Developers guidance

Qualitative research: collecting data on your digital technology

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This is best practice guidance

Although not legally required, it's an essential activity.

This Guide covers:

- United Kingdom

From:

- National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE)

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Qualitative research will give you a much richer understanding of how a user interacts with your digital technology.

Benefits of qualitative research

Collecting qualitative data is an important part of doing user research.

Qualitative data helps you:

- understand how health and social care staff would interact with data produced by your technology
- identify any barriers to using the data for clinical decision-making

Users may have a lack of trust in technology. This is a common barrier to the successful implementation of digital technology. For example, patients and staff may not understand AI decision-making. That's why qualitative data on user acceptance is particularly important for AI technologies.

Qualitative research definition

Qualitative research involves collecting and analysing non-numerical subjective data. You do this by using methods like interviews and field studies. This helps you understand a user's attitudes, thoughts and beliefs.

Qualitative research can give you a richer explanation of what is happening when someone uses your technology.

Difference between qualitative and quantitative research

Quantitative research can describe:

- patterns of disengagement with an app
- what demographic factors predict disengagement

Qualitative research can describe **why** a user stopped using the app.

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How to do qualitative research

Determine if qualitative research would be useful. For example, you should do qualitative research if you need an in-depth understanding of a user's thoughts and experiences.

Compare different qualitative study designs and choose an appropriate method. See guidance on qualitative studies from the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities.

Analyse the data. The most common method is thematic analysis. See guidance on how to analyse qualitative data from the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities.

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