

## **Written evidence submitted by ORCHA (DHS0029)**

### **An introduction to ORCHA**

Founded in 2015, ORCHA (the Organisation for the Review of Care and Health Apps) has grown rapidly to become the world's leading health app evaluation and distribution organisation. Its mission is to get safe, effective healthcare to millions more people across the globe by harnessing digital technology.

**Healthcare providers:** ORCHA works extensively with the NHS, charities and social care providers in the UK and in 12 other countries, creating app libraries which health and care staff can use as a source of the highest quality digital health support.

**Digital health developers:** The ORCHA Review is the most comprehensive, independent assessment model to date, assessing digital health products against more than 350 measures across clinical & professional assurance, data & privacy, and usability & accessibility. Achieving a score of 65% or more helps developers build trust in technology amongst clients, and enables them to appear in the digital health libraries provided to NHS and local authority organisations.

**Accreditation:** The ORCHA Review forms the foundation for a growing number of international accreditations and certification schemes. So, passing the ORCHA Review is also a good stepping stone to achieving compliance with additional standards, such as the DTAC, NICE ESF and CEN ISO 82304-2.

### **We have written answers to two of your question areas:**

#### **Care of patients and service users**

The objectives for the NHS app are very welcome and present a wonderful foundation for digitisation. We at ORCHA would welcome more discussion about how people can gain access to other health and clinical Digital Health apps.

This access, of course, needs to be considered in the light of regulation and quality. As of today, there are 360,000+ health apps now available on the open market, and the UK is the 5<sup>th</sup> most engaged country with these technologies. However, with no formal regulation in place and no quality watchdog, there are risks to our populations.

By way of example, ORCHA's recent research into period tracker apps found 84% sharing data with third parties but only around half complying correctly with GDPR.

Meanwhile, patients and service users are often finding their own way to these digital tools without guidance from healthcare professionals. Independent research by OnePoll for ORCHA this summer found that, of those who had used a health app, only a tiny percentage had received the recommendation from a healthcare professional.

Many NHS Trusts and ICSs are now incorporating high quality health apps into their care pathways, to great effect. And these tools have massive potential to support both patients and the NHS, especially with the elective care backlog. One health app, if just deployed for use in eye services, could save around 1.7m hours of nursing time by automating some aspects of pre-operative appointments.

The ideal national framework for digital health apps would be a system which enables healthcare providers to get the best out of health apps whilst minimising risk. In short, the approach to digital health should duplicate the approach to medicines, which are highly regulated.

For effective quality control, we'd suggest a mandatory accreditation system for all new health apps, which checks they are safe clinically and safe with patient data. Our other recommendations would be as follows:

- The accreditation system should monitor apps throughout their whole lifetime, as technology is constantly being updated/changed and must always meet required standards.
- Inbuilt in this system, should be a product recall function, just as with medicines.
- Patients should be encouraged to discuss health apps with their doctors and be directed to libraries of nationally accredited apps, which are safe and effective.
- Where apps require payment, doctors would be able to prescribe them to patients, again, as they do with medicines. An app prescription system is now available in Germany.

We would appreciate the opportunity to discuss all these points with the panel. Our objective, in suggesting all the above, is to ensure that patients and service users receive the best possible care.

### **Workforce literacy and the digital workforce**

Whilst the recruitment of digital, data and technology roles are most welcome, we believe there could still be a knowledge – and confidence – gap when it comes to frontline workers. Doctors, nurses, clinicians and social workers need to understand how to include the best digital health products in their care pathways.

For this reason, ORCHA has created (with commercial support from Boehringer Ingelheim) the ORCHA Digital Health Academy. This is a free and CPD-accredited resource which is available to every single frontline worker in this country. Over a thousand delegates have so far completed the foundation modules.

Specialist modules are being developed which focus on key clinical specialities such as mental health, MSK, diabetes and maternity. A newly launched module also teaches clinical entrepreneurs and app developers how to involve patients in the digital health design process, with a view to improving the usability of the end product.

If members of the panel would like to review the Academy, it can be viewed here: [orcha-academy.com](https://orcha-academy.com) and on the Health Education England Learning Hub ([learninghub.nhs.uk](https://learninghub.nhs.uk)).

Ends

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