

# Connecting children and young people digitally to improve mental wellbeing

**Creating online mental wellbeing digital platforms, analysing services online, co-producing digital mental wellbeing ambitions and delivering training to practitioners on how to communicate digitally with young people on their emotional health and wellbeing.**

During coronavirus (COVID-19), young people's mental health services needed to move online; young people struggled to find the information they needed; and practitioners were concerned about safe online provision of services.

As COVID-19 hit, the Kent Surrey Sussex Academic Health Science Network (KSS AHSN) worked in partnership with YMCA DownsLink Group to develop the e-wellbeing website, [www.e-wellbeing.co.uk](http://www.e-wellbeing.co.uk), for children up to the age of 18, and their families. This platform helps young people and their families navigate mental wellbeing services across Sussex, providing parents, young people and those working with them with tools, information and advice.

National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) Applied Research Collaboration Kent Surrey Sussex (ARC KSS), in partnership with YMCA DownsLink Group and University of Sussex, then evaluated the reach and acceptability of e-wellbeing platform. Our work showed that 15,000 young people accessed e-wellbeing in a year, logging over 53,000 page views.

The most popular pages were information and advice on low mood and anxiety, and over 96% said that e-wellbeing helped them deal with their problems. This is the overview of the findings, and has informed the creation of the toolkit, which is now available for pilot testing.

The review of CYP digital services across Sussex undertaken by KSS AHSN in partnership with YMCA DownsLink Group and Unity Insights identified gaps in the services, and digital ambitions co-produced by young people.

For example, 85% of children and young people said that online mental health support was useful and 66% said they had accessed online support for the first time during the pandemic. Examples of some of the ambitions include the need to embed creativity, and prioritise diversity and inclusion within digital solutions, and simplify online referral processes.

The Sussex Children and Young People's (CYP) Mental Health Digital Review report, and a summary version, have been shared, and the digital ambitions are now fully embedded within the Sussex CYP Mental Health (MH) plans and strategies. The e-wellbeing platform has been extended to support over 18-year-olds and became a Finalist in the 2020 'Children & Young People Now' national awards.

**Welcome to the Pan-Sussex Digital Mental Health Communications Training Programme**

For organisations and professionals supporting children and young people

**Pan-Sussex Digital Mental Health Communications Training!**

*'It allowed me to explore how I was feeling and not feel as nervous about it as I would if I was talking to someone face to face.'*

*'It was so clearly broken down because sometimes it can be so overwhelming.'*

**Youth-led research findings:**

- 44 Digital Offers in Sussex mapped against the THRIVE model (16 in Brighton and Hove, 11 in East Sussex, 17 in West Sussex)
- Offers included IAG, self-help, online counselling, text-based support, websites

17 in West Sussex  
16 in Brighton and Hove  
11 in East Sussex

**Kent Surrey Sussex Academic Health Science Network**  
**e-wellbeing**  
**NHS Health Education England**  
**YMCA**

Results based on  
CSQ-8 cognitive and  
emotional responses

★ Findings from June 2020 to May 2022

I feel confident I can rely on e-wellbeing to give me the support I need.



Most viewed  
pages include  
Anxiety and  
Low Mood\*

150+ people  
use e-wellbeing's  
resources every  
month\*

Over 98,000  
page views  
between 2020  
and 2022\*

The website is easy  
to explore. I feel at ease and  
comfortable using it!

It allowed me to explore how I was  
feeling, and not feel as nervous  
about it as I would if I was talking to  
someone face to face.



I enjoyed how everything was so  
clearly broken down, because  
sometimes it can be so  
overwhelming.

96%

of 16-25 year olds said e-wellbeing  
helped them deal with their problems

81%

of young people were mostly or  
very satisfied with e-wellbeing

96%

of 16-25 year olds said e-wellbeing  
was easy to use

72%

of young people said e-wellbeing  
met most or all of their needs

Formative Evaluation Approved by the University of Sussex Research Ethics Committee

'YMCA DownsLink Group are delighted to be involved in this digital review. Our expertise lies in ensuring youth voice is always part of the process of creating mental health resources and services that actually work for young people.'

'We are passionate about including young people in the process so that they can access the mental health services they really need, in a way that is accessible to them.'

*Nicola Harvey, Digital and Engagement Lead, YMCA DownsLink Group*

*'Brilliant training. It was powerful having e-wellbeing's youth ambassadors involved in the training, sharing their own personal experiences and what they like when accessing services e.g. music, videos etc. It was engaging and interactive and covered a range of relevant topics.'*

A key impact of the review has been funding through Health Education England, to develop a toolkit and training programme for over 200 members of the Sussex workforce on how to communicate digitally with young people on their mental health. This training has been co-produced and co-facilitated with young people, e-wellbeing's youth-ambassadors, and includes podcasts on embedding a trauma-informed approach, diversity and inclusion and use of different types of social media.

Becca Randell, KSS AHSN, says, 'The training has been extremely well received by those working with young people. The key has been to co-produce and co-facilitate the review of digital services and the digital mental health communication training with young people. We look forward to sharing the training resource toolkit nationwide.'

For a copy of the Digital Mental Health Communication Training Programme, visit [Starting Well: Children's Mental Health](#).

For more information contact Becca Randell – CYP Mental Health Implementation Lead, ARC KSS and KSS AHSN at [becca.randell@nhs.net](mailto:becca.randell@nhs.net).

*'The facilitators were wonderful, and it was a privilege to hear young people's direct experiences.'*

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