

A photograph of a smiling man with a young girl on his shoulders in a grassy field. The man is wearing a light blue polo shirt and the girl is wearing a light blue dress and a white headband with green polka dots. They are both smiling broadly. The background is a bright, sunny day in a green field with trees in the distance.

NHS

choices

www.nhs.uk

better access health care quality lives

DH information reader box

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NHS Choices is the online gateway for the NHS. Its aim is to help deliver a patient-centred NHS, by providing access and information to the public, patients and health professionals. All aspects of health and social care can now be found on one website: www.nhs.uk

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Foreword



Digital services impact on every aspect of modern society, creating huge opportunities for people to take greater control of their own lives. NHS Choices is leading the way in the digital revolution in health care.

Information and choice are indispensable if we are to achieve a truly patient-centred NHS in which standards and quality are constantly improved. When *High Quality Care for All* was published in July 2008, it signalled a step change in the relationship between the NHS, the information it collects, and the patients it serves. Patients will be empowered with clear information, via NHS Choices, on the quality of service offered by every NHS organisation. We have already made Hospital Standardised Mortality Rates available on NHS Choices. Over the year ahead we will be publishing an increasing range of comparative information to enable patients to compare the risks and benefits of treatments, and decide where to go for quality health care.

People take it for granted that they will access other people's reviews and ratings before buying something, and now they have systematic access to other people's experiences when choosing health services. Since the beginning of the service in 2007, NHS Choices has enabled patients to post their own comments on hospital services. During the course of 2009 this will be extended to GP practices.

We must not forget that many people still do not have access to the internet. NHS Choices is carrying out innovative work to combat inequalities in access to information, through use of mobile phones, digital TV and touch screen kiosks, working in partnership with local PCTs.

NHS Choices is central in our drive to improve access to information on health and social care services. I welcome this report on the achievements of the past year and look forward to the year ahead.

Sir Bruce Keogh

NHS Medical Director & Chair of NHS Choices
Clinical Information Advisory Group

What is NHS Choices?

Amid the ever-increasing uptake of online technologies and proliferation of multi-channel service delivery, NHS Choices (www.nhs.uk) has emerged as the UK's leading provider of online health information. Beyond the limitations of a traditional website, NHS Choices acts as the digital gateway and public front door to the NHS, transforming the delivery of health and social care to one that is patient-centred, personalised and accessible to all.

Serving citizens for over 60 years, the NHS is building on its renowned experience and expertise to provide individuals with the information and tools required to optimise their health and wellbeing throughout their lives. The values underpinning NHS Choices lie in prevention and empowerment, shifting the balance of power from clinician to citizen and easing the burden on NHS providers.

As a one-stop shop for health and social care, NHS Choices combines information on over 750 conditions and treatments, healthy lifestyle advice, news articles and real life stories with the opportunity to find, compare, book and comment on NHS services. It offers trusted advice to those with long-term conditions and practical support to carers, enhancing the quality of life for all involved. Personalisation is pivotal to the success of the site, delivering tailored content to individuals based on their recorded preferences.



7m
site visits per month

For the public,
NHS Choices is a:

- **personal health manager**, providing the information and tools they need to take control of their health and wellbeing, including access to personal health transactional services via HealthSpace;
- **online navigator**, helping them compare, choose and access the services they need, when they need them;
- **social network for health**, linking them up with other people with common health interests and giving them opportunities to comment on their own experiences of health and care services.

43%

increase in
public awareness

**For health and social care
professionals, NHS Choices is a:**

- **tool for delivering care**, providing information and services for use with patients and community, helping to explain health options and journeys through tools such as Map of Medicine;
- **NHS reference**, providing reliable information on treatments and conditions and directories of NHS services, supported by the best evidence;
- **news resource**, for clear, public-friendly discussion of the real facts behind the health stories of the day through award-winning services such as Behind the Headlines.

64%

of GPs aware of NHS Choices

For managers,
NHS Choices is a:

- **shop window**, providing them with the opportunity to deliver on local priorities by informing and engaging with their community who use services, carers and the public;
- **driver of improvement**, enabling patient choice and a key source of insight into people's experiences of health and social care;
- **source of personalised digital services**, improving the quality and efficiency of patient and carer services.

48%

of GP practices managing
own profiles by March 2009



better access



Reducing health inequalities by working with UK Online Centres

over
24m

unique visitors during 2008

Using technology to reduce inequalities and offer a personalised service

NHS Choices uses new technology to deliver personalised services in ways that ensure they reach those who need them most, whether directly or through a carer, a health professional or GP. It operates via online, print, mobile, interactive kiosks, digital tv and radio channels.

Highlights of the year

NHS Choices has achieved great strides since its inception in 2007: visits to the site continue to escalate and now exceed 7 million per month, the 'Your Thoughts' section has received over 12,000 public comments about their hospital experience and 220,000 people now have accounts with NHS Choices, with 10,000 more signing up every month.

NHS Choices is increasingly seen as a model of 21st-century digital engagement. In his foreword to *Delivering Digital Inclusion* (October 2008) the **Minister for Digital Inclusion, Paul Murphy MP** wrote:

"Digital technologies impact on almost every aspect of modern society, creating huge social benefits...NHS Choices is showing the way to a world-class digitally-enabled service."

In March 2009, the **Prime Minister Gordon Brown**, in the White Paper *Working Together, Public Services on your Side*, uses the site to illustrate the way in which new technology enables public empowerment. In the introduction, he says:

"... I believe Government has been much too slow to make use of the enormous democratising power of information. People take it for granted that they will access other people's reviews or ratings before buying things on Amazon or eBay..."

He later adds:

"Patients can already view comparative information about a range of healthcare services online at the NHS Choices website. Patients can make their own comments, observations and suggestions about hospital services and allow these to be visible to other patients. Often the best way for people to understand whether the service is right for them is to see what other similar users thought of that service. This is the experience of millions of customers who use Amazon or iTunes..."

HIGHLIGHTS OF 2008-09

Throughout the year, NHS Choices has introduced new releases, bringing on board new content, services and functionality. Highlights of 2008-09 were:

April 2008	Release 3.1	Supporting Free Choice
	Release 4	Introducing NHS Choices personal accounts
June 2008	Release 5	Pathways and planners: NHS guides on long-term conditions and Pregnancy Planner
August 2008	Release 5.1	Enhanced provider profiles – improvements to the Hospital Profile Content Management System
September 2008		Your Health Your Way patient prospectus
October 2008	Release 6	NHS Direct integration
October 2008	Release 6.1	Enhanced scorecard and site print functionality, Change4Life Campaign, overall site improvements
November 2008		Successful transition to new supplier Capita
January 2009	Release 7	Carers Direct
March 2009	Release 7.1	Improved search functionality and design, improved sitewide consistency and design, rearchitecture of content products for consistency and scalability, resolution of open site issues, launch of NHS Choices on digital TV (Freeview teletext)

Delivering high quality care

In June 2008, Lord Darzi's Next Stage Review positioned NHS Choices as a key part of delivering the vision of his report: *High Quality Care for All*. Specific commitments for NHS Choices were:

1. **Easy to understand, comparative information on all services available on NHS Choices**
2. **Continue to develop NHS Choices to include more comparative information about GP services**
3. **Expand the educational role of NHS Choices**
4. **Greater emphasis on personalised services and personal control of health**

Since then significant progress has been made on delivering on these commitments:



British Rowing Champion, James Cracknell, at the joint NHS Choices and local NHS 'b-active' launch event in Derby.

1. Easy to understand, comparative information on all services available on NHS Choices

Pathways and planners bringing together content, service directories and clinical indicators:

- NHS guides published through 2008–09 on dementia, diabetes, stroke, asthma, depression, heart disease, COPD, rheumatoid arthritis, osteoarthritis, epilepsy, kidney disease, bowel cancer, prostate cancer, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, lung cancer and cervical cancer
- Pregnancy Planner published June 2008
- Patient prospectus for long-term conditions published October 2008
- One new NHS Guide will be published every month through 2009–10

Scorecards allowing comparison between quality of services:

- Over 50 clinical indicators published during 2008–09 including survival rates for common procedures, referral to treatment, MRSA, wound infection and readmission, etc

- Programme of publishing new indicators drawn from Assured Menu every month during 2009–10

Patient comment to help people compare and choose services:

- Your Thoughts comments allows patients to compare services based on what other patients think, and allows providers to respond to comments
- Over 12,000 postings on hospital services by March 2009

2. Continue to develop NHS Choices to include more comparative information about GP services

- **Directories of GP practices and practice profiles** provide comprehensive picture of services available
- Comparative information from QOF, patient survey, etc
- 48% of GP practices managing own profiles by March 2009
- Improved practice-based editing tool launched April 2009

“I think sites like this are essential in helping to get relevant and accurate information out there, about mental health. And hopefully get rid of the stigma attached to these illnesses.”

Psychiatric Nurse who also suffers from depression

“At Crossroads we know that ensuring carers have access to timely information is vital to enable them to make choices about the right kind of help and support, and all organisations need to work together to make sure that happens. NHS Choices is a positive step forward in getting that vital information to more people.”

Anne Roberts, Chief Executive, Crossroads

3. Expand the educational role of NHS Choices

Expanding content

- NHS Direct content integrated October 2008
- Platform for DH campaigns launched October 2008
- Patient Prospectus for long-term conditions launched October 2008
- Carers Direct launched January 2009
- New medicines guides launched January 2009
- Behind the Headlines won BMJ Medical Communication Award April 2009
- New content on clinical trials launched April 2009
- Over 500 refreshes of home page design since beginning of service

Expanding access and use

- Visits doubled to over 7 million a month in 2008–09
- Over 100 syndicated partners adding another 1 million page views a month
- NHS Choices directory services on mobile phone
- NHS Choices kiosk services in pilot PCTs
- NHS Choices digital TV service launched on Freeview teletext April 2009
- Online training for intermediaries launched April 2009

4. Greater emphasis on personalised services and personal control of health

- 220,000 NHS Choices personal accounts opened by March 2009
- Closer integration with HealthSpace through consistent user experience and NHS Choices content feeds April 2009
- Fuller integration with HealthSpace during 2009
- Personal lifestyle risk checks through NHS LifeCheck hosted on NHS Choices from January 2009



Introducing Hull Pilot to the local NHS (left), NHS Choices wins top BMJ award for its Behind the Headlines service (right)



better health

220,000

people opened NHS Choices
accounts in 2008–09

Maintaining and improving wellbeing

NHS Choices enables people to take greater responsibility for their own health and wellbeing so they can enjoy longer, healthier lives. Innovative tools allow individuals to assess their own lifestyle and health risk, and provide practical information and plans to help reduce these risks.

Activity and user experience

Health information landscape

Since April 2008, **NHS Choices has enjoyed steady growth, equating to an average rate of 20% increase per month.** The online health market is undergoing rapid expansion as more citizens gain home internet access (an estimated 65% of the population) and use digital technology to manage their lives. This can already be seen in the travel and banking sectors, and is becoming more apparent in healthcare.

NHS Choices has quickly become market leader, with a market share (measured by Hitwise) that has more than doubled from 4.6% in April 2008 to 11.1% in March 2009, overtaking other leading health websites (Patient.co.uk: 4.8% and Net Doctor: 5.5%).

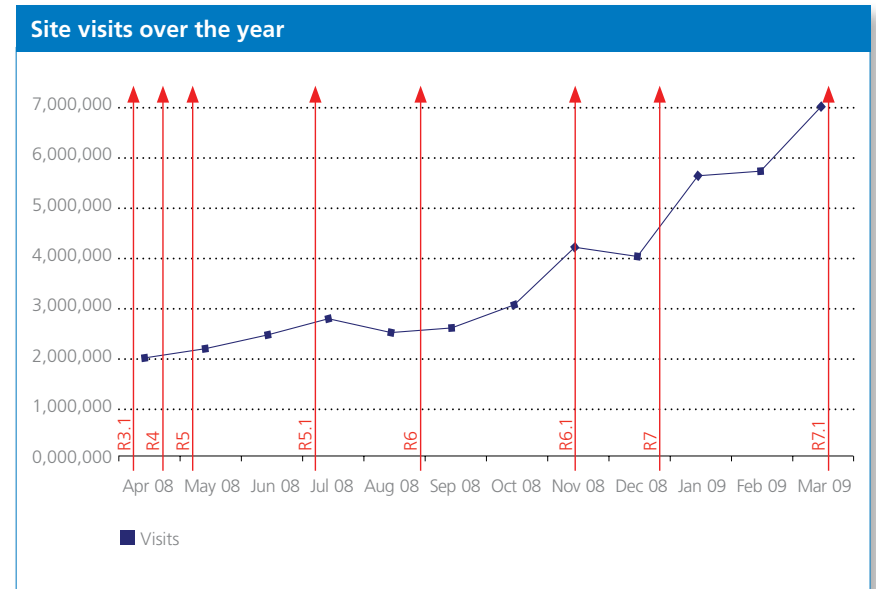
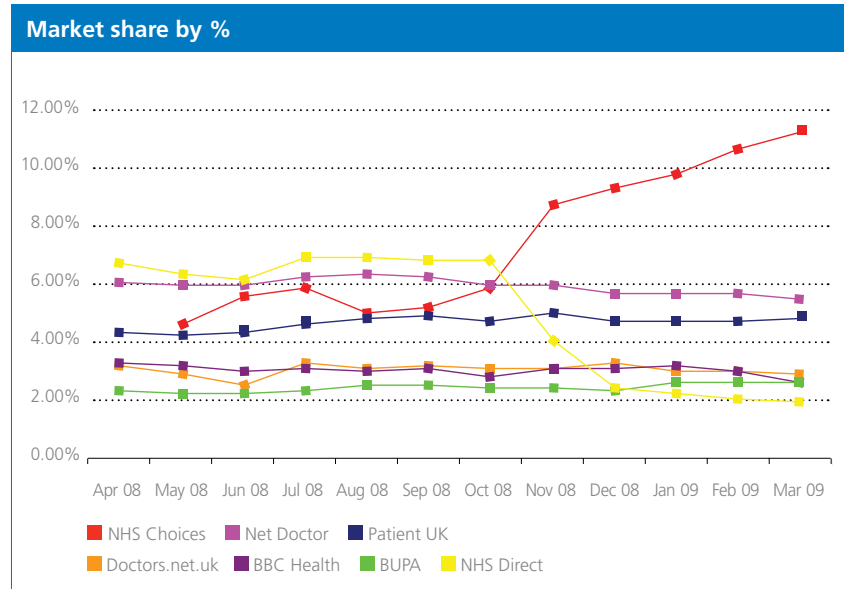
Site visits

Site visits increased almost threefold (242%) this financial year. Traffic declined in August and December, as expected, due to the public holidays. The website experienced significant growth in November following the integration of NHS Direct's online content. As part of the integration process, NHS Choices benefited from NHS Direct's high ranking in Google, which in turn led to increased visits in 2009. NHS Choices ended the financial year with a record 7 million visits in March. In the year ahead, we hope to continue growth even further.

Public awareness

Despite this increase in traffic, we still need to do more to raise public awareness. The 2008 Ipsos-MORI public survey revealed that awareness increased from 14% in October 2007 to 20% in December 2008, which is well behind public awareness of NHS Direct (81%).

However, it is likely that people are visiting NHS Choices without realising they are, when being directed to pages deep within the site via search engines, instead of entering via the homepage.



Activity and user experience (continued)

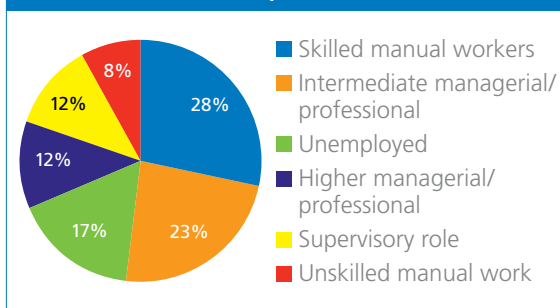
User profile

In December 2008, a user survey was conducted to determine the profile of those using NHS Choices and gauge levels of satisfaction. The survey found that 80% had visited the site for personal reasons and 20% as part of their job.

Among personal users, the age profile broadly reflected heavy internet users. However, the survey suggested a broader range of social grades using NHS Choices than in the internet-using population as a whole.

Personal users also reported poorer health compared to the general population (61% versus 70%). Moreover, a relatively higher proportion of NHS Choices users stated they had a disability, long-standing or chronic illness (34% versus 27% in the general population), demonstrating some success in meeting this important group.

NHS Choices User Occupations



How the public use the site

Since NHS Choices has not yet conducted a major publicity campaign, the main driver of traffic to the site is search engine listings (80%), with Google contributing to 89% of this traffic. This indicates that NHS Choices is acting as an on-demand resource, with 54% of visitors using the site for medical information.

'Professional' site users

People using NHS Choices as part of their work come from a wide range of backgrounds, with allied health professionals and hospital-based administrators as the biggest subgroups. However, the small sample size and diverse profile suggest a need for further research in order to understand this group fully. Among this group, the most common reason for visiting was for information about services, mentioned by 45%.

What they thought of the site

Overall 76% said it was easy to find what they were looking for on the site. **When asked to rate the site, users were very positive with 83% being satisfied with the site, 90% saying they will use the site again and 80% saying they would recommend it.**

Research among health professionals

Further research was commissioned to track GP awareness and opinions of the site; awareness has increased from 48% in September 2007 to 64% in August 2008. GPs' definite commitment to recommend the site has also increased significantly in the same period from 22% to 44%.

However, awareness was lower among pharmacists and midwives. We surveyed pharmacists in February and found 40% were aware of the site; while 45% of midwives, surveyed in August were aware of it. When shown the site, 44% of pharmacists and 36% of midwives said they would definitely recommend it to patients.

Incorporating user views into the design

As well as tracking awareness and usage, user research is also being used during new product development and redesign. This user testing includes a cross-section of people of different ages, from different backgrounds and people who have direct experience relevant to the part of the site requiring development, eg carers, pregnant women, people who have had an elective procedure or are waiting to have one, people with long-term health conditions or their carers.

Benefits realisation

What is benefits realisation and management?

NHS Choices has the potential to deliver significant benefits for patients and the NHS. A benefits realisation and measurement programme was initiated in 2008. The objective of the service's benefits realisation and management activities is to identify these benefits, help inform the planning and development activities required to support the delivery of these benefits, and then evaluate to what degree these benefits have been delivered.

Benefits we are aiming to achieve

NHS Choices can deliver numerous benefits to many different people ranging from those looking to improve their health and fitness, carers, health professionals and sufferers of long-term conditions to people who want to find their nearest GP or know more about the quality of their local hospitals.

During 2008–09, we engaged with many different people involved in the service, from policy leads and academics to end users and intermediaries. The result was a list of the 18 key benefits, divided into four broad categories: providing better information; supporting choice and access; enabling healthy living and helping users obtain better care.

The short-listed benefits which we will now be tracking are:

BETTER INFORMATION

- User access to the right information at the correct time increased
- Inequalities in access to health and provider information decreased
- User access to information prescriptions increased

CHOICE AND ACCESS

- Ability to find providers increased
- Ability to make an informed selection of provider on the basis of preferred criteria increased
- User choice increased
- Service users receiving their care in their preferred setting increased
- DNA rates decreased

HEALTHY LIVING

- Health literacy levels increased
- User empowerment to live healthier lives increased

BETTER CARE

- User control in the decisions about their care increased
- Users accessing care in the appropriate setting increased
- Users' ability to manage their LTCs in the community increased
- Appropriateness of time spent at GPs increased
- Users' involvement in screening programmes increased
- Users' involvement in vaccine programmes increased
- Users' trust in the NHS increased
- Efficiency of GP consultations increased

Measuring benefits

Each of these 18 benefits has several measures to ascertain the success of the service in delivering the benefit. These measures range from the specific and tangible, such as the number of visitors to a particular area on the NHS Choices website; through to the less tangible such as behavioural changes (eg people taking more exercise). Recently we have been collecting the data for as many of these measures as possible. This data is a mixture of quantitative and qualitative sources, and ranges from web analytics, pop-up surveys, to user questionnaires and focus groups.

“NHS Choices is a really useful tool as it is full of research and evidence-based information which can only help parents to make an informed choice, and it's accessible to them so it's going to help them to build up their confidence.”

Denise Ward, health visitor,
Eastwood Health Clinic



better care



David Behan,
Director General,
Local Government
and Care Partnerships
(DoH), at the Carers
Direct launch event
for stakeholders

242%
growth in web traffic

Help to navigate the system

NHS Choices is the front door to the NHS and social care. It helps people to understand the right treatment and care options for themselves or those for whom they are caring, and to access those services more easily.

Engagement and marketing

Project governance and advisory bodies

NHS Choices is owned by the Department of Health. The site is governed by the NHS Choices Board and NHS Choices Operations Board, which watch over future developments, budgets and data quality of NHS Choices.

NHS Choices Board

The most senior governance board meets every two months under the chairmanship of Christine Connelly, Director General CIO. It defines and manages the strategic direction and priorities of NHS Choices, responds to the Users' Council, Clinical Information Advisory Group and escalates requests from the Operations Board. It is also responsible for approving yearly financial budgets and development plans.

NHS Choices Operations Board

Responsible for the day-to-day operations and developments of the NHS Choices service, Gary Ashby, NHS Choices Programme Director, is the chair of this board. The Operations Board meets monthly and decides on the governance, management, future development and operations of NHS Choices within the strategy approved by the NHS Choices Board.

The Clinical Information Advisory Group

The Clinical Information Advisory Group, chaired by Professor Sir Bruce Keogh, Medical Director of the NHS,

is part of the overall governance of the NHS Choices delivery programme. The group is responsible for setting editorial and data quality standards for NHS Choices and providing overall clinical governance for the service.

Users' Council

The purpose of the Users' Council is to ensure the maximum level of independence for NHS Choices and to ensure that it is responsive to patient and public needs. The independent chair of the Council has the responsibility to approach public and patient groups to ask for nominations for the Council. The Council meets on a quarterly basis.

Stakeholder communications

Targeted stakeholder communications help to promote NHS Choices to health professionals, NHS organisations and the social care sector. Raising levels of awareness and usage among these groups helps to increase access to good quality health information for people in all communities.

Awareness levels among GPs (and to a lesser extent pharmacists) rose significantly during 2008, reflecting activity with both groups and engagement with, and support from, professional and representative groups such as the BMA's General Practitioner Committee and the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of GB.

Half of all GP practices in England are now editing their own profile pages on NHS Choices. This facility, first made available at the end of 2007, is enhancing the quality of information the public has about GP services.

The NHS Choices stakeholder team worked with a number of NHS trusts to help develop the new profile pages for hospital trusts launched in September. A poll conducted for NHS Choices by the Association of Healthcare Communicators in early 2009 found that 80% of respondents believe the new profiles to be an improvement.

A series of roadshows took place in the foyer areas of 15 NHS trusts across London and exposed NHS Choices to 30,000 hospital staff and members of the public.

NHS Choices benefits from a positive relationship with the NHS Confederation and its partner networks. The national conference in June included a successful Choice workshop event partnered with the DH; and was followed by advocacy presentations at events organised by the Foundation Trust Network and the Primary Care Trust Network.

During 2009, NHS Choices made its first appearance in the social care sector. Highlights included successful engagement with the Local Government Association, a major presence at the NCASS conference in Liverpool, and working with the Association of Adult Social Services to host regional workshops for local authority and third sector staff.

Engagement and marketing (continued)

The integration with NHS Direct represented the biggest single stakeholder communications project ever undertaken by NHS Choices and over 30,000 NHS stakeholders received details of the initiative.

“NHS Choices is a well designed, easy to navigate website that has clearly been developed with the customer in mind. Here, at Warwickshire, we have been impressed with this and by working with NHS Choices see this as a secure way of empowering people to make choices about their support. And for those who are already engaged with us it will enable them to make better, more informed decisions and exercise choice and take control over the support they receive.”

Graeme Betts, Strategic Director, Adult, Health & Community Services, Warwickshire County Council

Syndication and partnerships

NHS Choices is committed to sharing data and content with other organisations through free content syndication, thus increasing the reach and accessibility of core NHS Choices features. With 29 established partnerships, NHS Choices receives between 1.3–1.5 million server queries a month from syndicated sites. There are a further 71 partners signed up and ready to implement.

A partnership that has worked particularly well is the joint initiative with UK Online, which established a network of **‘NHS Choices Community Champions’** across England to increase awareness and take-up of NHS Choices among its user base of over 500,000 users. The Government launched UK Online eight years ago to help overcome the digital divide. It operates a 6,000-strong network of libraries, community centres and educational institutions

that reach a C2DE demographic with training, education and internet access.

Each of the nine UK Online flagship centres received support from NHS Choices to recruit and train 35 centres, all of whom would advocate the site to users. **So far, 481 centres have been recruited, 58,376 users have been trained on NHS Choices and 18 million people have been exposed to marketing materials.**

The initiative was also nominated for an E-government award in January. However, despite the high levels of centre recruitment, the disparate coverage across the country highlights the need for further recruitment and project development next year.

CASE STUDY: Internet knowledge helps Jane make informed choices

Thirty-eight-year-old Jane Murray has Down’s syndrome and uses her local UK Online centre to learn about the internet and socialise.

Debbie Derbyshire, Jane’s tutor, has been working with her since she first started attending the centre. *“The NHS*

Choices website is set as our homepage, and we use it as an induction for all our new learners,” says Debbie. *“I give everyone a worksheet to go through, and they have to look things up on the site to be able to complete the worksheet. That’s how Jane got to know the*

website. Since then there’s been no stopping her!”

Jane uses NHS Choices to look up information on Down’s syndrome, read about other people’s experiences and gain tips on how to cope as a carer. In fact, when Jane’s mum became ill with pneumonia, Chronic

Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) and osteoporosis, she went straight to the NHS Choices website.

“The website was great for me,” says Jane. *“I wanted to find out what my mum was going through, and it helped me to understand what*

was happening.”

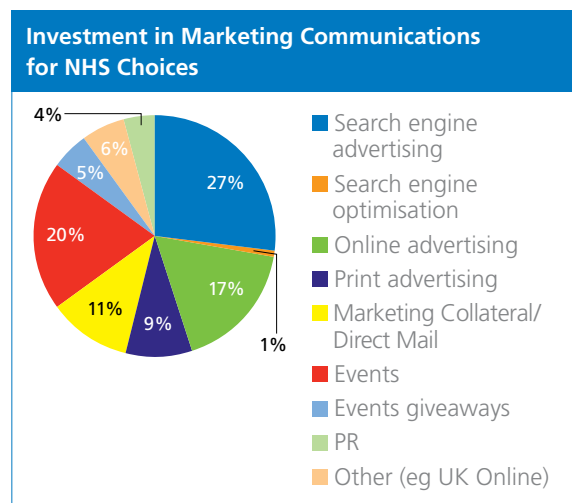
Jane likes to be as independent as possible but her mum’s illness prompted her to think about the future. *“When my mum passes away I’m going to have to have a carer or be put into a home.”* Using the NHS Choices website, she

discovered that there are specialist services available to help those who need help with daily living activities, and which could be accessed in hospitals, health centres, community groups, or even in their own homes.

Engagement and marketing (continued)

Marketing and events

Pending the outcome of the DH digital brand review, a product-led marketing strategy was chosen, delivering information to those who need it, when they need it. An estimated 388 million people were exposed to NHS Choices marketing campaigns resulting in almost 11 million visits to the site. The following pie chart shows the percentage of investment in each activity.



Key highlights include:

- Search engine advertising, which accounts for 17% of page views, brought 3.1 million impressions to the site and 10.6 million clicks, with an average cost per click of £0.09 and 3.39% click-through rate
- NHS Choices attended 51 training sessions, events and exhibitions, reaching an estimated 250,000 people and driving subsequent traffic to the site
- Issue three of the *NHS Choices* magazine proved extremely popular with citizens and intermediaries, reaching an estimated 3.6 million and generating 65,000 visits
- Advertising to promote the Pregnancy Desktop, a widget that provides expectant mothers with weekly information and advice, increased traffic to the Pregnancy Planner by 38% and initiated 10,059 widget downloads. This campaign was pre-empted by literature in the Pregnancy Information packs distributed to pregnant women via midwives and point-of-care collateral in midwife units
- 6 million NHS Choices-branded pharmacy bags were distributed to customers collecting prescriptions across 1,250 independent pharmacies, promoting patient feedback and the new NHS guides
- An online ad campaign took place this April advertising the NHS guides to bowel cancer, osteoarthritis and kidney disease. The model developed to deliver these campaigns will be used for other guides campaigns next year.

“There is a lot of information about bowel cancer on the internet, but it is often fragmented across different sites, many of which may be unfamiliar to the user. Where the NHS Choices Bowel Cancer Guide differs is that it provides an effective resource for patients and carers seeking information across the entire treatment pathway, under the banner of the trusted and recognisable NHS brand. Bowel Cancer UK is pleased to support this initiative, because we believe that it will help those affected by bowel cancer to easily access comprehensive high quality information.”

Deborah Alsina, Director of Services and Strategy, Bowel Cancer UK



Advert promoting the NHS Choices Pregnancy Care Planner to expectant mothers



Issue 3 of the NHS Choices magazine



better quality



David McConnell,
Stakeholder Manager,
speaking at a Carers
Direct event

83%
customer satisfaction

Understanding the patient, client and carer experience

NHS Choices is the place for the public to comment on their experiences of care and the quality of services, providing valuable feedback to ensure services are more responsive to local needs.

Delivering innovation

Awards for innovation

NHS Choices' place as a leading force in innovation in health has been recognised this year through the winning of a number of prestigious awards.

The Behind the Headlines service on NHS Choices picked up the top BMJ award for Innovation in Medical Communications, for helping the public and healthcare professionals alike get a clearer sense of the truth behind the medical stories in the news each day. NHS Choices editor Paul Nuki said:

"Helping people make sense of the mass of health information out there goes to the heart of what NHS Choices is about.

The media is reporting the latest developments in medical research every day. The absolutely crucial factor with all of these stories is to see whether the science justifies the headline. Behind the Headlines looks at the science, and then analyses whether the evidence stacks up. The service has proved popular with ordinary citizens, doctors and journalists alike."

The NHS Choices team also picked up a BT/E Health Insider award this year for innovative use of digital technology to communicate health messages. The sexual health pilot in Hull used a combination of digital Bluetooth messaging, a regional micro-site and traditional campaign tools – posters, meetings, champions – to target young people in the Humber region with sexual health messages. The campaign directly led to a 10% increase in the numbers of people taking up sexual health services in the area.

Finally, the place of NHS Choices as a leading player in the government-wide Transformational Government agenda was recognised at the E-Government awards in January. The service was nominated for three awards, for building usage, citizen feedback interactions, and was commended for its partnership working across different government departments, including linking up with Directgov and Business Link.

A vibrant programme with momentum

NHS Choices embraces the principles of innovation and swift implementation. The site has pioneered the concept of public comment on government services and this year will extend the concept from hospitals to GP practices. Findings from the digital Health Trainers pilot in Hull triggered and helped shape the development of an online training tool to be used by health intermediaries across England.

NHS Choices prides itself on its innovative concepts and efficient methods of delivery. A case in point is the deployment of interactive kiosks across four companies in Derbyshire to help the local NHS work with employers in addressing health issues in the workplace. Through initiatives like this, NHS Choices is exploiting its technological expertise to improve health outcomes across the country.

Rolling out pilots

The NHS Choices Intermediaries Training Programme launched on 15 April 2009. A key strategy for tackling health inequalities, it provides training and guidance for health and social care professionals, librarians, and others who have direct contact with the public.

A new E-learning portal, www.nhschoicestraining.co.uk, allows users to log on and view a series of tutorials and training videos that will introduce them to the main features of the site. For those who wish to host their own workshop, the trainer's toolkit section is an area where participants can download trainer notes and activities, and posters to promote their event. Alternatively, participants can attend the regional face-to-face workshops for trainers.

"It's very good for librarians as it's a trusted source of medical information. You don't have to go searching all over the world for it."

Lee Francis, Head Librarian, Wood Green Library, Haringey

Delivering innovation (continued)

The NHS Choices Pilot Programme

- Supports the core NHS Choices programme by providing a strong evidence base to inform service development, either through the core website or other digital channels
- Builds on pilot programmes conducted by the NHS and Department of Health
- Works with the local NHS to test out public health initiatives that have potential for national rollout
- Devises and tests means by which NHS Choices can partner with external organisations and the private sector to address health inequalities

Looking ahead

2009 will see the delivery of 'Your Thoughts' on GPs, kiosks in GP surgeries, new ways of comparing hospitals and an automated Information Prescription generator among a host of other improvements and content developments. In the meantime, the development of new technologies and concepts will ensure the programme is fed with well-researched and evidence-based ideas for service improvement.

StartHere Pilot

StartHere, a national charity, has found that the most effective way to help the most vulnerable in society is to help them help themselves. Providing public and voluntary sector organisations with a simple-to-use signposting service, it acts as a single starting point from where people can access the information and services they need in times of crisis of distress.

In April 2008, NHS Choices and Directgov agreed to jointly fund pilot work with StartHere to determine the optimum ways of reaching the digitally excluded. This involved providing access to NHS Choices via StartHere kiosks deployed in strategic locations around the country, namely community centres, health centres, age concern outlets, prisons, probation hostels and citizens advice bureaux. There follows two case studies demonstrating the pilot's success in making a real difference to people's lives.

Case Study 1: HMP Pentonville

HMP Pentonville holds over 1,000 prisoners. It has a major resettlement programme for prisoners nearing release, managed by the Learning and Skills department. The programme provides information, advice and guidance (IAG), and ICT and Skills for Life courses.

StartHere is available on a stand-alone kiosk in the resettlement workshop area, and on six PCs on the closed 'Polaris' network. The service is also embedded into the ICT and IAG programmes.

Head of Learning and Skills, Peter Jackson, says:

"One of the biggest problems prisoners have when they are released is slipping back into their old networks and inevitably their old routines. They don't know there is another world out there. We need to make it clear to them that there is another way, a different life, a different support network. StartHere makes the talk real and tangible. It's great for us and the lads to see the networks there in black and white; local centres and groups they can look to for support rather than their old mates and bad habits."

Case Study 2: Mrs Thind's Story

Mrs Thind, a Bangladeshi woman from the Mansell Street estate with two young children, had never used a computer before. Although four friends had signed up to an IT course in their local community centre she refused to join them. *"Computers weren't for me,"* says Mrs Thind, *"with the mouse and all the keys, I didn't see the point."*

A conversation about her mother's arthritis with Mrs Shindo, an old friend, changed everything. Mrs Shindo pointed her to the information kiosk and together they looked up arthritis using StartHere. *"The kiosk wasn't hard to use at all. I didn't even think it was a computer!"* Within a few minutes Mrs Thind not only found information about her mother's condition, but also overcame her fear of IT. In fact, she soon enrolled on a structured IT course, where she's since learnt to use NHS Choices and Directgov and is even listening to music on YouTube. She's even trying to get her mum signed up!

Getting involved

There are numerous ways to get involved with NHS Choices, both from a public and stakeholder perspective:

- **Provide feedback on NHS Choices:** Members of the public have the opportunity to post feedback about the site via the 'Contact Us' section and comment on specific articles throughout
- **Comment on NHS hospitals:** The patient feedback facility allows patients, carers and families to comment on their hospital experience – and rate the care they received. This, in conjunction with hospital scorecards, provides individuals with the information necessary to choose the hospital that is right for them
- **Obtain patient insight:** Through the use of RSS feeds, hospital staff can receive alerts when new comments are posted, issue a response and take action to resolve any problems cited. In this way, hospitals can use patient feedback to drive improvement and/or promote areas of success
- **Participate in blogs and forums:** NHS Choices offers a series of expert-led blogs and forums on long-term conditions, pregnancy and carer-related topics. Members of the public can read the experiences of others with the same condition, contribute, and ask questions of experts in the field
- **Open an NHS Choices account:** Creating an account allows individuals to save information and receive emails on their chosen topics and health goals. It also enables users to complete personalised health plans and participate in NHS Choices blogs and forums
- **Prescribe trusted health information:** Health professionals can refer patients to the NHS Choices website for more information on their condition and the treatments available. The provision of a personalised 'Information Prescription' enables patients to gain information relevant to their stage of care and details on local services for the condition in question
- **Promote services to the public:** In a drive to provide the public with more information on specific health providers, GP practices, hospital and acute mental health trusts can edit their own profile on NHS Choices, containing information on staff, clinics, services, facilities and performance data



NHS Choices stand at The Baby Show, Birmingham, February 2009



better lives



Sponsorship of local children's football team, Clissford Rangers Football Club

11%

market share, which has more than doubled since April 2008

Improving community partnerships to deliver better health

NHS Choices builds relationships by working with local and national non-NHS partners. The service supports partnerships in employment, education, culture and sport.

Looking forward: the year ahead

The NHS Choices Board has now approved an ambitious programme of development for the year ahead 2009–10. During the year we will be:

- Launching a simpler, clearer 'TripAdvisor' style tool for comparing health care services
- Extending NHS Choices patient comments from hospitals to general practices
- Publishing, month on month, new clinical indicators drawn from the National Assured Menu
- Providing increasingly detailed, local information to enhance key initiatives including Carers Direct, Your Health Your Way, and Information Prescriptions
- Developing an Information Prescriptions generator tool for professionals
- Publishing a range of engaging, interactive content and tools to support healthy lifestyles and treatment decisions
- Supporting national priorities on personal responsibility and control through individual budgets and access to psychological therapies
- Continuing the programme of health improvement pilots in PCTs
- Enabling an increasingly personalised service, working closely with HealthSpace



Public Health Seminar in Hull



NHS Choices stand at NHS 60 event at Wembley Stadium, celebrating 60 years of the NHS