

LEARNING FROM THE LABS

VOLUME 2:

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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In 2014, we carried out a project to evaluate five of the digital products developed as part of the Innovation Labs initiative: **Doc Ready, In Hand, Head Meds, Madly in Love, MoodBug**.

The evaluation focused on the effectiveness of the individual digital products in terms of their user, intended and social value. In this executive summary, we present highlights of the findings under each of these headings. The **full report** describes the methods adopted, presents the detailed findings and provides a commentary on the conclusions, lessons and reflections from the project.

User Value

Using data collected by common analytics software (**Google Analytics** and **Flurry**) we found the following about how the products were being used.

- All five Innovation Labs products are building audiences, with increasing numbers of people accessing and using the websites and apps – by October 2014, the overall reach for the five products was over 120,000 sessions
- As expected, the return rates reflected the purpose of the different products - the two apps (**In Hand, Moodbug**) had retention rates of 75-90%, while the websites (**Doc Ready, Madly in Love** and **Head Meds**) were mainly used once, with around 15% of users coming back again.
- Closer examination of the analytics data enabled identification of a smaller group of users who were engaging meaningfully with the products, that is, spending enough time to engage with the content or carry out relevant actions
 - For **Doc Ready** and **Madly in Love** approximately 25% of users visited long enough to complete a meaningful action
 - For **MoodBug** (50%) and **In Hand** (60%) a higher ratio of engagers was found.

- **HeadMeds** generated two different kinds of engagement. We estimated that 32% of visitors had ‘light’ engagement, skimming the site in seconds to find a specific piece of information, while 68% of visitors could be classed as ‘deep’ engagers, spending long enough on the site to search for a medication or watch a video story.

Through surveys and interviews with **Doc Ready** and **In Hand** we discovered the following.

- Most users are first engaging with the digital products via social media, web searches and links from other web resources, with smaller numbers finding them through referral by services, professionals or friends
- The main group of users are young people with experience of mental health problems, although other people are also finding them useful, for example older users and people who do not report experience of mental health problems.
- Users are highly satisfied with the products, which was confirmed across a range of different measures, set out in this table:

| Satisfaction indicator (% in agreement) | Doc Ready (n=56) | In Hand (n=131) |
|---|------------------|-----------------|
| Easy to use | 87% | 92% |
| Partly met needs | 9% | 33% |
| Completely met needs | 71% | 35% |
| Would use again | 56% | 65% |
| Recommend to family and friends | 82% | 84% |

- Users reported value related directly to the products’ defining characteristics:
 - **Doc Ready** users value most highly the checklist function
 - **In Hand** users value it being a self-contained tool and available to use anytime and anywhere.

Intended Value

The products were all showing encouraging signs of achieving their intended purpose and demonstrating their place in the landscape of digital mental wellbeing support for young people.

We found examples of where **Doc Ready** had improved communication in GP consultations, helped young people to feel in more control, reassured people and reduced their feelings of isolation and encouraged people to seek help for their mental wellbeing. We found that users of **In Hand** had used the app to increase their mood and wellbeing awareness and regulate how they were feeling. For **Head Meds** a key purpose is to provide information that can't be accessed from other sources, such as how medications interact with alcohol and other drugs and these specific information pages are some of the most frequently viewed across the site. Increasingly, people are spending longer on **Madly in Love** and accessing the advice and shared experiences pages more frequently. People have reported that **Moodbug** helps users to learn about their own moods as well as have conversations about them.

The outcome findings in relation to **Doc Ready** and **In Hand** are more robust because they are based on independent user surveys, while the outcomes of the other three products rely on proxy measures such as data analytics and anecdotal feedback at present. The products teams attribute their success to:

- their commitment to developing products that young people wanted
- close involvement of young people throughout the development of the product
- product teams being open with each other and communicating well, sharing responsibility for the end product and working hard to meet the project objectives.

Social Value

In the user surveys, we assessed the self-reported effectiveness of **Doc Ready** and **In Hand** in relation to mental wellbeing outcomes. The results indicate that both tools were supporting users with their mental wellbeing in the way that was intended by the products:

- For **Doc Ready** this is about helping a user to gather their thoughts and feeling greater confidence in an appointment (based on feedback from 44 users).
- For **In Hand** it enabled strategies to manage feelings and emotions (based on feedback from 108 users).

Learning and reflections

This evaluation has found that simple digital products have a role within the landscape of mental wellbeing support and we have begun to show the type of value and effect they can have for those who use them. In particular, we have shown that **In Hand** and **Doc Ready** are being used by a relatively large number of people, many of whom report they are making a positive contribution to their mental wellbeing in the way that was envisaged by the development teams.

Caution is required when drawing broader conclusions from this evaluation. For most products, the emerging evidence is based on proxy measures, such as data analytics and anecdotal feedback. The detailed research, which provides more robust evidence, are applicable to the two products only and it is not possible to generalise across all the products nor more widely to all users of the products.

In the spirit of shared learning which has characterised the Innovation Labs Initiative, here's a summary of the lessons we have learnt – [more in the full report](#).

1. Integrate evaluation from the start of any social tech projects
2. Explore the possible harms, risks and unintended uses of products during development
3. Forward plan for using the data analytics
4. Adopt a model of evaluation that matches the product development stage
5. Be clear about the theory of change
6. Learn from early indicators to maximise the value of user feedback
7. Identify emerging indicators of social value and assess their usefulness at meeting the projects aims

Further information related to this evaluation is available from NIHR MindTech Healthcare Technology Cooperative on request. www.mindtech.org.uk

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