



Department  
for Education

# **Evaluation of the University of Kent's consortium project to explore how technology can support young people in care**

**Evaluation Report**

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**Children's Social Care Innovation Programme Evaluation Report 11**

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## Executive Summary

This project, led by the University of Kent, brought together a consortium of technologists, designers and academics to understand how to leverage advances in technology for the benefit of some of the most vulnerable young people in society. Four waves of co-design workshops were conducted with young people, their carers and social workers, to scope out a new digital service for vulnerable young people. By the end of the project, several concepts or early prototypes were produced for potential further development, should the project receive further funding to continue.

The independent evaluation of this project, led by TNS BMRB, consisted of observations of the co-design workshops, follow up interviews, and validation workshops. It had 3 main evaluation aims:

1. To examine the extent to which the outputs from the project were grounded in faithful translation of the views of the young people and carers who took part – i.e. how far the concepts reflected participants' views and priorities
2. To provide some external validation of the concepts with a fresh audience who had not taken part in the main co-design workshops, by exploring the views of young people and carers on the proposed digital solutions
3. To explore the effectiveness of the process of engaging young people and carers, identifying if possible any impact participation had on those involved in this project

## Key findings

### Evaluation of the concepts

Of the 7 concepts tested, 2 had the most traction with the young people and carers that took part: 'Real World' – a virtual flat that teaches young people the skills they need to move into independence, and an online platform – a place for information to be collated and shared between young people, carers and social workers. These concepts were most supported as (i) they responded to genuine issues and information gaps which young people identified, and (ii) young people could imagine themselves using them. Other concepts had more of a mixed reception, with the key criticisms levied against them relating to (i) likely engagement amongst the intended users; (ii) the fact that participants could not see what they offered over and above existing tools and resources, (iii) the fact that the tools threatened to replace face to face contact, and (iv) their not being perceived to adequately respond to the key issues which participants had themselves identified: in some cases they were perceived to exacerbate them.

## **Young people, carers and technology**

Across all the workshops, young people expressed concern with inadequate face to face contact with their social workers. As a result, some were occasionally quite resistant to technology that seemed to supplant in-person contact time with social workers. Carers echoed this view, not only because they felt face to face meetings facilitate better relationships, but also because they help build young people's social skills. Carers tended to be wary of technology that might encourage social isolation and insularity, perceiving technology in general as something that risked deskilling young people by undermining their ability to communicate face to face.

A common response amongst some of the young people participating was that although they thought an idea might be good in principle, they could not see themselves using it. Young people also felt that whilst they might engage initially, they were likely to stop engaging relatively soon. Carers discussed the challenge of ensuring young people adopted and used new technology designed for young people in care, raising the point that the most vulnerable may be the least likely to engage. Carers felt there would need to be incentives for using the technology to keep young people interested and engaged.

## **Process of engagement**

Participants were able to engage with the ideas relatively well, and though there was variation in the extent to which some individuals were enabled to contribute, on the whole the co-design process was effective and allowed the views of young people and carers to be captured and incorporated into the development of new technology.

Overall, participants interviewed said they thought the process was creative and interesting, and identified several positive impacts of taking part. Though participants said they initially did not expect to be heard, by the end they felt that they were genuinely being listened to, and felt their ideas had been incorporated into the final concepts. From observation of the co-design workshops, activities were varied, active and flexibly adapted according to the needs and abilities of participants. The evaluation suggests that some things could be adapted in future co-design projects with this audience, namely (a) spending more time introducing the purpose of the co-design workshops and individual activities, to aid comprehension and engagement with the co-design process; (b) splitting groups by language and ability, with careful facilitation supported by engaged social workers where possible, and (c) involving participants more closely or providing more visibility of the design process.

## Overview of Project

This project, led by the University of Kent and funded by the DfE Innovation Programme, brought together a consortium of technologists, designers and academics to understand how to utilise advances in technology for the benefit of some of the most vulnerable young people in society. The consortium consisted of The University of Kent Centre for Child Protection; University of Portsmouth; Affective State, and Snook.<sup>1</sup>

This project was the first stage in developing potential new digital services for young people in care. By the end of the first stage, the aim was to build understanding of what was needed and what might work for this group in order to develop a number of concepts or prototypes, to be taken into further development at a later stage.

## Aims & Objectives

The overall aim of the project was to find out how traumatised young people in care linked their context and experiences with their emotional state and behaviour, and to discover whether they could co-design behavioural and support technologies and to integrate them into a service to help them thrive. Specifically, the project focussed on :

- providing companionship for traumatised young people
- aiding communication between young people and their carers and the local authority
- potentially advocating for them in local authority meetings
- providing coaching for young people to help them cope with their strong feelings
- providing a mechanism for supervision to help them be safe when they are out and about
- using technology to capture their thoughts, and feelings as they happen

Through discussion with young people in care and their carers, the aim was to scope out what a new digital service for these young people might look like in the future for them, their carers, Local Authorities and allied health and social care organisations who look after them, protect them and help them thrive.

A key intended outcome of the project was to gain new, in-depth knowledge of, and insight into, the experiences of traumatised young people in care and their wants and needs, focusing on the role that digital and technological tools might play in supporting them. As well as increasing the knowledge base around young people themselves, the project sought to better understand carers' experiences and their use of technology.

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<sup>1</sup> Affective State: a Research and Development and Consultancy in the Human Sciences.  
Snook: a multidisciplinary design and research agency that design products and services.

Another key aim relates to the experiences of the young people taking part in the project: through their participation, the project aimed to enable them to feel heard and empowered, and for the experience to help develop their confidence, skills and capabilities. Furthermore, it sought to improve their awareness and understanding of technology and the role it might play in enhancing their safety, and inform opportunities to use technology to increase young people's capacity to express themselves in different contexts, for example in care review meetings.

## Methodology

The co-design strand of the project employed Snook's citizen engagement and co-design methodology, which is drawn from the Design Council Double Diamond. This involved group sessions with young people and their carers, using Service and User Experience Design methods and tools (customer journey mapping; use of 'personae' to illustrate different user types; idea-generation activities and templates) to engage the young people and carers in idea generation and co-design sessions, and creative structured workshops to conduct a series of prototyping sessions where their ideas for new technical support systems were tested and refined. There were 4 phases to the co-design: Discover, Define, Develop, and Deliver. The initial workshop collected young people's views and ideas, and subsequent workshops built on young people's feedback and analysis of these by the project consortium. The project design allowed for the focus of the technology to be determined by the outputs of the co-design process, rather than having any pre-conceived problems or issues to address.

## Existing Research

The project design took into account existing research on the problems and risks this group of vulnerable young people experience and are exposed to. Research shows that young people in care are at increased risk of various and complex risks within the care system, for example, child sexual exploitation (CSE) (CEOP 2013-14); drug and alcohol abuse (Lee et al 2008); suicide (Tong and King 2004); committing criminal offences (DfES 2007); serial placements (SCIE 2014) and frequent changes of social worker (SCIE 2014).

Changes in the ways that young people communicate and learn have evolved in recent years with mobile technology playing a significant role. Recent research suggests that individuals may confide in an avatar more readily than humans (Rizzo et al 2014) as they feel they won't be judged. Research also shows that traumatised and neglected young people often find it difficult to communicate with humans but live in a landscape where mobile technology, texting, BlackBerry Messenger and social media are ubiquitous and readily available.

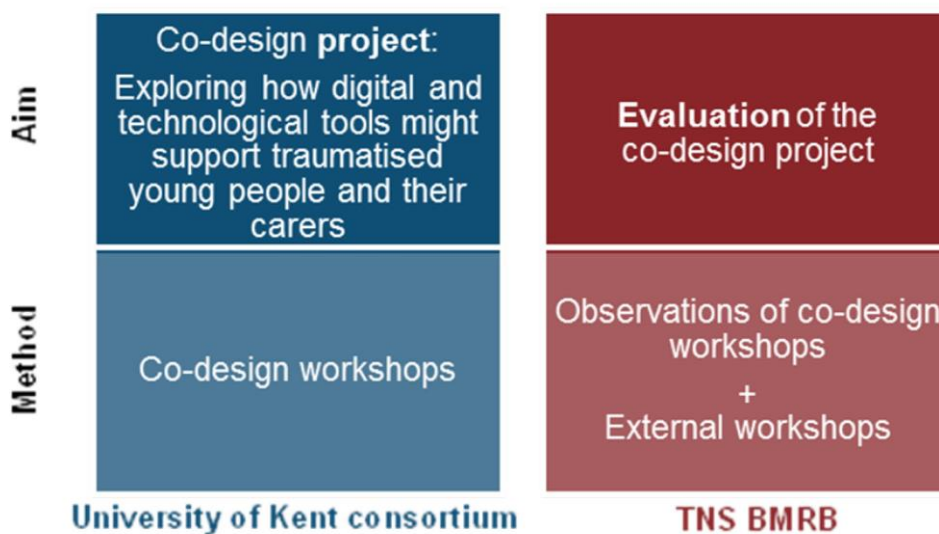


In terms of teaching and learning, new research from the Centre for Child Protection (Reeves and Shemmings 2014) shows that contemporary young people like using serious gaming and entertainment technology to talk and learn about complex issues ('Zak' on radicalisation; 'Looking out for Lottie' on CSE), highlighting the potential for new opportunities to engage and communicate, influence and supervise difficult to reach young people, in ways that are appealing to them.

# Overview of Evaluation

TNS BMRB, an independent research agency, was commissioned by the University of Kent to conduct the independent evaluation of this co-design project. The aim and methods of both the main project, (conducted by the University of Kent consortium), and the evaluation (conducted by TNS BMRB) are summarised in the figure below.

Figure 1: Diagram summarising method



There were 3 main evaluation aims:

1. To examine the extent to which the outputs from the project were grounded in faithful and sensitive translation of the views of the young people and carers who took part, for example:
  - whether participants in the research felt their views and priorities had been represented in the outputs of the research (i.e. the final concept demonstrations)
  - whether the internal (project) reporting reflected the views, priorities and key issues put forward by participants in the co-design workshops.
2. At the end of the process, the worked up concepts were tested with a group of young people and carers who had not participated in the co-design workshops, but who represented the intended users of the technology. The final external workshops aimed to:
  - provide some external validation of the concepts with a fresh audience, by exploring the views of young people and carers on the proposed digital solutions
  - provide additional feedback on the concepts with a wider group, including any suggestions for improvements or changes.

3. A further area of evaluation, though one of lesser focus, was exploring the effectiveness of the process of engaging young people and carers, identifying if possible any impact participation had on those involved in this project, for example:
  - whether the participants involved felt appropriately engaged and listened to
  - whether the project impacted on young people's capability to articulate and express themselves, and those involved felt they have a voice
  - whether the participants felt safe and protected from any emotional harm or disturbance whilst being involved
  - whether the project impacted on young people and carers' awareness and knowledge in relation to the use of technology in supporting them and enhancing their safety.

## Methodology

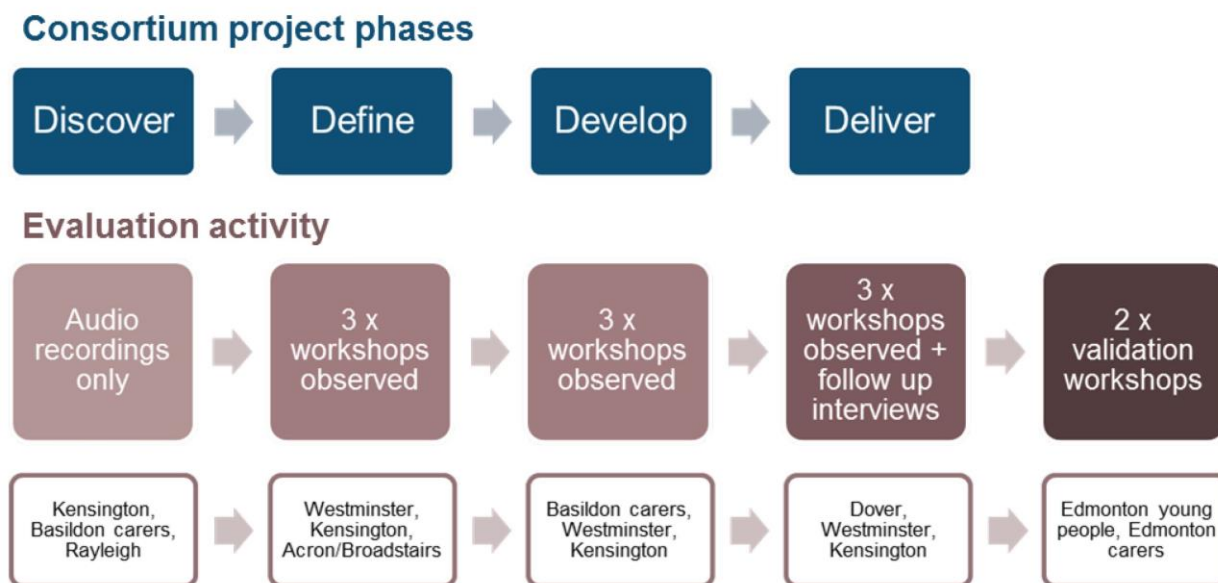
The following activities were undertaken to answer these evaluation questions:

- mini-groups with participants in the final phase, to understand their views on taking part, in terms of whether they felt listened to
- external workshops with young people and carers, to test the final concepts with an external audience.

The method employed allowed the evaluation to examine the extent to which key points and themes emerging from the co-design workshops observed were reflected in the design. It also includes the views of those who agreed to participate in follow up interviews.

Figure 2 below summarises the evaluation activity in each phase of the project.

Figure 2: Phases of the project



In choosing co-design workshop locations, the evaluation balanced achieving a breadth of locations with continuity of observer in order to build trust and rapport with the participants, and to explore how participants' engagement changed over the course of the project. For a more detailed breakdown of the co-design workshops attended in each phase, see Appendix B.

The consortium team encountered some challenge to initial recruitment for the first phase of co-design workshops, leading to lower than expected attendance in the 'Discover' phase. In light of this, the project consortium requested that the evaluators did not attend the initial sessions, so as not to overwhelm participants with a high number of moderators. The evaluation team instead accessed recordings of parts of the sessions, which were of some discussions rather than the whole session, and we can thus only comment on what is included in these recordings.

### Observations and follow up interviews

A member of the evaluation team observed the co-design workshops, introducing themselves and the role of the evaluation at the start of the session. Observers made minimal notes during the sessions themselves, so as to not make young people participating feel uncomfortable. Rather, notes were written into proforma documents after the session took place. Some of the sessions were also audio-recorded (though in some locations young people preferred not to be recorded): in these instances researchers also listened to audio recordings to conduct more detailed analysis and obtain verbatim quotes.

Follow up interviews were conducted following the final phase of co-design workshops. These took the form of mini-groups held with a member of the evaluation team and 3-4 participants immediately after the workshop, lasting around 15 minutes. Moderators used a semi-structured guide to explore views of those taking part.

## Analysis

Proformas were completed by the observer following each of the sessions, documenting the activities in the co-design workshops, young people’s engagement, and key points raised. Analysis sessions were then held after each phase of workshops, where researchers discussed key points, commonalities and differences in responses across the 3 workshops observed. Feedback on the process of the co-design workshops was also collated by the evaluation team, and fed back to the project team through informal discussion (following phase 2) and via a short report (following phase 3).

## External workshops

The evaluation team conducted recruitment for the final two external ‘validation’ workshops. The aim was to convene groups of 5-6 young people in care, and 5-6 carers and/or social work professionals, for each group. Participants were recruited using free-find methods, i.e. using a screening questionnaire to determine eligibility, and seeking consent from both carers and young people. An example of the information flyers used to explain the research can be found in appendix C. The external workshops were conducted in community centres in north London, and participants were provided with gift cards as a thank you for their time (£30 for young people, £20 for chaperones of young people, and £40 for carers). The carer group workshop lasted 1.5 hours, and the young people’s 2.5 hours (including breaks, games and food). The achieved sample for the external workshops with young people and carers is in the table below.

Table 1: Achieved sample

Group type	Sample information	Total achieved
5 x young people	Ages: 14, 15, 17, 18, 19	<b>5 total</b>
	Living status: independent living x 1, semi-independent x1, foster care x 2, residential care x 1	
5 x carers	Locations: Walthamforest, Enfield, and Haringey	<b>8 total</b>
3 x social support workers (one of whom was also a foster carer)	Caring for children aged 12-18	

Both groups were moderated by researchers with experience conducting research with this audience. Moderators used a semi-structured topic guide to explore views on the different concepts, using mock ups and prototypes to illustrate as far as possible what the technology would look like and how it would work.<sup>2</sup>

Sessions were audio-recorded using digitally encrypted devices, and researcher notes written into proforma documents to capture key points, quotes, and researcher impressions. An analysis session was held after the workshops, to compare feedback between young people and carers, and against the co-design sessions already observed. Further detailed, thematic analysis was conducted on all proformas produced from the observation sessions.

## Structure of the report

This report is structured as follows:

- the first section of key findings is an evaluation of the seven ‘final’ concepts, in terms of the extent to which they reflected participants’ views and priorities from the co-design workshops observed, as well as incorporating feedback from the external workshops
- the second section outlines key themes raised across all workshops around use of technology amongst young people in care that are not related to any particular concept
- the third section explores some of the learning about the engagement process, in terms of the experience and impact of taking part. This is followed by a short discussion about the extent to which the project achieved its intended outcomes
- finally, the report explores some of the limitations of the evaluation, and the implications and recommendations.

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<sup>2</sup> The guide and concept materials were developed from the presentation to the project’s expert panel, in conversations with the project team, and based on any mock-ups, screenshots or early prototypes developed. The final guides and materials were agreed with the project team prior to the workshops.

# Key Findings

## Evaluation of final concepts

In this section, we explore each of the final concepts that were presented to the expert panel by the consortium, which are included in University of Kent’s (UoK) final report for the project. For each, we report on the extent to which the outputs are grounded in faithful translation of the views of the participants, in terms of how the views put forward by participants are reflected in the concept design; feedback on the concepts from the external workshops; and any challenges raised or improvements suggested by participants.

### Online platform: ‘wall of care’

This is a digital platform with two key functions: firstly, a way for young people, their carers and professionals to share information about themselves, review meetings, and other events, and secondly, an information collation point for young people in care.

Figure 3: Mocked up image for the landing page of ‘wall of care’



This concept responded to strong views and consistent discussions amongst young people about the need to improve relationships with social workers. The feature of the website allowing young people to see photos and profile information about social workers directly responded to some of these concerns, particularly that young people felt uncomfortable with what they viewed as a one-sided relationship, in which professionals

knew intimate details about them, yet young people knew nothing about their social workers. There was also strong support in feedback, in both the external and co-design workshops, for the feature allowing young people to see who was going to attend review meetings and what the purpose of the meeting would be in advance.. Participants in the external young people's workshop were particularly supportive of the idea that they would be able to find out information about other social workers that might be replacing or filling in for their social worker. In the external workshop discussions, young people suggested that social worker qualifications, experience and career progression, as well as hobbies and interests could be included, many of which were built into the final concept.

Young people across the workshops were generally supportive of the idea that the website could be used to help smooth the transition when moving home. This responded directly to issues that many of the participants had personally experienced and raised during early workshops.

In the co-design workshops, views about the information collation aspect of the website were more mixed: whilst some young people thought this would be useful for them and other young people like them, others felt they already managed well with e-mails and existing information resources. Carers in the co-design workshops agreed with this, and were relatively sceptical about the added value of this feature. These views were broadly reflected in the external workshops, with younger people being more positive, and carers more sceptical that this resource would be used. Amongst those who supported the idea of using a website to collate information, in addition to offering general information on topics such as childline, sexual health clinics, mental health information, education courses and housing information, participants also suggested that personalised content specific to an individual could be included, such as health appointments, school reports, and college timetables.

Young people in the co-design workshops discussed some of the detailed functionality of a previous iteration of the website idea, and raised a point about the inclusion of a 'like' feature. Participants connected this to the use of 'likes' on social media sites and the possibility of feeling demoralised should posts not receive likes. This feature was not included in subsequent mock-ups of the concept. On the other hand, the use of emojis or 'emoticons' was widely liked, and this again was reflected in the final concept.

## **Challenges**

Participants raised a number of challenges with the website concept. Young people across the workshops were concerned about access, security and confidentiality, and whether schools or social care professionals other than their social worker would be able to access all or parts of their profile. We this was responded to in two ways: firstly, that part of the concept description in the workshops said that young people would be able to



control who saw what; and secondly, that the proposed next stage of the project would explore ethics, security, and access issues.

A key challenge, raised by almost all who discussed the website (across co-design and external workshops), was that of social workers' likely engagement with the tool. Carers in particular were sceptical that social workers would have the time or inclination to use the website, both in the co-design and external workshops. Carers and support workers in the external workshop also felt it would be difficult to get young people to engage with the website, in part because of the perceived time it would take to set up a profile, but this also relates to a theme regularly raised by carers around challenges to implementation without incentivisation (see Key Themes below). Participants from Enfield explained that a similar system existed in their local authority and take up had been poor. Finally, support workers in the external workshop felt uncomfortable with the tool, seeing it as an indication that they would be expected to work and be contactable at all hours. This has a bearing on how such a tool would need to be communicated and introduced to local authority staff.

Carers in the external workshop also raised specific concerns about providing information about themselves and where they had lived to a young person they had never met before. This was in part because they would not be in control of who this information was shared with, and were mainly concerned with young people giving this information to parents or others they were not supposed to have contact with.

### **Suggestions for improvements**

This section outlines some of the additional features suggested by young people in the co-design workshops that are not included (or not yet included) in the concept design, as far as the evaluation is aware. These included:

- the ability to rate or reflect upon review meetings after they had taken place
- a status button for their social worker to communicate when they were away
- information on the overall role of a social worker, and the team structure they worked in, to understand who the other professionals were that they came across.

Related to this was a suggestion that the website could include a map of a young person's journey through care, including at what age or point different review meetings happened, and which professionals were involved and why. This theme of 'understanding and navigating the system' appears to have emerged only relatively late in the co-design process, but could be interesting to explore further as the concepts are developed.

Young people, carers and support workers spontaneously suggested the website could include a space for providing advice on moving into independent living. This echoed what was said in previous workshops, that this could be in the format of care leavers sharing their experiences, for example via a Q&A section. Young people and carers also both

discussed the importance of adapting the site for smartphones, with carers pointing out that it should have offline capability with the option to upload when connected to Wi-Fi, given concerns around data usage costs. These views emerged across the co-design and external workshops.

Participants were invited, in the co-design workshops, to suggest some names for the website – a task that both carers and young people found quite challenging. Young people raised the point that they would prefer that the word ‘care’ was not used as they did not want to be referred to as ‘children in care’. Therefore, we would not recommend retaining the provisional name of ‘wall of care’ for this concept.

## **iTell**

An out of hours messaging service, connected to the online platform, designed to enable young people to have their say ‘in the moment’ at any time of day or night. Young people can choose to store the message to their profile or send it as a message to a person or people they choose e.g. social worker, therapist, carer, etc.

Future possibilities for developing the concept include incorporating translation for young people for whom English is not their first language, to be used with professionals; recording emotions over time; and analysing recordings to track over time, flagging high emotions as priority messages to social workers; and audio conversion into text to help young people who struggle with writing to prepare for meetings or reviews.

Overall, young people in the co-design workshops liked the iTell concept and could see it could have uses. For example, they recognised a need for support to express themselves in a written format, particularly if they struggled with English. However, some pointed out they also struggled with pronunciation so were unable to use audio-capture tools easily.

Carers in the external workshop were generally positive about the potential for this tool to help some young people communicate their emotions. Carers in the co-design workshop thought the app could be useful for recording evidence for girls at risk of CSE.

Participants outlined a number of specific ways they thought the app would be useful to young people beyond the core intentions informing its design:

- both carers and young people in the co-design workshops liked the idea of an automatic translation tool, considering this the best aspect of the proposed idea
- some young people in the co-design workshops supported the idea that they could see when a social worker had received a message, as they felt social workers weren’t always honest about this

- some young people in the co-design workshops thought it would be a good way for them to personally record their thoughts on their history, to build up and add to their own case file
- carers in the co-design workshops thought it could be useful for young people with mental health issues, to send messages to therapists. One young person in the external workshops, who was in therapy, also spontaneously raised this idea
- young people in the co-design workshops particularly liked the option within the app not to send recordings on, with prompts giving them a chance to pause and reflect before sending a message. This is reflected in the final concept design with a prompt to ask young people whether they are sure they want to send before they do so.

## Challenges

This last point reflects some of the issues participants recognised with iTell – that sending emotionally charged messages to carers, social workers or others could be potentially damaging to young people and their relationships with others. Carers in the co-design workshops thought that young people could use the app to rant to social workers about their carers, and vice versa, or that extremely troubled young people would send messages very frequently, potentially overwhelming or annoying social workers. Young people in the external workshops echoed these views, expecting that social workers could potentially receive a very high volume of messages. A related challenge was identified across the workshops about whether social workers would have the time to listen to such messages, and what young people could do to ensure their messages were followed up.

Young people in the both the co-design and external workshops were unsure whether this app would help them track their emotions over time, which is one of the underlying intentions behind this concept, at least initially. Young people in the external workshop were overall quite strongly against the idea, believing it would be counter-productive to record, share, or dwell on negative emotions. They reported that they would rather forget negative emotions and would not want to listen back to things they said in anger, let alone share it with someone else. Out of all the concepts tested, iTell was rated the lowest by young people in the external workshop.

Carers and social support workers in the external workshops also raised an issue – a recurring theme as they discussed technology and young people – that an app like this could actually prevent some young people from learning how to engage with people face to face. Participants worried that tools such as this could encourage certain young people, already struggling with social situations, to become increasingly withdrawn.

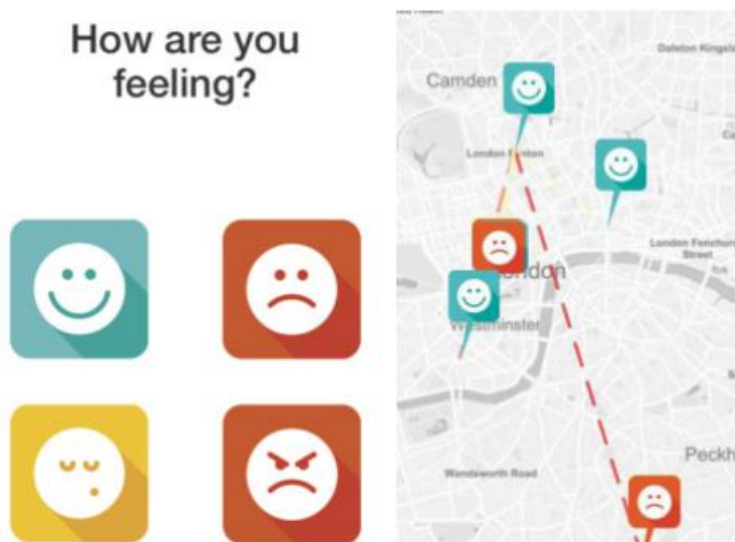
All participants again raised concerns about security and access, given the highly personal nature of the content, and feared that it could be relatively easy for others to access content on their phones.

### Suggestions for improvement

One suggestion put forward about the iTell concept was from young people in the co-design workshops for whom English was not their first language, about using the translation tool as a check for translators. These young people felt that they were not always sure how things were being translated, or what was being said about them by other professionals. They felt a translation tool could support them to communicate more effectively.

### Em\_Loc

Figure 4: Mocked up image from Em-Loc



EmLoc is a mapping emotion app - a service for young people and their carers to make links between emotion, location and the people they are spending time with, and a way to capture emotion to talk about it later for young people who might struggle to express their feelings.

This concept was only explicitly tested once in the workshops attended by the evaluation team,<sup>3</sup> so these findings are primarily drawn from the external testing groups.

In both external workshops, this concept was perceived to be better suited to younger age groups, or to those who had identified problems with recognising or dealing with their emotions. Carers thought it could be useful to help identify and communicate bullying, or a way for young people to tell their carer where they are. It was felt that with encouragement, pre-teens and teenagers might engage with the technology and use it to talk about their emotions with an adult, but that these discussions would need to be initiated by the young person. In the observed workshop, young people were sceptical that they would use the app to track their own emotions, thinking that the young people who were more likely to use it were 'probably already clued in' to their feelings. One young person thought it could be a useful way to focus discussion with social workers, with a young person describing their feelings and actions that week.

Social support workers felt this could be a useful tool to help them control and track young people, if they could remotely access geo-location data. It was also thought to be particularly beneficial for those at risk of child sexual exploitation or of going missing.

## **Challenges**

Young people in the external workshops were highly sceptical that they would use this technology, primarily because they would not want to share their location with carers or social workers. They identified this as a key barrier to effective use, as young people could choose to dismiss notifications from the app when they were in certain locations, or disengage entirely.

Carers in the external workshops also raised concerns about the utility of the technology for revealing realistic emotional patterns, sharing young people's scepticism that it would be used. They reported that honest conversations about the people and places that caused young people to feel negative would come most effectively from building relationships with young people over time, rather than from a tool. This linked to a recurring theme amongst carers that they felt some of the technological solutions proposed threatened to replace important aspects of a carer's role.

## **Suggestions for improvement**

Discussion of Em\_Loc prompted carers to talk about other apps to protect young people, including mobile alarms triggered if young people felt frightened or unsafe, which could

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<sup>3</sup> As concepts were developed over the course of the co-design process, some concepts were introduced and explored in later phases. As workshops were conducted flexibly, not all concepts were tested in each workshop and in each phase, so as not to rush the discussions if other concepts had taken more time.

also trigger an immediate alert to the police. Both these functions were suggested as useful additions to the Em\_Loc technology. Young people also suggested similar ideas in several of the co-design workshops, such as a panic button they could activate without others knowing, if they were in danger.

In one of the phase 2 co-design workshops, there was a discussion about staying safe when running away, where several suggestions were made relating to location tracking and communication with carers. Young people in this workshop thought it could be useful to send messages to carers and social workers to let them know that they were safe, and thus avoid the police being called. This would require some kind of verification so it could only be sent by the young person. They also suggested that the message could include their location, or could be tracked to help find the young person. Ideas along these lines were considered, but not taken into further prototyping by the project team.

## Real World

This is a desktop based coaching tool to provide young people with the life skills, mental resilience, and access to support they need to help them cope in independence, e.g. videos and challenges which teach about, and then set challenges for practise in, how to budget, cook or pay household bills. Social workers or carers would be able to set challenges through the tool that young people would complete in real life.

Figure 5: Image of RealWorld prototype

PHOTO REDACTED DUE TO THIRD PARTY RIGHTS OR OTHER LEGAL ISSUES



In the external workshops with young people, this concept was rated highest compared to the others, with some feeling actively excited by the prospect. This support was primarily due to the view that they felt Real World had genuine utility – they could see themselves using it to prepare for independent living. This may in part have been driven by the dynamic of this group, where there was spontaneous appetite from all participants to discuss and share information and advice about moving into independent living. However, there was also general agreement from young people in the co-design

workshops that they thought they might use and benefit from something like Real World – as they recognised a gap in their knowledge and skills and ability to move into independence. Support workers and carers in the external workshops also saw the potential for this technology, as they felt it could educate and enable self-sufficiency.

“It helps you with something in real life, so it’s useful. These are not things that you learn at school.” (Young people external workshop)

In general, young people thought that video tutorials would be a useful way to learn skills, and were preferable to audio or text tutorials where they tended to lose concentration. There was also support throughout from young people and carers for the idea that the video game format was appealing, particularly to those of a younger age.

Adaptations to the final design can be seen to be reflective of participants’ views throughout the co-design workshop process in a number of ways. Firstly, participants suggested that videos could be created by care leavers, an idea which was incorporated into the subsequent iterations of the concept and very positively received by other participants. Some young people suggested this go a step further, with the programme used to actually connect them with mentors.<sup>4</sup> Secondly, a common view that previous versions of the flat were too high-end or posh and thus unrealistic were responded to, as the next iteration was designed to be closer to the kind of flat that young people could expect to live in. Thirdly, there were suggestions in early phases that it might be effective to practise some of the tasks in real life to embed them: the introduction of challenges into the app has in some ways responded to this viewpoint.

Participants reported the following would be useful to include in Real World:

- cooking, menu planning, which shops to buy food from cheaply, where to buy different things, how to furnish affordably
- finding a job, how it feels to work, benefits, finance, budgeting, their rights
- Cleaning and laundry, real-time reminders about cleaning, home maintenance, how to use boilers and radiators
- social situations, emotional support and advice, dealing with loneliness
- sexual health, hygiene.

## Challenges

In the early phase of the co-design workshops, some young people were sceptical that videos were the best format to learn some of these skills, such as bill paying, which they

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<sup>4</sup> The project team intends to explore this in greater depth in the next phase of this work.

felt were better suited to face to face workshops with social work professionals. A few young people raised a related point that they would prefer better quality face to face contact with social workers, than a technology platform that they perceived to require significant investment to develop, particularly when exploring the early, virtual reality version of this concept.

Again, some carers in the external workshops were slightly uncomfortable with Real World as they felt it suggested that they would not be teaching young people these skills themselves, meaning they were not fulfilling their role as a carer.<sup>5</sup> However, they recognised this could be appropriate for other young people whose carers were less supportive.

## Suggestions for improvement

Currently the concept is planned to be desktop-based, but there was strong support across co-design workshops for this to be available as an app, and for some, in virtual reality. Younger people in the external workshop were very excited by the idea that they could access Real World via virtual reality, anticipating that they could use this as a mechanism for escape.

The benefits of adding more gamification elements were raised by young people and carers in both the co-design and external workshops, who suggested points, prizes and levelling up.<sup>6</sup>

The option to personalise the space was included in the initial design and later removed, in part due to the cost of developing personalisation capabilities in virtual reality, but it was something that young people really engaged with. When this feature was removed young people in both the co-design and external workshops often suggested that they should be able to customise and personalise the space, saying that otherwise they may lose interest.<sup>7</sup>

Young people in the external workshop wanted to use Real World once they moved into independent living slightly differently, where the flat would start empty, and would be built up over time, so they could track their savings towards different items of furniture.

## Virtual Meet

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<sup>5</sup> This is despite the fact that the concept was designed to include input and involvement from carers.

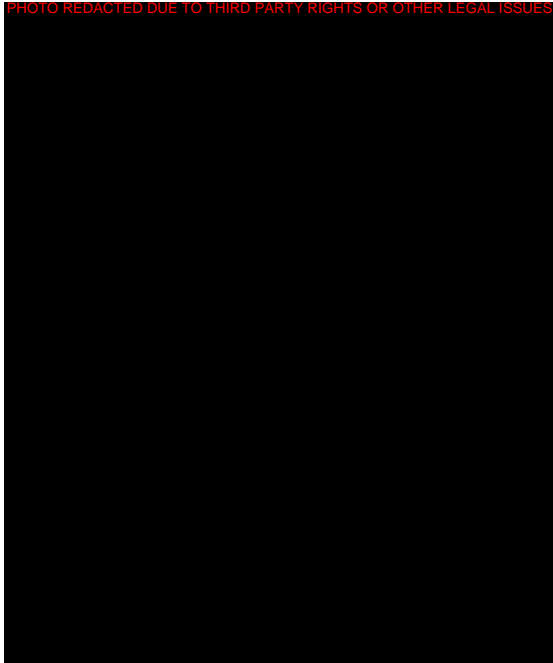
<sup>6</sup> These elements are planned for the next phase of design for this concept.

<sup>7</sup> The project team has yet to decide whether personalisation will feature in the next phase of this concept's design.



This is a neutral virtual meeting room that can facilitate Skype-like meetings with members attending as digital characters, designed for those who found social situations or meetings with professionals intimidating.

Figure 6: Image of Virtual Meet prototype



Young people and carers in the co-design and external workshops agreed that Virtual Meet could be useful for certain kinds of young people, for example, those with Asperger's or social anxiety. Both liked the idea that the space could be personalised, particularly as young people thought the space in the mock-up version looked too formal and 'grown-up'. This has been taken on board by the project team and will be implemented in the next phase of development.

Young people did not think they were likely to use this tool, personally preferring face to face contact. This concept responds to this preference, explicitly being targeted at young people who need it to help with social anxiety, in its final iteration. However, as young people in the co-design workshops could not see the value of this tool to them personally, they tended to disengage from the concept or misunderstand its purpose, hence feedback is relatively shallow.

## Challenges

Carers and young people in both the co-design and external workshops felt that this would be effective only for use in the short-term, and would necessitate a lot of support, initially to encourage young people to use it, and then to build confidence to begin to go to face-to-face meetings. They thought it would be an effective tool to introduce new social work professionals, but that young people would need to then be weaned off using it and start to learn social skills and how to communicate in real life, otherwise this kind of

technology could risk harming those who lacked social skills, as they would never have to learn to deal with professionals or how to communicate with them in person.

Carers and social support workers in the external workshop described how this technology would require social workers to co-operate and learn to use the technology. This was perceived as unlikely, as some social workers were considered to be less capable and engaged with new technology, despite this tool being relatively simple to use (comparable with using Skype, for example).

## **Brain Wave**

This is an educational resource designed to help young people understand how their developing brain makes them feel while helping them to take control of their responses.

This concept was not tested in external workshops due to time – ideas with prototypes or physical examples were prioritised. Findings are thus drawn from observations of co-design workshops only.

Young people and carers both thought Brain Wave in theory could be valuable in helping young people train themselves to better recognise how to control their emotions, and could be fun. Carers cited positive examples where young people responded well to feeling in control. They felt the idea would be particularly suitable for use in secondary schools, and for young people with Asperger's Syndrome.

However, young people tended to say they did not think they would use it, and some could not see how it was different to other games.

## **Challenges**

Some young people in the co-design workshops were wary of the headset and were initially frightened and reluctant to put something on their head. They felt it was 'alien', 'creepy' and made them feel 'abnormal'. Others worried that it could somehow read or control people's thoughts, or could have some other illicit purpose. In a follow up interview, one young person said he was afraid to try the app for fear that it would reveal 'something wrong or bad' about him.

Some young people in the co-design workshops felt that such technology would need to be carefully introduced, as if they were offered this in the wrong way, some young people might feel that they were being told they 'can't concentrate' or could be made to feel stupid.

## **Calm Space/Happy place**

This is a virtual reality calming environment that young people could retreat to during times of high stress/anger to help calm them down.

This was not tested in the carers/social support workers external workshop due to time, and was not tested in the carer group observed. Findings are thus drawn only from the perspective of young people in the co-design and external workshops.

Generally young people in the co-design workshops thought this was a good idea, and they engaged with the activity of designing their ideal calm space. Calming, stress-relieving games were suggested spontaneously by young people in the early workshops as something they would be interested in.

In the external workshops, young people stated that they were thought it was better suited for use when they were upset than when they felt angry, as they expected they might break their phone or headset if angry. They envisaged using it in their room when lying down. Some said they would use it as a distraction, or if they were bored. This idea has been picked up in the Em\_Loc concept.

## **Overall evaluation of concepts**

The Real World concept was by far the most popular concept tested: it had the most support from both young people and carers, across both the co-design and external workshops. The online platform was also thought to be a positive and potentially beneficial tool for young people. These concepts were most successful as they responded to genuine issues and information gaps which young people identified, and young people could imagine themselves using them. Other concepts had a more mixed reception, with the key criticisms levied against them relating to likely engagement amongst the intended users; participants being unable to see what they offered over and above existing tools and resources (e.g. search engines, messaging services), or the concern that the tools threatened to replace face to face contact.

## **Key themes**

This section outlines the key themes raised by participants across the co-design workshops observed about what is important to them about young people in care's use of technology. These are points that do not necessarily fit with any specific concept generated by the project, though they underpin participants' assessment of them all. This provides further evaluative data about the extent to which young people's voices have been heard as part of this process, as well as providing depth and context to participants' responses to the concepts. These themes should have broader applicability in terms of

understanding how young people and carers engage with some of these ideas and technologies, in the context of care and vulnerability, and some of the barriers and facilitators to successful innovations in this area.

## **Preference for face to face support**

Across the co-design workshops observed, young people expressed fundamental concern with inadequate face to face contact with their social workers. Some were occasionally quite resistant to technology that seemed to supplant in-person contact time with social workers. Young people often stated that they thought technology was key to building positive relationships and better for information gathering than emotional support, equating face to face contact with better standards of care and communication.

“Face-to-face shows you care and it is not just your job to pretend to.”  
(Westminster phase 3)

Some young people expressed discomfort that money would be invested in developing technology, which they perceived as a ‘nice to have’, in the context of this experience - where stretched social workers were unable to dedicate time and attention to individuals.

## **Social skills vs. insularity**

Carers echoed the view that face to face care is important to retain, not only because it facilitates better relationships, but also because it helps build young people’s social skills. They tended to be wary of technology that might encourage social isolation and insularity, where young people with tendencies to avoid social situations would effectively have an excuse not to enter them. This linked to wider views about young people and technology: that it can serve to deskill young people by undermining their ability to communicate face to face, acts as a distraction to homework and responsibilities, and substitutes spending real time with friends, playing sports, or outdoors.

## **Who pays?**

This point was raised a number of times in the workshops both by young people and carers, who were quick to ask who would pay for the technology, and smart-phones more specifically for app-based concepts, as not all young people have access to these. Questions were also asked about mobile data requirements, and it was important to participants to know whether any online mobile functions could be recorded offline, and uploaded when connected to Wi-Fi.

Related to discussions about the appropriateness of investment in new technology given pressures of social care services, some suggested that money could instead be more

usefully invested in providing young people with phones and credit, in terms of the perceived potential impact.

## **Implementation without incentivisation**

A common response amongst some of the young people participating was that although they thought an idea might be good in principle, they could not see themselves using certain technology. In some cases, this was because they thought it was better suited to a different type of young person (i.e. one with particular needs), or because they felt they already had access to the support offered by the concept. Young people also felt that whilst they might engage initially, they were likely to forget, get bored with, or stop using new technology relatively soon.

Carers in both the observed workshops and external workshops felt that a key challenge with technology was to ensure young people adopted and used it. Though they recognised young people were often interested and even obsessive about some technology, they foresaw challenges to embedding uptake, particularly for those slightly older, i.e. young people over 16 years old. They also raised the point that the young people who were least likely to engage, are those who are the most troubled. Carers felt there would need to be incentives for using some of the technology, and suggested phone credit or mobile data could be offered as a way to keep young people interested and engaged.

## **Lessons about the process of engagement**

This section explores:

- participants' experience of the co-design process, in terms of whether they felt they had a voice, felt appropriately engaged and listened to, and felt safe and protected from harm during the course of the process
- the impact of taking part, in terms of young people's capability to articulate and express themselves, or their awareness and knowledge in relation to the use of technology in supporting them and enhancing their safety

Findings are drawn from the follow up interviews and observation of the co-design workshops.

## **Experience of taking part**

Overall, participants interviewed said they thought the process was creative, interesting and that it was exciting to play with the technology.

## **Methods of engagement**

Throughout the workshops facilitators were open and friendly, and encouraged young people to have their voice heard in different ways. For example, activities in different formats were used (drawing, writing, collages, role-plays) and adapted to the level that participants could engage with. Moderators offered to draw or write for young people who were uncomfortable doing this themselves. Having some smaller group-work and pairs also facilitated quieter participants to contribute to the discussions.

From observation of the workshops, the evaluation suggests that some participants could have been further encouraged to contribute. In some of the workshops, louder, more confident, or more articulate participants tended to dominate the group discussions. More facilitation could have helped to bring out the views of some of the quieter participants, though social workers that attended the groups were effective at supporting this, particularly in larger group sizes. Attendees in the groups also ranged not only in age but also in terms of their ability to engage and articulate themselves, making the balance of group discussions more challenging. The evaluation recognises that this was in part a function of recruitment challenges, as the team did not know in advance who would be attending each workshop.

## **Workshop structure and activities**

In terms of the structure of the workshop, participants interviewed reported that they liked the format of having mini-groups and moving through different concepts and activities, and preferred smaller group discussions as this gave them more space to be heard. Overall, the activities were regarded as enjoyable by those interviewed. In particular, playing with the technology and virtual reality goggles were strong positives. Some said they liked the simple activities, such as agree/disagree questions. Some said their favourite was the 'crossy road' game, as it was a fun way to think about their life.

Participants interviewed said they disliked arts and crafts activities, such as cutting pictures out of magazines to create their ideal space. Others said that on balance, they would prefer more active activities: playing more games and less sitting down and writing things.

## **Comprehension**

Some participants interviewed said they found a few of the activities a little confusing or complicated, whereas others in the same group thought they had been over-simplified and repetitive, which reflected the range of ages and abilities in the room. All participants interviewed said they felt they were able to ask questions if they didn't understand something.

During the observations of the workshops, some young people occasionally struggled to understand what was being asked of them, as questions were sometimes quite complex. In some cases the language being used was perhaps a little technical, for example 'avatar', 'Google cardboard' etc. were used without explanation, and young people later said they did not understand what was meant.

In other cases, activities and concepts that were being tested were inadequately introduced. For example, when introducing the 'virtual room' concept in virtual reality, there was little explanation about what was being shown, why, or what was being asked in relation to it, leading to some confusion and low engagement. This was improved in the later workshops, however, in response to feedback from the evaluation team, and more time was spent on introducing and explaining each new activity. Some of the participants, for whom English was not their first language, tended to engage less with the discussions, and often took longer to understand the activities. They were better able to engage if there was another young person in the group who spoke the same language, but who was more confident conversing in English.<sup>8</sup>

### **Understanding of, and engagement with, the co-design process**

Prior to the workshops, young people interviewed said they did not know what to expect, and did not have a clear idea of what they would consist of or what they were for. Mainly they said they had a vague sense that it was about electronic things or technology, and did not realise they would be involved in developing ideas. Some of the young people interviewed said that during the first phase of workshops they were still very confused about what they were doing, and what the activities were for. Compared to other similar projects, and especially given the audience, initial lack of clarity about exactly what the workshops were for is not unusual. However, by the end of the workshop process, there was still some question as to the extent some had grasped the concept, or felt that they had contributed to the design of concepts.

From observation of the workshops, there were several instances that suggested that some participants were not entirely clear about their role in the co-design process. For example, in one Phase 2 workshop, a young person questioned what had been done with the materials they had produced last time, and what they were used for. At the start of the Phase 2 and 3 workshops, more time could have been spent re-introducing the purpose of the workshops and the co-design process, showing young people where they were in the process. The animation video designed to explain this process could have

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<sup>8</sup> There was a translator present in some of the groups (for Eritrean participants), though no other translators as far as the evaluation team is aware.

been played here, though this video was not used in any of the workshops observed. Though it is not vital for the participants to fully understand the concept of co-design in order to meaningfully contribute, it can result in lower engagement, or even misunderstanding of the aims of the workshops.

In one or two instances young people taking part expressed concern about the objectives and process of the workshops, in one instance taking the relatively extreme view that young participants were being used as an excuse for the developers to create the gadgets they wanted to make. This could be read as a lack of buy-in to the process of co-design, i.e. that they did not see how their ideas were reflected in the concepts they were being presented with, and were unaware of how the first stages linked with the development of the ideas. However, this response could also be seen, at least in part, as a reaction against a key issue young people raised: that is, a lack of attention and face to face time with their key social workers. As they saw technology as challenging this, it is perhaps not surprising that these kinds of criticisms emerged.

“Everything we’ve been shown, it’s cool [...] but it’s just a toy.” (Westminster, phase 3)

### **Feeling safe and protected from any emotional harm**

Those interviewed said they felt safe and protected during the course of the workshops. One young person interviewed felt that some of the pair-work in the first phase felt overly personal, and made her feel slightly uncomfortable, but otherwise felt that the process was well managed. From observation of the workshops, it was clear that social workers were used effectively to support moderation and diffuse arguments and tension between the young people: this was handled well by the team.

### **Whether participants’ voices were heard**

Participants interviewed said that initially, they didn’t expect to be heard, but by the end they felt that they were genuinely being listened to, in contrast to common experiences of adults telling them what to do. Participants interviewed described seeing the development of the concepts, and that they could see how their feedback had been taken on board.

“In the virtual world, they had put what we said in to it.” (Follow up interview, Kensington W4)



## Impact of taking part

All participants interviewed said they would take part again, or take part in something similar, if asked. They outlined several positive impacts of taking part:

- good for their CV and felt it will improve employability
- were pleased to have a chance to discuss their personal safety, which is something they felt was not discussed much otherwise
- enjoyed meeting other young people
- glad to receive an incentive

## Young people's capability to articulate and express themselves

In terms of the impacts of taking part, young people mainly pointed to the chance to share their views and be heard. Though those interviewed did not identify any specific impact on their capability to express themselves as a result of taking part, the evaluation team suggests that having a positive experience of sharing their views may help them to do so more confidently in the future.<sup>9</sup>

## Awareness in relation to the use of technology in supporting and enhancing safety

Virtual reality was new to some of the participants, and they were interested to discover and play with this technology. Participants interviewed said they now recognised greater potential for apps to support them in a general sense, though did not point to anything specifically. Overall, those interviewed did not think differently about technology as a result of taking part, though some highlighted that it had made them realise the extent to which they currently rely on technology, which led them to want to reduce their use of it.

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<sup>9</sup> Shaw, C, Brady, L and Davey, C. (2011) *Guidelines for Research with CYP*. NCB Research Centre

## Limitations of Evaluation

Following a request from DfE to include some final external workshops, the number of observations and follow ups had to be reduced, meaning the focus on the process evaluation was reduced.

One challenge to the evaluation was the fact that the project was just the first stage of a longer project, meaning final concepts were still in prototyping phase, rather than finished products that could be more fully tested and validated. It is likely that the way in which participants would engage with an actual prototype is different from their understanding of a partially developed mock-up with verbal descriptions of how it would work.

Another film was developed by the consortium team as an output of this project phase, illustrating how the concepts would be used by young people in care. It would have been beneficial, had timelines permitted, to play this film to participants to help communicate the ideas more clearly.<sup>10</sup>

The external validation phase was small-scale, comprising just two workshops., Therefore, the final workshops conducted by the evaluation team cannot be seen to provide full external validity to the ideas produced, but rather represent a further evidence stream for future development. If a greater number of workshops had been conducted, results may have been different.

The evaluation team was unable to observe the first phase of workshops, because of recruitment and engagement challenges early on in the project. Though some contingency measures were taken (i.e. listening to audio recordings, and meetings with the project team), this impacted on the breadth of the evaluation, and meant that fewer locations were observed overall.

In the final phase of workshops, the evaluation team was unable to conduct follow up interviews in Dover due to logistics, as participants needed to leave directly after the workshop. Participants in the other follow up interviews were semi self-selecting as they volunteered to take part, meaning the slightly more engaged participants were more likely to agree to interviews.

There are no current plans for further evaluation activities, as the evaluators understand that the next phase of the project is presently on hold. However, we recommend that a future evaluation includes activities that include more elements of the project. For example, we recommend formally evaluating the analysis sessions where ideas are

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<sup>10</sup> The final version of the film is available to watch online at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mEyDaOaa0gs>

developed, to more clearly understand how concepts are refined, decided upon or against.

## Implications & Recommendations

### Co-designing a new digital service with young people and carers

This project and the evaluation have evidenced the potential and pitfalls of involving this audience in a co-design process. Participants were able to engage with the ideas relatively well, and though there was variation in the extent to which some individuals were enabled to contribute, on the whole, the co-design process allowed the views of young people and carers to be captured and incorporated into the development of new technology. Though there was less evidence of impact on their knowledge about how technology can support young people to be safe, those interviewed did feel that they had a chance to express themselves and have their voices heard. Especially in the latter phase of workshops, as a result of engaging 3 or 4 times, participants were more engaged, had greater clarity about the purpose of the workshops, and some appeared more confident about sharing their views and opinions.

The project design allowed for the focus of the technology to be determined by the outputs of the co-design process, rather than having any pre-conceived problems or issues to address. Ideas were generated through initial discussions and adapted throughout the process based on feedback from participants.

The project team was flexible and adaptable to the needs and abilities of those who took part, meaning activities were adjusted to appropriate levels. With those less able to discuss their views on the future potential of the technology, or comment on abstract ideas, the team allowed them to simply play with the prototypes and have a much more general discussion. We suggest that in future projects, young people such as this can contribute most meaningfully at the start and end of the process, i.e. in understanding current use of technology, and the key issues they face as a young person in care, and then at the end, with a more fully developed prototype or product. Ideally, participants of similar age groups and abilities could be grouped together, at least in break-out groups, to ensure that activities remain as inclusive as possible, though the evaluation team recognises the recruitment challenges attached to this.

To push the co-design aspect even further, young people and carers could be involved in, or have greater visibility of, some of the design process, such as attending workshops with the development team, or hearing feedback about how their ideas have been incorporated into product concepts. The evaluation team conclude that more could have done to increase participants' sense of input into and ownership of some of the concepts overall. Though they had been invited to name some of the concepts, this was

challenging for both young people and carers, and arguably a relatively superficial aspect of the final product.

In terms of maximising the positive impact on those who take part in co-design workshops in the future, the evaluation team recommends that more time is spent in workshops, and possibly afterwards, allowing young people to reflect on what they have learnt and taken from their involvement. Concrete affirmation of their contribution could also help to build confidence and perception of the value of taking part, for example by awarding certificates at the end of the process.

## **Building an understanding of how young people and carers use technology**

The project was useful in understanding some of the likely barriers and facilitators for carers and young people engaging with any new technology designed for them. It showed that carers may be resistant to technology that they think may undermine or replace key aspects of their role, i.e. in giving advice and emotional support to the young people they care for. For young people, it will be important to emphasise how any new technology adds value over existing tools, and demonstrate a clear case for how it could support them. Ideas that are likely to be more successful are those that address a clear need or gap that young people can quickly recognise. It will also be important to consider the burden on or expectations of social workers: tools should be able to work without requiring (significant) engagement on their part.

## Appendix A

Breakdown of workshops conducted by the consortium, with those observed by the evaluation team indicated with an asterisk.

Table 2: All workshops conducted by the consortium

Phase	Location	Stakeholder	Attendees	
Discovery	Essex*	Young people	4	
<b>(audio only)</b>	Westminster	Young people	9	
	Essex (Rayleigh)	Carers	4	
	Essex (Ely House)*	Carers	5	
	Westminster	Young people	5	
	Kensington & Chelsea*	Young people	4	
	Hammersmith & Fulham	Young people	2	
	Channels & Choices	Young people	12	
	Essex	Young people (Danbury Day)	28	
	Define	Essex (Ely House)	Carers	20
		Westminster*	Young people	9
	Kensington & Chelsea*	Young people	7	
	Kensington & Chelsea	Social workers	<i>Unknown</i>	
	Acorn*	Residential Staff	2	
	Acorn*	Young people	2	
	Channels & Choices	Young people	6	
	Acorn	Young people	2	
	Expert Panel	Social workers	12	
Develop	Channels & Choices	Young people	4	
	Channels & Choices	Therapists	1	
	Essex (Ely House)*	Carers	10	
	Westminster*	Young people	9	
	Kensington & Chelsea*	Young people	8	
	Acorn	Young people	1	
	Hammersmith & Fulham	Young people	5	
Deliver	Kensington & Chelsea*	Young people	10	
(including	Westminster*	Young people	15	
follow up	Channels & Choices*	Young people	7	
interviews)	Essex (Rayleigh)	Carers	7	

NB. Though both carer groups observed were held in Essex, different individuals attended each group.

## Appendix B

Information flyer for young people

### Workshop about new technology to help out young people like you

#### What is the workshop about?

We would like to invite you, a young person in care (or who has recently left care), to take part in a workshop with up to seven other young people to test exciting new technology to support you while in care and on to independence. You would get to play with the technology then tell us what you think about these – Would you use this technology? Would it make your life easier? How could it be used to support you and others like you?

We are interested in your opinions and the views of young people like you – there are no right or wrong answers! Your views will help us understand what young people might want from technology in the future.



We hope you will find the workshops **fun** (as we'll play some games), as well as relaxed and safe.

#### Why were these technologies I would be playing with developed?

These technologies were designed to enable young people in care to recognise, communicate and manage their behaviour more effectively. They were designed with young people in care, in collaboration with a team of technologists, designers and academics, including the University of Kent and the Centre for Child Protection.

Researchers from an independent research agency called TNS BMRB are hosting the workshop on behalf of the Department for Education (DfE).

#### What will I get for taking part?

There will be pizza, snacks and beverages available during the workshop and you will get to meet other young people. As a thank you for your time you will receive £30 Love to Shop voucher when the workshop is completed.

#### What will happen with the information I tell you?

We will treat all information as completely confidential. All data will be stored securely, and only be used for the purpose of this evaluation. All information will be anonymised, which means no one will know who said what in the report about what we learned from the workshop.



*Paul said...*

*One young person said...*

### **Who can I talk with to learn more?**

You can call or text XXXX XXXX on XXXXXXXX or email her on [XXXXXXXX@tns-bmr.co.uk](mailto:XXXXXXXX@tns-bmr.co.uk) if you have any questions or would like to learn more about taking part.



# Appendix C

## DfE Children's Social Care Innovation Programme:

### Young People Validation Workshop Guide

#### Aims of the Project

The main project is an evaluation of the University of Kent's consortium project to explore how technology can support young people in care. The project has been set up to explore how technology can support traumatised young people in care and their carers in a number of ways.

#### Aims of the Validation workshops

A range of concepts/prototypes have been developed in a series of co creation workshops with young people in local authority care, and their carers.

- Online platform [Wall of Care (temporary name)] – an information gathering point for young people in care designed to improve communications between young people, their carers and professionals
- iTell – an out of hours messaging service, connected to the online platform, designed to enable young people to have their say 'in the moment' at any time of day or night. They can choose to store the message to their profile or send it message to a person/people they choose e.g. social worker, therapist, carer, etc.
- Em\_Loc – mapping emotion app - a service for young people and their carers to make links between emotion, location and the people they are spending time with – and a way to capture emotion to talk about it later for young people who might struggle to express their feelings
- Real World – A desktop based coaching tool that provides young people with the life skills, mental resilience, and access to support they need to help them cope in independence, e.g. videos and challenges set to practice how to budget, cook or pay your bills.
- Brain Wave - An educational resource designed to help young people understand how their developing brain makes them feel while helping them to take control of their responses.
- Calm Space - A virtual reality calming environment that young people can retreat to during times of high stress/anger to help calm them down.
- Virtual Meet - A neutral virtual meeting room, that can facilitate skype meetings with members attending as digital characters, e.g. for those who find social situations/meeting with professionals intimidating

- Virtual Therapy - Virtual reality for guided trauma recovery that allows rooms/environments to be explored together with the therapist – similar to therapy used for returning soldiers who have experienced trauma
- Safe Search – An underlying safety system that identifies and detects trigger words and re-directs the user to specific websites, e.g. those at risk of self-harm

This is now a testing group with young people who have not participated in the co creation exercise but would also be potential users of the technology. The overall aim of this stage is to validate the outputs/concepts with a fresh group of participants and gather some external views on the concepts/prototypes in some depth. We also aim to gather any suggestions for improvements or changes.

- Stim packs and print outs of website
- VR, phones, and bluetooth controller
- Charger
- Headphones
- Stars stickers
- Pens
- Laptop

## **Workshop guide – 2.5 hours total**

### **Introduction and warm up –10:00-10.20 (20 mins)**

- Introduce yourself and TNS-BMRB – an independent social research agency
- We are conducting this research on behalf of the Department for Education and University of Kent
- This research is to explore how technology can support young people in care –
  - Kent have developed some ideas with young people – over 50 young people were involved
  - This workshop is to show you some of the things they have come up with, and see what you think
  - Want them to think about whether they would use this technology, and how it might help them – or other young people like them.
- Plan for the day – will get to know each other, take a look at some of the technology, play with some of the tech, and then have pizza before going home
- This research is completely voluntary, confidential and anonymous – your name will not be used in the reporting
- There are no right or wrong answers, it is not a test but just to hear what you think - honesty
- Consent for audio recording – this will only be shared with the TNS BMRB research team
- Explain the role of any other attendees in the workshop (if any)
- Explain housekeeping arrangements and what to do if you feel unwell / want to leave.

Moderator to check whether any participants know one another

- Each participant to introduce themselves to the person sitting next to them: their name, age, and something interesting about them, e.g. hobby, favourite film or food, or what they had for breakfast. Then each person has to introduce the other to the rest of the group and tell us 1 interesting fact about them
- Explore their views on technology generally –
  - How do they personally feel about using technology
- Participants to arrange themselves into a line, based on how they see themselves, i.e. as...
  - someone who loves tech and always knows about the latest gadgets, iPhones etc
  - someone who dislikes using technology
  - somewhere in-between

Moderators to stand in the line first to show which end is which

- Explore reasons – why have they stood where they are – why that attitude to tech
- What kinds of things do they use technology for now, e.g. what kinds of apps do they use most on their phones, which websites do they go to the most?
- Do they think technology could be helpful for young people like them?
  - How? Can they think of any situations
  - Prompt if needed around: to help communicate with your social worker, or carer; to provide companionship/like someone to talk to; to help you in meetings, to keep them safe when out and about, to help when you are feeling emotional or angry.

### **Concept testing: WEBSITE 10:20-10:40**

Moderator to explain again that we are going to test some ideas that were developed with the help of other young people like them (e.g. similar age, some in care/foster care, or have recently gone into independent living). Explain that these are not yet finished, they are just ideas, and we want to know which ones they like. Repeat that we would like them to think about:

- Whether they would use this – when/why/why not
- Whether they think other young people could use this (e.g. younger/older/care leavers etc.)
- Anything to make it better

At the end they will be able to vote for their favourite one.

Website – show the clickable site, plus the pages of the website to be stuck up on the wall in a row [WEBSITE MOCK UPS A]

Explain the first idea we are going to look at is a website: this would be a special website where they could log in and access lots of information

- One aim of the website is to keep all this in one place rather in lots of different text, emails, phone calls
  - HANDS UP for:
    - If they ever get told things by their social worker or carer that they forget
    - If they are ever given things like leaflets or papers by their social worker that they lose
  - Also a way for young people to make sure social workers / carers can see information about them that they want to share, e.g. their story, things about them, so they don't have to explain their story every time they meet someone new
    - Whether this is something that they have experienced
  - Overall – do they think this would be useful to them
    - Why/why not

Walk through the website demo as a group, moderator to show each page and what might be on the page, e.g. things about college, info about getting a job, useful travel advice, or how to claim benefits. Could also have a way to record how you are feeling (like a diary), information about your review meeting, and information if you are moving to a new home.

Ask the group to draw on the pages that they think they might use to share with their social worker/care, and add anything else they think would be useful to include. Participants to put ticks next to the bits they like best/think would be most useful, and can put crosses next to those they think they would not use. Moderators to support and query reasons for responses throughout.

For final minute reflect on the website pages now and what has been added, and reflect back some of the comments about the website overall.

- Now they've looked at it in more detail –
  - what do they think of the idea
  - would they/others use it
  - why/why not
- Everyone to rate it out of 5 and stick their stars on the main poster next to 'WEBSITE'

Game 10 mins (play for 5, break for 5)

Question web: in a circle, have a ball of string and throw it to one person who has to answer a question about themselves. Once they answer they throw it to someone else but hold onto the string until everyone has answered a question. Moderator to read out questions, or give them to young person to read if preferred.

[QUESTION CARDS]

Concept testing: iTell 10:50-11:10

[Demo using the app - [www.itell.herokuapp.com](http://www.itell.herokuapp.com) , or the pdf back up]

Background – Young people and carers both wanted something to help them better understand, manage and interpret their day to day emotions.

Ask participants to imagine/pretend they have had a really bad day and are really upset, angry, or worried – what they normally do in this situation? Who would they talk to?

Now imagine it is the middle of the night and you're feeling like you really need to get something off your chest – what would you do then? Who could you talk to?

If you had a special app called 'iTell' on your phone where you could say how you feel anytime – and then choose to store it to listen to later or send it to someone like your social worker for them to listen to later – how might you use it?

Include the future potential somewhere which cannot be demo'd yet –

- a) Someone could record in their own language which could be translated for professionals
- b) Recordings can be analysed to both help young people interpret their feelings and alert carers/social workers if particularly strong emotion – have done this with sobbing, anger and calm. This could also be mapped over time.
- c) Recordings could be converted to text to help young people prepare for meetings, reviews etc. For the next stage in development, we want to test using iTell for review preparation.

[DEMO THE APP]

- Any questions about the app (repeat explanation of how it works)
- Can they think of any situations recently where they could have used an app like this
  - Do they think it would be useful to use in the future
  - Why / why not
  - Do they think they/other young people would use it

- Who would they want to share the messages with – or would they want to keep them private
- What are the benefits/what is good about having something like this
- What are the drawbacks/is there anything they wouldn't like
- Would they change anything about how it works
  - E.g. any new features they would want
- How they think this compared to website – which they prefer
- Everyone to rate it out of 5 and stick their stars on the main poster next to 'iTell'

### **The Apprentice: Em\_Loc and Real World 11:10 – 11.45**

Moderator to explain they are going to play the Apprentice: they will split into 2 teams and they have to decide on an app that is going to be the most successful for young people like them. Each moderator will pitch one of the apps as if they have developed it, in separate meetings, while team sits in a panel. The team then has to decide which one will be better. Each team to come up with a team name.

Group to split into 2 – one to look at Em\_Loc and the other Real World (15 mins each)

Em\_Loc group

- Whether everyone can tell us how they were feeling... (go around group and each person to shout out)
  - This morning
  - Yesterday (Friday)
  - Last Monday
  - On November 12<sup>th</sup> 2014
- Do people feel happier when they are in certain places (name a place?)
- Do people feel happier when they are with certain people

Moderator explain, this idea is a way to record how you are feeling so you can see how it changes over time, or depending on where you are, or who you are with. The idea is that both you and your carer can see where you are happy or unhappy, feel safe or unsafe that might help you think about maybe avoiding certain places or people that make you unhappy.

Use [MAP STIMULUS] (showing school/home/park/cinema/high street/shopping etc) and emotion cards and ask participants to add these onto the maps in mini-groups and discuss their maps with each other.

- Do they think it would be useful for them to see this information about themselves (about where they are happy/unhappy) – why/why not

Show Em\_Loc stimulus and app demo

- Repeat previous discussion – would this be used, when, by whom, what is good/bad about the idea, suggestions to improve it
- Everyone to rate it out of 5 and stick their stars on the main poster next to Em\_Loc
- Group to think about whether they will offer moderator a deal to develop the app

Groups to swap places

## Real World group

*Moderator to explain that one of the things young people said was that it was difficult to move into independent living as they did not have all the skills they needed to live alone.*

- What skills they think they will need once they move out/into independent living
- Prompt if needed: cooking, paying bills, budgeting

Moderator to explain that this tool will help young people prepare for independence by creating a virtual room similar to a flat you might move into. They can look around the flat and different objects will trigger different levels of advice and training/coaching videos, which they can watch. Their carer/key worker or social worker can set them challenges in the real world which would enable them to practice certain life skills before they move out, e.g. register with a GP; cook a meal on a budget.

Allow time for each of the young people to look around the room on the laptop, and look at the challenge pages. Can use VR of Virtual Therapy so they can see how detailed the flat would be when mocked up.

- First thoughts about Real World
- If their social worker gave them a Google Cardboard viewer and showed them how to use it- is this something they could see themselves using
- Repeat previous discussion – would this be used, when, by whom, what is good/bad about the idea, suggestions to improve it
- Everyone to rate it out of 5 and stick their stars on the main poster next to 'EmLoc'

For last 5 mins: groups to discuss with each other their ratings for both of these apps – *which they think they will go for*

- Which one they think would be most successful
  - Why
  - Whether they will fire either of the moderator ideas, or keep both
- Break 10 mins

## Virtual Meet 11:55-12.05

As a group, test the virtual meet platform and moderator to explain it could be used as a way to go to a meeting without really being there, having a digital character to go rather than meet people face to face. This is designed for young people who might find it scary

or intimidating to meet with social workers or other adults, e.g. who find it difficult to attend review meetings.

[Demo using VR]

- What they think of the idea
- What kind of character would they use for themselves
- Do they know anyone that it could be useful for / would they want to use it for themselves
- What kind of features would they want to add to it so it works well for young people
- Rating with star stickers

### **Calm Space/Brain wave 12.05-12.30**

Over pizza, groups to test out the two final apps – moderators to explain that these games would help them either to relax when they are feeling really stressed or upset, the other one would help them learn how they can concentrate or take control of their feelings. Young people to watch the 2 demo videos. Some can play on the Perfect Beach / Rollercoaster app). As a group, discuss:

- What would be in the calm space if they were to design their own personal one (moderator to add this to flipchart/board so they have an ultimate calm space board they create together)
- When / where would they be most likely to use it
- Would it be suitable for all young people, or some more than others
- Whether any of them have ever used any brain training apps before, or heard of something similar
- Do they think it would be helpful to train their brain to learn how to control emotions
- Repeat previous discussion and get final star rating
- Quick recap of the ideas, each participant to go around and say their best and worst
- Overall vote for their favourite
- Any other ideas or comments about how best technology could help young people like them
- How they felt taking part and giving their views
- How would they like young people to be involved in developing ideas like this in the future
- Incentives
- Thanks and close



## Appendix D

University of Kent's theory of change outlining how knowledge gained from this project offers the potential to changes the way young people in care are looked after and cared for.

# What will change for young people - and how - with a new digital service

### The vision

The vision is for the **new** knowledge created from this study on (1) companionship; (2) communication; (3) advocacy; 4) coaching; (5) supervision; & the (6) storage of information offers the potential to change the way young people in care who have experienced trauma are looked after and cared for. This links to our **underpinning theory of change diagram that:**

1. Young people (YP) can be kept as safe as possible with alert systems for them and the technology '*does no harm*'
2. YP are cared for, have increasingly strong and positive attachments and relationships and feel they belong
3. YP express themselves, feel listened to and understood in ways that are meaningful to them

4. YP have digital 'tools' and a service designed to help them cope at times and places they need it most and it is immediate responsive
5. Foster carers and residential staff will have access to more effective tools to help them understand, communicate and help young people

Messages from designing a digital service (Doblin) suggest that the team have to turn the user ideas into **practical solutions** that provide **value** to the young people so that each **service interaction** makes a **service moment** which add up to positive experiences for the user so they will keep coming back to **use it**.



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