

WAITWELL: CODESIGN REPORT

Spring 2026



Contents

01

Introduction, Aim and Objectives

02

Sheffield Flourish Role and Methodology

03

Session 1: Proof of Concept

06

Session 2: Functionality

10

Session 3: Test it, Break it

14

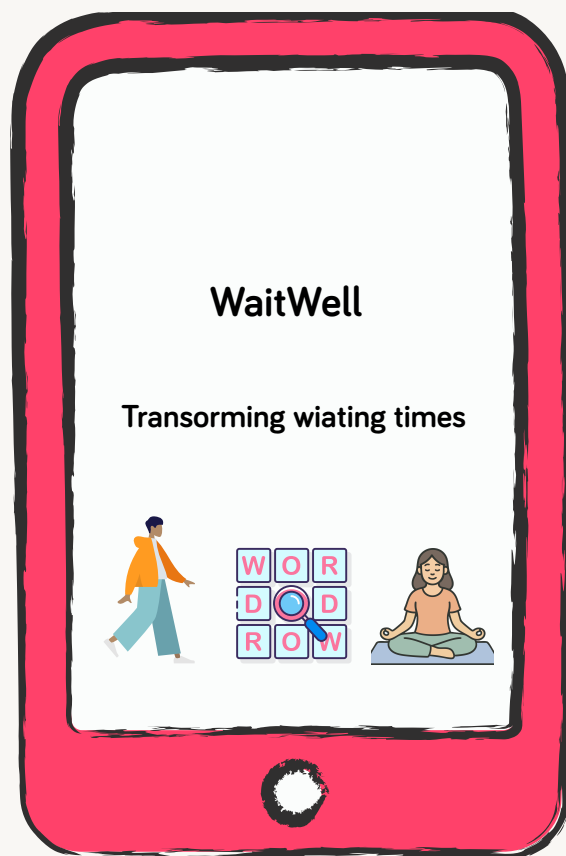
Summary of Key Findings

Introduction

In response to feedback about long waiting periods for the Decisions Unit (DU) at the Longley Centre, Sheffield Health Partnership University (SHPU) have developed a prototype for an app that aims to transform waiting times into active and meaningful experiences. This will promote physical health, mental wellbeing and digital confidence.

SHPU would like to test the app's useability and codesign app developments to ensure it is genuinely meeting the needs of people with mental health lived experience. In particular:

- Test the concept and gather qualitative feedback
- Identify barriers and motivators for engagement
- Co-design features that make the experience inclusive and meaningful
- Address the 'back-end' burden



This report provides findings from the 3 codesign sessions held at Sheffield Flourish

Aim and Purpose

Aim

To codesign a resource that will transform waiting times into active and meaningful experiences.

Session 1: Proof of Concept

Purpose

- Understand your experiences of waiting for NHS appointments
- Think of ways that could improve the pre-appointment waiting experience
- Introduce the idea of the Wait/Well app

Session 2: Functionality

Purpose

- Test the concept of the app and gather qualitative feedback
- Co-design features to make the app inclusive and meaningful
- Identify barriers and motivators for app use

Session 3: Test it, break it!

Purpose

- Test a prototype of the WaitWell app
- Does the app cover the main areas we wanted
- Focus on functionality (rather than technical bugs as there will be many!)



Sheffield Flourish Role

Sheffield Flourish is a voluntary sector organisation that supports people living with mental health conditions to use their skills, ideas and talents to build the lives they wish to lead, through creative, mental-health friendly activities, coproduction and digital tools. The charity supports SHPU on a number of different areas of Trust work, acting as a critical friend and working closely with them around user involvement and engagement, particularly on the mental health wards. A part of this work is providing digital inclusion sessions to patients.

Sheffield Flourish supported SHPU to gather real user feedback based on the above, through structured codesign sessions with people with mental health lived experience.

- Help to recruit 6-8 people with mental health lived experience to take part in an advisory group on the app.
- Organise 3 x 3-hour sessions to work through the different areas of feedback, including:
- Organizing dates around room and Raihan availability
- Producing information and promotional material around the sessions
- Managing enquiries and sign-ups
- Liaising with participants
- Preparing materials and equipment
- Where required, purchase devices for participants to use during the sessions
- Additional staff support during the sessions
- Administering lived experience payments



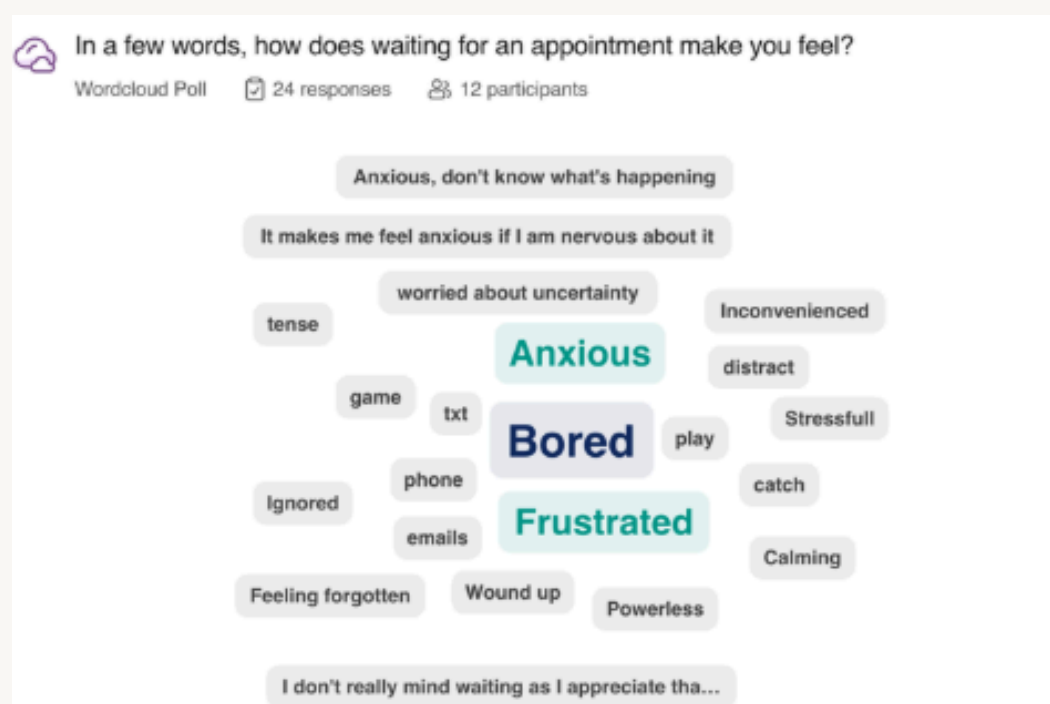
Session 1: Proof of Concept

Participants: 9 attendees with mental health lived experience

4 facilitators

Activity 1: Slido questions

Participants used mobile phones to scan a QR code and answer the questions.



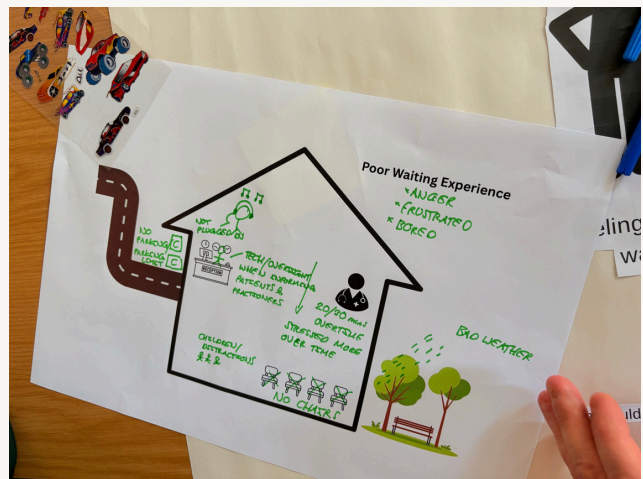
Things to consider: digital literacy

2 attendees had no access to a phone and used Flourish equipment (22%)

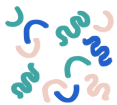
4 attendees needed support to scan the QR code (44%)

Activity 2: Rich Picture

Participants were asked to work in groups to design the worst waiting room experience.



Key themes:



Sensory overload



Uncomfortable facilities



Poor communication



Unfriendly staff



Things to consider:

By far this biggest factor that made the waiting room a bad experience was around communication, including not knowing how long the wait will be, clinicians not explaining who they are, jargon/lack of translation.

Activity 3: Responding to Key Themes

Participants focused on three areas of the waiting experience, looking at what could be done to help.

1.Managing feelings during the waiting time

- Information - a simple guide of the facilities, up-to-date noticeboard, things to read
- Resources - complimentary headphones, wifi access, tea/coffee/water
- Facilities - ambient lighting, comfortable seating
- Staff - that check-in with you, conflict resolution training, acknowledgment that you are there.
- Culture - a more flexible system, emphasis given to patient care

2. Anticipation of meeting the clinician

- Let me know in advance what the appointment is for
- Knowing what I need to take in advance e.g. meds, sample etc.
- Clinician knows why I am there
- Knowing where I need to head to / whether there is parking
- Small bio about the clinician if it is the first time meeting
- No jargon or overly medical terminology
- Giving me the option to bring a chaperone
- Giving me the option of choosing who I get to see
- A suggested lists of 'prompts' that I might like to ask the clinician



Things to consider:

Most of the feedback under this theme was about clear and concise information provided before the appointment.

3. How to use time while you wait

Mindfulness

- Guided meditation / meditation chants
- Self-help information
- Distraction techniques
- Colouring
- Hand massage
- Activities for zoning out



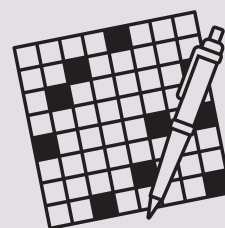
Active

- Guided gentle exercise
- Walk in the garden
- A walk with local points of interest / facts in the area



Fun

- Games to play
- Articles, healing poetry and interesting stories to read
- Word games, crosswords, card games and puzzles
- Eye spy
- Good books, up-to-date magazines, cartoons and joke

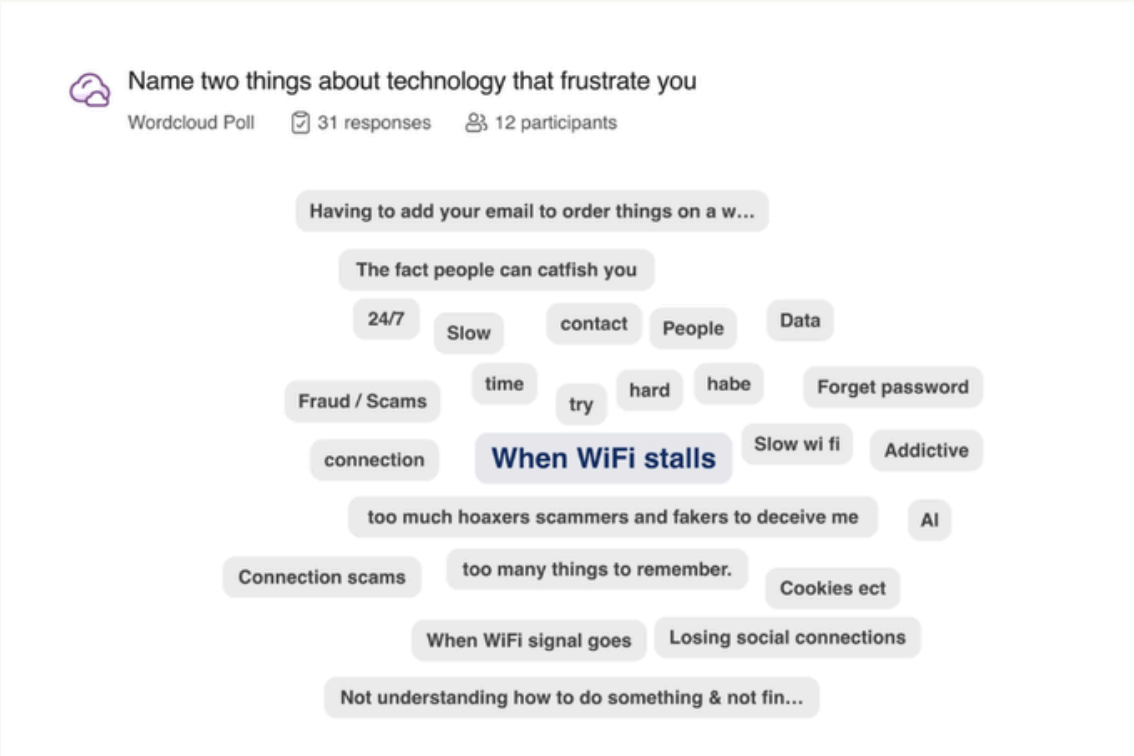
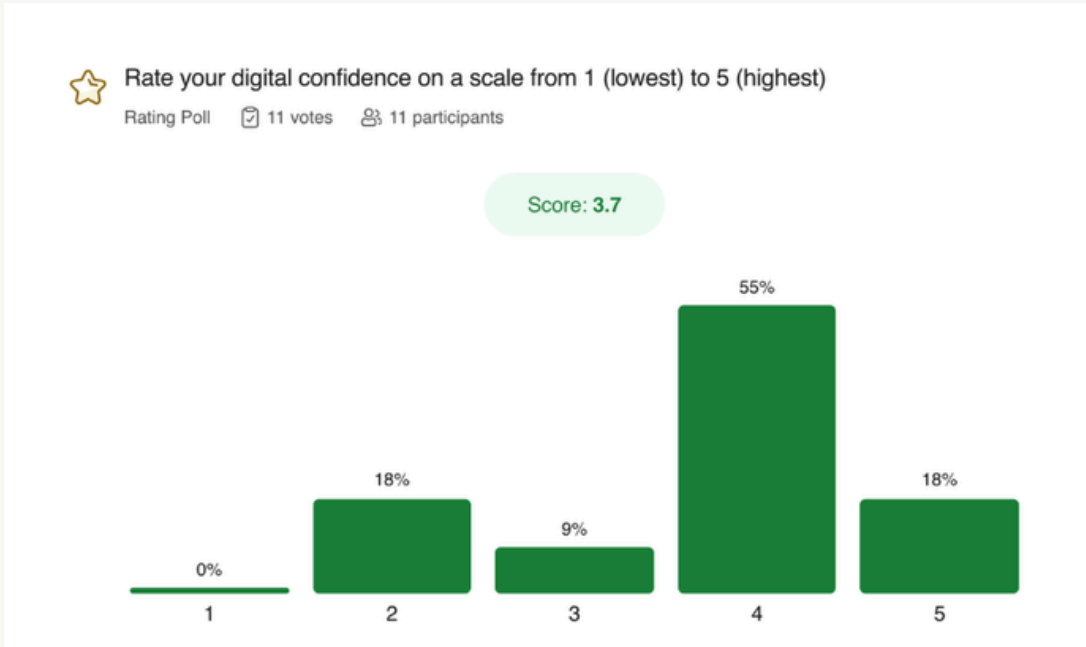


Session 2: Functionality

Participants: 11 attendees with mental health lived experience
4 facilitators

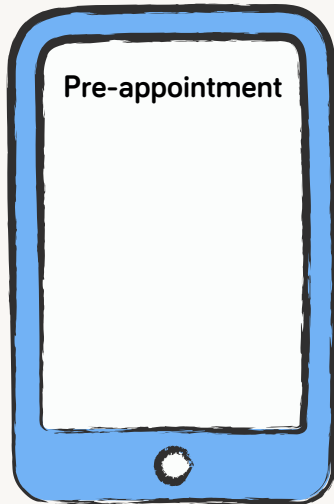
Activity 1: Slido questions

Participants used mobile phones to scan a QR code and answer the questions.

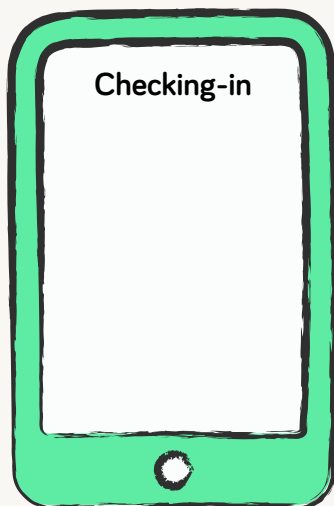


Activity 2: Journey Mapping

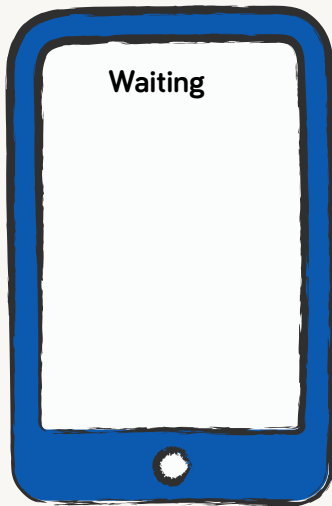
- Participants walked through the journey from pre-appointment to meeting the clinician making notes of what the app functionality should be at each key point.



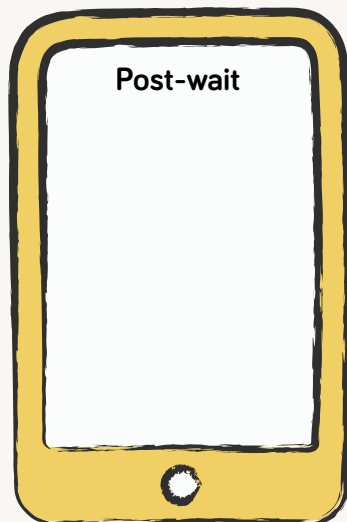
- What is the appointment for?
- When, where (mobility access, link to google maps with address, photos/videos, parking and public transport)
- Who am I seeing (small bio/ photo, including something human)?
- Option to inform clinician of any phobias (needles)
- Option for earlier appointments
- What do I need to bring to my appointment? – can I bring someone/ translator?
- Option for informing about being late
- How busy is the waiting room? Is there a quiet area?
- Ask pre-appointment questions
- Options to cancel appointments



- Right details – reaffirming that you're at the right place and confirmation that they're aware of your presence.
- Clear instructions of what to do, with pictures
- Wristbands/ fobs to link with the app – can only check-in once in the building
- Delay times
- Which waiting room should I be in?



- Games – colouring in or puzzles
- Gamification – point based or rewards for taking part in health activities
- Requests for resources through the app
- Live news
- Changes/ live waiting time updates (how many people are before you)
- Local walks
- Distraction techniques
- Tips for appointment and notes for preparing for clinician
- Show that you're out of the building, or in the toilet



- Suggestions box/ feedback
- Next steps – new appointment
- Link to the NHS app – information on your meds and any possible side effects and how to take meds
- Own individual notes system
- Prompt around exercises to do if appointment has been stressful



Things to consider:

Once again the majority of the feedback was about communication at pre-appointment stage.

Activity 3: Functionality Questions (Y/N)

Question	Yes	No
Do you have a smart phone?	10 (91%)	1 (9%)
Do you use an iPhone?	8 (73%)	3 (27%)
Do you have mobile data most of the time?	9 (82%)	2 (18%)
Can you scan a QR code?	9 (82%)	2 (18%)
Are you confident in using apps?	10 (91%)	1 (9%)
Do you use Google Maps?	9 (82%)	2 (18%)
Do you use the NHS app?	7 (64%)	4 (36%)
Have you heard of My Toolkit?	6 (55%)	5 (45%)
Have you heard of Care Opinion?	1 (9%)	10 (91%)
Are you comfortable with the use of AI in an app?	4 (36%)	7 (64%)
Are headphones needed for using the app?	7 (64%)	4 (36%)
Should the app provide notifications?	11 (100%)	0 (0%)
Should there be a "crisis safe mode"?	11 (100%)	0 (0%)
Are you comfortable with the app knowing your location?	8 (73%)	3 (27%)
Is gamification a good incentive?	6 (55%)	5 (45%)
Are you comfortable with the app tracking your steps and storing them on your phone?	8 (73%)	3 (27%)

Activity 4: Making it work!

Participants were asked to add post-it notes to three flip-charts about what conditions need to be in place to make the app work, under the headings Physical Activity, Mindfulness Activity and Fun Activities.

Physical Activity

- Go outside
- Keep activity simple and able to actually do
- Safety – walking outdoor in the dark in unsafe areas (lone women)
- Location detection necessary if going off premises
- Not exclusionary for people with mobility problems, eating disorders, people who need to rest – no one size fits all advice



Mindfulness

- Headphones – not chanting along
- Sitting after an appointment to rebalance
- Transcendental meditation
- Friendly atmosphere
- Simple and easy instructions
- Relaxing music
- Observe and describe
- Self-soothing
- ASMR
- Quiet atmosphere
- Virtual – fishtank or light show
- Self-hand massage
- Not patronising
- Diet and movement supplements
- Counting games



Fun Activity

- Not overstimulating! – e.g. not a shooting game or anything that will wind you up
- Maybe not appropriate for IN the waiting room – potential for staring at other patients
- Games suitable for age range
- Up to date books
- Articles, poems and stories
- Positive quotes and fables
- Wordle or wordsearches – sudoku
- Other local support services
- From local people and artwork
- QR codes to activities in house
- Ipad set up for easy activities



Session 3: Test it, Break it.

Participants: 10 attendees with mental health lived experience

5 facilitators

Activity: Testing the Prototype

- Participants each downloaded the WaitWell app
- A list of prompt questions were provided for them to go through

First Impression

What were your first thoughts or feelings when you opened the app?

- Easy to download
- Very well put together
- Like the streamlined design
- Polite and courteous user-friendly language
- Easy to use
- Too complex
- I didn't feel confident, especially as I wasn't using a phone system I was familiar with

Did anything immediately make you feel calmer or more anxious?

- Colour scheme is welcoming and calming
- Polite and courteous user-friendly language

Was anything confusing, surprising, or unexpected?

- A clear guide on how to navigate would be useful.
- There wasn't a back button
- Didn't understand what the 'life buoy' button was for until I clicked on it.
- Could be more creative with the shapes
- Doesn't take into account what we said about who we are seeing and not knowing what the appointment is for.

Ease of Use

How easy was it to find your way around the app?

- It's complex and overwhelming, even as someone relatively digitally confident.
- Easy to navigate through the screen.
- Easy to find categories and subsections
- Icons clear and precise

Did you know what to do next at each stage?

- Took me a while to work out how to work my way through it – if its my first time using the app then I won't have time unless my practitioner is running very late. I think we need a good lesson on using it in advance.
- Prompts and suggestions
- Breathing exercise is unclear and actually made me anxious.

Ease of Use (cont'd)

Were there any parts where you got stuck or weren't sure what button to press or what a section was for?

- I'd like bigger print and options for colours like the My Toolkit
- We asked for fun activities, where are they?
- I'd like guided breathing to listen to on my headphones
- Does the app track you if you are on a walk and notify you if the clinician is ready to see you?
- Very informative and great links.

Emotional Experience

How did the app make you feel while using it?

- Really relaxed and reassuring
- Gave me confidence
- Overwhelmed and frustrated
- Reminds me of top-down NHS medical model dressed up as coproduction and got rather frustrated.
- I was surprised that I was actually using it!

Did anything in the app help reduce anxiety about waiting for an appointment?

- Clinicians bios were reassuring
- Gratitude option feedback helped
- Yes the breathing and gratitude and nature tabs at the top.
- Easy to find categories and subsections
- I liked the idea of taking a nature photo.
- How about a positive quote for the day or a picture that makes you smile.

Did anything increase your anxiety or feel unhelpful?

- Sick of smoke free stuff and walking. I'd like more personal options to remove this.
- First thing is a stop-smoking exercise!!! Most people in the co-design session smoke – I understand the need for it but maybe not first!
- "Take a nature photo"- risky to encourage people to be taking photos potentially in a waiting room, making other people uncomfortable.
- The breathing was okay but I didn't want to follow the apps timing for breathing.

Content and Usefulness

Which parts of the app did you find helpful or supportive?

- I like the feature about appointment delays.
- I like the delay information, clinician bio and gratitude box.
- Easy to follow.
- Very well put together.

Were there any features or messages that didn't feel relevant to you?

- Stop smoking is the first thing on wellbeing!
- Walking, nature pics, stop smoking – don't want it
- A big mismatch between delay time and how much time I had left.

Content and Usefulness (cont'd)

Did the language feel friendly and reassuring?

- The language was fine.
- Language about clinician is too jargony
- I think the language needs to be co-designed with service users – remember who it's for.

Was there anything you expected to see but didn't?

- Couldn't find any translation or EasyRead versions
- Are there no games or puzzles
- I'd like mindful colouring, games, guided meditation, elf-help info and health eating.
- I would appreciate the app being more personal like having my name or welcoming me back.

Real-world Fit

Can you imagine using this app while waiting for an appointment?

- I can see myself using this app especially when I'm stressed or worried or confused.
- Yes, would be a welcome distraction.
- It has loads of options.
- Yes, as its helpful and I'd use as soon as I get there.
- I think I genuinely would use it as it gives you a good 'live' idea of how long you'll be waiting and what sort of delay there is.
- Yes I would use the app but I would want to change the colour themes, play games and do guided meditation.
- I want realistic wait times and how many people before me.
- I can imagine using it but probably not doing the routes because I'm scared I'd get lost.
- Only for the clinician waiting times feature. For the bits like the local walks I think I'd use a dedicated app that I already have and know my way around rather than try to use a new 'jack of all trades' one.
- Not sure I would, except I like the idea of knowing who I will see and knowing their profile.

Accessibility and Comfort

Was the app comfortable to read and navigate (text size, colours, layout)?

- No, the font is too small.
- I want to change the text size and colours.
- Need a simplified version.
- Yes, I was very impressed with the calming colours and ease of use.
- Very easy to navigate but can be changed to meet the individual needs of the patient.

Did it feel inclusive and sensitive to mental health experiences?

- It didn't mention mental health.
- Yes, because there is a wellbeing tab.

Would you feel comfortable using this app in a public space?

- Yes, but I don't know how to use headphones.
- I would feel comfortable using this in a public space - people would think I'm just checking my phone.
- Yes, I would use it in a public space.
- Yes, but weary of camera use.

Interaction and Features

Were the interactive parts (e.g. tools, exercises, info sections) helpful?

- Bookmark own favourite resources
- Crisis section and information
- Yes helpful and informative
- Could go much further with the interactive stuff
- Where are the games?
- I loved the bird-spotting part – really unexpected. Maybe also include local flora and fauna (and how to spot each thing)

Did anything feel too long, too short, or too effortful?

- How does it work if you don't know the clinicians name or speciality.

Is there anything you'd want to personalise?

- My name, date and time, when I open the app.
- I want to personalise it all – my own avatar, colour, font, size

Suggestions and Improvements

What one thing would you change to make the app better?

- At present, it's maybe trying to do too much and can seem a bit overwhelming.
- Not all about walking. Make sure rewards aren't all exercise based like Better Points.
- Point system and badges explained.
- It took me a long time to find, but the privacy section is really well written.

What new feature—big or small—would make the most difference for you?

- For me the best things would be: uplifting poetry, a spiritual song or chant, a few suggestions for writing a small poem e.g. using gratitude or devising a short essay/crossword.
- Colouring in and different games.
- Guided meditation, music, spoken word and video.
- Games and activities outside of walking.
- Having the time, date and my name.
- Definitely AI is the way forward.
- Need to have better games.

Overall Experience

How would you describe the app to a friend?

- Very friendly and easily accessible.
- Pleasantly satisfying.
- A useful tool that is in development and would be helpful.
- An information tool with distraction techniques.
- Difficult but potentially helpful if you learn your way.

Would you use this app again? Why or why not?

- Yes, to get used to it and help it evolve.
- Don't know. Needs to be simpler and more user friendly for me.
- Yes, I would keep it on my phone.

Summary of Key Findings



Coproduction participants supported the idea of a waiting-well app. However, they highlighted a number of important design improvements and considerations that would make it genuinely useful, accessible and patient-focused.

What came across strongly was that communication and uncertainty around appointments were the biggest cause of anxiety during the waiting period. Participants consistently prioritised information about appointments, delays, clinicians and what to expect, over wellbeing activities or entertainment features.

Communication Matters more than Activities

A clear message emerged about the experience of waiting for appointments:

People worry the most when they don't know what is happening.



Participants described poor communication, uncertainty, jargon and lack of information as major causes of distress while waiting. The most requested app features were:

- What the appointment is for
- Who they will be seeing
- Clinician photos and short biographies
- What to bring
- Parking and transport information
- Directions and accessibility information
- Live delay updates
- Knowing how many people are ahead of them
- Clear next steps after appointment