

Inspire



Understanding the policy implications of using information communication technology to improve youth mental health

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Orygen
YOUTH Health

Inspire

Acknowledgements

The logo for Inspire, featuring the word "Inspire" in a blue, cursive script font.The logo for VicHealth, consisting of a blue circle with three colored lines (red, yellow, blue) forming a stylized 'V' shape, followed by the text "VicHealth" in a blue, sans-serif font.

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The logo for Orygen Youth Health, featuring the word "Orygen" in green, "YOUTH" in blue, and "Health" in green, with a blue circle above the "H" in "Health".The logo for Orygen Youth Health, featuring the word "Orygen" in green, "YOUTH" in blue, and "Health" in green, with a blue circle above the "H" in "Health".The logo for Inspire, featuring the word "Inspire" in a blue, cursive script font.

Background to Project

- Conducted as a PhD study (2008 -2011)
- Informed by previous research conducted by Inspire “Bridging the Digital Divide” which found that:
 - Professionals who work with young people have low levels of ICT literacy and lack confidence using technology in their practice
 - Service providers express a need for education and training in the area of ICT
 - Service providers are concerned about the risks of the online environment

There is a significant challenge inherent in promoting practice in a field (ICT based mental health promotion) where the evidence is still emerging.

Study Aims

- To examine the use of information communication technology by professionals in youth mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention.
- To investigate how to increase the capacity of professionals who work with young people to utilise technology in mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention.

Research Questions (1)

The research aims to answer the following questions:

1. What **skills** are needed for individual professionals and organisations who work with young people in promotion, prevention and early intervention settings to utilise technology in their practice?
2. What **resources** are needed (...) to utilise technology effectively?
3. What are **effective strategies for building the capacity of individual professionals and organisations** who work with young people in promotion, prevention and early intervention settings to utilise technology in their practice?

Research Questions (2)

4. Where is the **need** for capacity building the greatest? (E.g. Sector? Role? Geographic Areas?)
5. Who should be **responsible** for building the capacity of professionals and organisations who work with young people?
6. What are the **barriers** that need to be overcome for individual professionals and organisations who work with young people in promotion, prevention and early intervention settings to utilise technology in their practice?

Methods

This is a mixed methods study incorporating

- Literature Review
- Online Questionnaire (N = 210)
- Organisational Audit (N = 6)
 - Interviews with Staff
 - Review of Policy Documents and Infrastructure
- Interviews with thought leaders (N=6)
 - Added this component based on findings from earlier phases

Inclusion Criteria

- Participants were eligible to complete the survey if they
 - Work in a multidisciplinary service
 - Eg Headspace, Hospital, Area Health Service
 - Work at least some of the time with young people aged 12 – 25
 - Primary or secondary aim of practice is to improve youth mental health
- Sites were eligible to participate in the audit if they
 - Are a multidisciplinary setting
 - Eg Headspace, Hospital, Area Health Service
 - Provide a prevention, early intervention, treatment or mental health promotion service to young people aged 12 – 25 (or a group within that age range)

Participants

The participants in the study:

- **Represented a range of professions & roles**
 - **Case Managers (26.2%), Psychologists (22.4%), Social Workers (10.5%), Nurses (11.9%)**
 - **Predominantly counsellors (56.9%) and Case Coordination/ Management (47.4%)**
- **Worked across different service models**
 - **CAMHS (31.9%), Other Youth Mental Health (19.5%), Headspace (19%), Private Practice (3.8%)**
- **All had access to a computer and internet at work**

Benefits of Using ICT

Participants reported that utilising ICT had the following benefits:

- **Builds credibility and rapport with young people**
 - Eg Facebook in assessments, SMS and email
- **Ease of contact**
 - Eg SMS appointment reminders, email follow up
- **The environment**
 - Desire for a paperless office
- **Adds value to f2f engagement**
 - Considered less threatening conversation starter
 - Online CBT as a clinical adjunct
 - Online factsheets to clarify issues discussed

Nature of ICT Usage

- **Commonly participants use ICT to**
 - **print information for clients and carers (86.2%)**
 - **maintain client records (61.6%) and**
 - **to refer clients and carers to websites (57.1%)**
- **If they had the resources and capacity they would like to**
 - **provide appointment reminders via SMS (36.9%),**
 - **do video/teleconference (35.7%),**
 - **email clients (28%) and**
 - **maintain client records (26.6%)**

Barriers to using ICT

Participants identified the following barriers to utilising ICT in their practice:

- **Poor infrastructure**
 - Blocked (clinically relevant) information
 - Disconnects periodically
 - Too slow
- **Prohibitive policies and unsupportive staff**
 - Time wasting by staff
 - Duty of care concerns
- **Concern of intrusion into personal lives**
- **Note: Few thought they lacked skills or that ICT based interventions had not been proved effective.**

Organisational Policy Implications

It was found that:

- Those services who had effectively integrated ICT were those where the practice informed the policy or there were no policies at all
- Those services facing significant barriers were those where inflexible policies existed and staff felt powerless to challenge these. All agreed these prohibited policies were not warranted.

Therefore:

- A best practice framework for integrating ICT into youth mental health services, informed by practice, is much needed.
- A significant investment in ICT infrastructure is needed before services can make the most of the opportunities that ICT affords.

For further consideration

A number of issues have been identified for further consideration in the analysis and interviews with thought leaders:

- Why do the services with the most innovative leaders (and supporters of technology) find it difficult to incorporate ICT into their practice?
- How can the infrastructure gaps in services be addressed without taking resources away from core service delivery?
- Your reflections?