

Summary

mHealth Practice: ORCHA and Staffordshire County Council

Info extracted and adapted from:

<https://www.orchahealth.com/staffordshire-public-health-changes-lives-with-digital-health/>

<https://www.orchahealth.com/>

<https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Care-for-all-ages/Search-for-health-and-wellbeing-apps.aspx>

Topics

ORCHA and Staffordshire County Council has a successful approach on the following topics:

- Planning > **Creating partnerships**
- Planning > **User centered design considerations**

Background info and scope of the mHealth practice

Staffordshire County Council is the top-tier local authority for the non-metropolitan county of Staffordshire, England.

Part of the Council's work includes offering advice, support and care for health and wellbeing, to keep residents well and staying healthy. This includes advice on: NHS health checks, mental health and wellbeing, getting active, physical activity for older people, eating and drinking, weight management, drinking less alcohol, stopping smoking, preparing for old age, diabetes, drugs, and preparing for and coping with winter.

For a number of years, the Council has explored using digital technologies to improve support for residents, and so in-line with this thinking, the Public Health team looked at how technology could be best used to reach and engage with people to change behaviours and extend the services offered.

Home to 870,000 people, life expectancy across Staffordshire has risen year on year, but its ageing population still face an average 17.5 years of poor health. To further extend lives, but crucially increase the number of healthy years, Staffordshire County Council runs a range of public health support services.

With around 40% of ill health preventable, and obesity, smoking and diabetes the major factors, the Council's support services aim to help people make better lifestyle choices. This includes one-to-one support sessions; providing advice, medication and information to help people make long term behaviour changes.

Although effective, the team identified that face to face appointments don't work for everyone, and even during COVID-19, when appointments were moved online, the format still stops many people from engaging. Some people can't make the time of day, others, prior to COVID-19, couldn't get to the clinic, and a significant number don't want to face a person with their lifestyle choices.

On the other hand, ORCHA curates bespoke Digital Health Libraries and professional recommendation tools for regional and national health and care organisations and bodies. ORCHA provides services to the NHS in 50% of regions in the UK, curating App Libraries and professional recommendation tools across a broad range of settings. It runs national health app accreditation

schemes to national bodies worldwide. Its unique review engine assesses apps against over 350 elements across Professional Assurance, Data Privacy, and Usability/Accessibility, plus additional criteria depending on needs.

Description of the mHealth practice

The team conducted research, looking at the market and what services are available on G-Cloud. They'd been aware of ORCHA, a digital health evaluation and distribution organisation, and saw that it was the only organisation who could effectively enable the Council to connect people with reviewed and trusted health and care apps, and so the team engaged ORCHA to work with them to integrate these into its lifestyle services.

ORCHA's implementation team worked with the Public Health team to identify the most important health challenges its residents face, then identified and mapped the most effective apps to each of these. ORCHA ensured that each app had been robustly reviewed against 350 measures and, where appropriate, additional COVID-19 criteria.

An App Library was then built tailored to the Council's branding and health priorities. A carousel of pre-prepared searches for each of the priority health areas was included. This was embedded via an iframe within the Council's website, so that it could be easily found: <https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/appfinder> ORCHA Pro Accounts were also added to the library, which would enable staff to logon to their own account, keep a favourites list of their preferred apps, recommend apps via email or text to residents, and keep a track of who has been recommended an app and if they have downloaded it.

After two months of development, the programme was ready, a training programme was rolled out across Adult Social Care teams, social prescribing teams, the local NHS Trusts, and the information services within libraries. This enabled teams to start recommending apps to service users.

Engaged with the programme, teams made favourite app lists and when they spotted a new app that wasn't on the library, they asked ORCHA to review it, to make sure it was safe. If it made the grade it was added to the library, but if it didn't (as 85% apps don't), the team knew to warn service users about it.

To make residents aware of the programme, the team created a three-month paid-for social media campaign. It focused on the positive difference apps can make, encouraging people to visit the library and choose an app. The campaign targeted certain groups of people, by geography, demographic and interests. Initially, the focus was placed on those over 50 years old, tailoring the images and messages to maximise engagement.

- *Scalability of the mHealth practice*

As the programme uses ORCHA's digital solution, it is very scalable and so could be opened up at GP level, regional level, or national level.

The apps that appear in the Staffordshire County Council Digital Health Library have all undergone stringent reviews by ORCHA.

Designed by a multidisciplinary team of subject matter experts and clinicians, the ORCHA Review delivers robust, rapid and reliable accreditation for Digital Health worldwide.

The ORCHA Review is dynamic and responds to the focus area and functionality of an app to assess only the relevant compliance issues. ORCHA's platform also enables its Review Team to carry out a "re-review" of an app after every update, ensuring that the Library's information is kept up-to-date and is scalable.

The app reviews are housed on a platform that can be intelligently searched to find apps against a range of criteria. The platform enables bespoke app libraries to be quick and easily built, making the solution scalable across regions and nationally. ORCHA also offers a range of products that can be added to a library, helping professionals to recommend and distribute apps safely to patients, and providing usage insights and measurement.

Main outcomes and testimonials

The programme has been successful, with good engagement levels by the public through the social media campaign, and strong levels of recommendations by service teams.

Feedback from staff has been extremely positive. They have been comfortable with the library, finding it very easy to use and have been reassured by the review process behind every app selected to be featured. It has made them more comfortable recommending an app to supplement their care delivery.

In its first five months of launching, the library has seen around 4,000 sessions, with approximately 10,000 pages viewed. People have searched for help with everything from Fitness and Nutrition, to Mental Health, Dementia and Diabetes and already downloaded hundreds of apps.

Steve Tranter, Stop Smoking Practitioner, Everyone Health, describes his experience:

“Its design and ease of use is one of ORCHA’s particular highlights. Each specific app is categorised and can be accessed just by using the scroll bar. In addition, you can also just type into the keywords box your specific search and then it gives you a breakdown of all the apps available to assist. There is a huge selection of apps available once you have performed your search, it is then just a case of scrolling the huge quantity on offer and using the filters (budget, platform, etc) to help you find the App which you feel will assist the client with the particular issue they need help and support with.

“To recommend or send an app it is just a case of typing in the client’s email or mobile number and then clicking to send the recommendation. This will then be sent directly to the client’s phone via text or email for them to download. The app that has been sent can then provide them with some additional support right at their fingertips”.

The Public Health team see the library as an effective tool it can use to tackle challenges including obesity and smoking. But they don’t see the library as a product that after they’ve purchased the work is done. To keep achieving results, they believe they need to keep it alive. With this view, they continue to educate the workforce on health and care apps to maintain enthusiasm and education. They have also identified champions within each service delivery team, who will continue to find apps for testing and support other members.

Communications have been central to the success of the programme. Following the dedicated social media campaign, the team have embedded the apps library into their wider health campaigns. Apps have been at the heart of its recent STOPtober campaign, for example, offering a practical, measurable, call to action.

Commenting on the programme, Lucy Gratton, Commissioning Officer, Public Health and Prevention, Health and Care Directorate, Staffordshire Council, summarises:

“Apps offer a real, practical solution that people can engage with to make a difference to their health. Carried with them all day, they can offer regular motivation and feedback that other formats of intervention can’t. They also appeal to people who, for whatever reason, do not want to engage with traditional services.

But lots of apps aren't safe and so it was essential for us to connect our residents with apps we know are assured and will make a difference to their life changes. The ORCHA reviewing and library have been essential for us to achieve and deliver this".

"The programme has been a success. We see the number of recommendations and downloads growing and know that for many, it is helping to change their lives and become healthier."

References

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