much out there. Social media, it's too accessible for younger people to access… I have concerns about victimisation, body shaming, child exploitation etc*"
- The balance between health-supporting apps for physical health and the effect on mental health was discussed by some participants; "*I think if I just pick this and this with my time, I could be my healthiest self, but you end up looking at the polar opposite and it just pulls you down*"

- Some participants highlighted the concern that digital technology and/or broadband connection created contract or subscription costs that are difficult to balance with other necessities; "*well that's one of the things when you're unemployed, if you've got to pay a contract, it's going to be very difficult to eat or heat and pay that*"

<u>Participants' attitudes towards digital technology and the wider health of the public</u>

- Awareness of health-improving digital technology (e.g. wearables, health apps) but lack of full information and/or desire to use them; "*A fitness tracker or something that picks up when I am eating carbs would be good for me, but I can't afford it at the moment*"
- The potential to influence a wide audience through digital technology; "*it is a quick and easy way to get a lot of people fitter*". One participant used the example of Captain Tom who created an example of activity during the 2020 lockdown "*by walking around his garden and inspiring the country to get up and do something positive*"
- Concerns about system integration and different services not communicating with each other; "*How can one GP get to know what is wrong with that patient, but I have to explain myself to the next GP?*"
- The potential that digital messaging can have on public health campaigns was identified by several participants, although it needed to be more consistent; "*I see a lot of stuff around healthy eating in schools but the follow up doesn't happen and can't be followed up*"
- The ability of digital technology to socially connect people was picked up as an opportunity for public health; "*I think we have experienced that a lot within Covid, using games and apps. I think it has the social connectiveness with it as well – even though you aren't fully social you are still social*"
- Digital exclusion was identified as a downside of having the majority of information online; "*by having so much online and so much available through technology, you isolate potentially some of the groups who need it the most*"
- The use of health-related apps such the NHS Covid-19 app during the pandemic was recognised as a positive example of digital technology; "*when it's used to the good, you've only got to see the pandemic we've been through and at times they needed to act fast and contact certain groups*"

<u>The issues with using digital technology for improving health</u>

- Several participants mentioned having issues with storage and charging with digital devices which had knock on effects on how comfortable they felt using them; "*I have a step counter on my phone, and I worry about the space it uses up*" "*I worry about charging all these devices, now with energy prices as my children charge theirs up too*"
- Addiction to digital technology, even with the intention to improve health, can have a detrimental impact on mental health; "*you keep pushing yourself and pushing yourself every day, then that's probably not going to ed up being very good for you*", "*it just becomes addictive and becomes about the numbers… that's why I don't use it at all*"
- Concern from parents about what their children are accessing and how it can influence negative health behaviours; "*Protect younger generations because you can see eating disorders spreading… you see all these models and it makes them feel like they're not good enough*"
- Similarly, some participants said it was become more difficult to judge if health and wellbeing information was incorrect or misleading.

- Data control and privacy around apps that can track you was highlighted as a recurring issue; "*you could see where people's houses were, you could see if people were at home… that was the final straw for Snapchat for me. I don't want to be tracked*"
- Some participants did not have much confidence in online advice or consultations and were worried that increasing use of digital technology would leave them behind; "*Technology's moving so fast that even people who've grown up in the age of changing technology are now just struggling to keep up*"