Crown
Commercial
Service

User research for health and care services

G-Cloud 15 service definition

Healthia®

User research (UR)

We specialise in user research for health and care. We can identify what patients, carers, staff and clinicians need from your service at each step of their journey.

We use a range of techniques to inform the shape of services, digital products, policies and spaces.

We advocate for inclusive, accessible research practices to ensure all voices are heard, including seldom-heard and under-represented groups.

We translate insights into prioritised, actionable recommendations that can be shared across your organisation. We use video recordings to build empathy and understanding,

Our rigorous approach enables user research to be used to inform strategy as well as the design of products and services.

- We specialise in research for health and care. Clients include: NHSE, BNSSG, NHS Mid and South Essex, NHS Gloucestershire, Public Health Wales, Macmillan and Breast Cancer Now.
- We have extensive experience in planning, conducting and managing a wide range of user research, remotely and in person in our purpose-built, in-house research lab
- We have a dedicated research operations team to manage research logistics and ensure adherence to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) at all times
- We take an agile approach to user research and user-centred design, in line with GDS and NHS service standard, to enable iterative improvements, quick changes and rapid delivery
- We work in the open as one team to drive decisions collaboratively, taking every opportunity to share knowledge, upskill, build internal capabilities and enable sustainable benefits

Mixed-methods research approach

We use a wide range of methods and adapt our techniques to specific audiences, contexts and the problems to solve.

Inception involves aligning stakeholders on the challenge, purpose, goals and outcomes for the research, creation of recruitment strategy and stakeholder engagement plan.

Desk / secondary research and expert reviews enable us to deep-dive into existing research and available documentation.

Quantitative techniques expose the extent of the problem and identify areas of focus. **Surveys and analytics review** help us understand the websites, services and products as they are and pinpoint problematic journeys, tasks or areas for users.

Stakeholder research enables us to understand individual contexts, needs, priorities and build on valuable expertise. We take time to understand the background, overarching strategies and policy intent.

Business analysis and process mapping help us understand the organisation and assess user and business needs, dependencies and system constraints.

Content and IA evaluation helps us map out existing content types, and navigation structure, identifying gaps and opportunities to improve user journeys.

Qualitative research delves deep into user experience, journeys, behaviours, motivations, needs and pain points.

Qualitative methods

We use various methods to delve deep into user experience, journeys, behaviours, motivations, needs and pain points.

Depth interviews (semi-structured, moderated / unmoderated) with diverse user groups, including internal and external, existing and potential users, to elicit rich insights into who the users are, what they do and what they need.

Contextual research enables us to observe users in situ, performing specific tasks / completing journeys in a day-to-day setting.

Ethnographic research allows us to understand the people's environment and their complex interactions within it.

Diary study provides insights on user experience and needs over time.

Guerrilla research / intercept interviews explore people's preferences and experiences onsite.

Focus groups and co-creation / co-design workshops investigate shared experiences, facilitate discussions and collaborative service concept exploration.

Usability testing across devices (desktop / tablet / mobile), A/B testing, a lab-based, remote or in person, sessions to assess how users complete specific journeys or tasks.

Inclusive research and design

We take an inclusive approach to our work to ensure all voices are represented. This reduces the risk of missing opportunities and fits with our ethos of leaving no-one behind.

We make it easy for people to participate in research, adapting to specific needs or requirements. Recent research has included people with autism, people with no fixed abode / address, and people with English as an additional language.

We have developed ways to effectively engage with diverse groups to co-create and co-design solutions in a collaborative and transparent way, helping design accessible services, policies and places that work for everyone.

We are experienced in researching, collaborating and designing with complex stakeholder groups including staff, local authorities, communities, charities, businesses, partner organisations and technology providers.

Seldom-heard and under-represented groups

- We include diverse, seldom-heard, under-represented and marginalised communities in our research as standard, including low digital literacy
- We include people from outside the mainstream and across socio-economic backgrounds, so we can design for people with markedly different lives and needs
- We have created a guide to conducting research around sensitive topics with vulnerable users to ensure the wellbeing of both participants and our researchers. Please contact us for a copy
- Through experience we have developed a number of techniques for recruiting from these groups which we tailor to each engagement

Research operations

We have a dedicated research operations (ReOps) team to manage logistics and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) compliance.

Our team manage research planning, scheduling, consent, incentive payments and data protection. We regularly conduct and manage research for organisations requiring utmost data security, including NHS and National Cyber Security Centre.

With over 20 years of experience across sectors and methodologies (agile, kanban, waterfall), our ReOps team ensure that research delivery is smooth, timely and on budget. They oversee resourcing, track project progress against objectives and maintain open communication.

This enables our researchers to focus their time and effort on the research delivery and the quality of research outcomes.

Recruitment strategy

We have recruited thousands of research participants. This includes the general public, subject specialists, senior / board level, internal / external users, existing / new users, community members, international users, vulnerable and under-represented groups, and people with health conditions and access needs (motor / cognitive impairments).

We work closely with our clients to align on research objectives and agree clear, unambiguous participant profiles to ensure we speak to the right people. To reach target audience groups we use various recruitment techniques:

- Specialist recruitment partners
- In-house via relevant networks
- Closed lists supplied by clients where we manage the process, adhering to GDPR
- Disability panels

Stakeholder engagement

Stakeholder engagement is fundamental to our approach. We use innovative ways of keeping disparate - often time-poor - stakeholders involved.

We put effort into creating an effective and inclusive engagement plan to understand individual perspectives, wider context, priorities and build on their valuable expertise.

We have extensive experience collaborating with SMEs and stakeholders at all levels and adapt our communication to meet technical and non-technical needs.

Through our work with government and NHS clients, we have developed ways of effectively engaging with complex stakeholder groups across organisations and government departments. We bring stakeholders together to align priorities and collaboratively drive evidence-based decisions.

“They are capable of liaising with and managing stakeholders at all levels so for us they’ve interacted with people at board level all the way down, sensitively and empathically building relationships with customers who are often at a point of crisis. That can be quite a difficult thing to do and those softer skills really matter”

- Service owner, Cabinet Office

“They work openly and collaboratively with stakeholders to plan, execute and act on the research and design. This is so important when you are looking to transfer skills into the organisation and unlike other agencies or consultants we have worked in the past they do not exclude clients from the process or take specific parts of the project, work on it and then deliver a finished product.”

- Insights and engagement manager, NHS BNSSG

User research approach

Activities:

- Inception workshop with project team
- Desktop research
- Stakeholder interviews
- Creation of detailed recruitment and research plan
- Analytics and data review
- Survey design and analysis
- User interviews / research sessions and analysis with facilitated observation
- Research playbacks
- Co-creation, sketching and storyboarding
- Next steps workshop

Outputs:

- Research report with recommendations
- Documented, prioritised user needs and journeys
- Pen portraits / personas / modes
- Experience maps
- As-is and to-be service maps
- Sketches and storyboards
- Content and IA findings report
- Service concepts for further exploration
- Sketches and storyboards

Our experience

We are user research partner for NHS England's Digital Prevention Services Portfolio. There are more examples of our work here.