Bridging the ‘Digital Disconnect’

Exploring parents’ views on using technology to promote young people’s mental health

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Bridging the Digital Disconnect

- Working with parents, education, health and mental health professionals to understand knowledge of youth mental health and their use of technology to support young people’s mental health

- Online Resources
  - Parents
  - Teachers, Youth workers
  - Health Promotion Officers, Social Workers, General Practitioners,
  - Psychologists, Psychiatrists and Suicide Resource Officers
Young people and online technologies

- Greatest users of Internet in Ireland: 16-24 year olds
  - 34% in 2005 – 92% in 2011 accessing Internet
  - 78% of young people use Internet on daily basis (European Union, 2012)

- EU Kids Online survey- half of parents surveyed in Ireland say they should do more in relation to children’s internet use (O’Neill & Dinh, 2012)
  - Parents concerned about sexually explicit / violent images, online grooming, self harm, suicide, anorexia
# Young people, mental health and online technologies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Support for mental health and wellbeing</th>
<th>Adolescents: 12-19 years N= 6,085</th>
<th>Young Adults: 17-25 years N = 8,221</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td><strong>77%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>56%</td>
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</tbody>
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Parents’ Needs Assessment Survey

Questionnaire Sample

• N = 334 parents of students in 1st (aged 14) and 5th years (aged 17) across 11 randomly selected schools in Ireland (15.2% response rate)

Focus Group Sample

• N = 34 parents across the four regions of Ireland
What did you use the internet for in the past month?

22% of parents surveyed used the internet to search for mental health information in the previous month.
Parents and Young People’s Mental Health

If your child was going through a tough time, what support would you use?

- Look for help on the Internet: 70%
- Look for help on a dedicated mental health website: 64%
Receiving youth mental health…

- Professional Association: 25%
- Email: 20%
- Website: 26%
- Leaflet: 29%
Development of Online Resource for Parents

- Guidelines about identifying mental health problems in young people and how to deal with problems
- Directory of relevant local services to support young people
- Reliable information – youth mental health
- Reliable information - how parents can support their own mental health and wellbeing
Additional Suggestions - Focus Group Sessions

- Emphasis on positive mental health

“Tips to help us promote good mental health in our families”
Additional Suggestions - Focus Group Sessions

- Address technology gap between parents and young people

  “Facebook, how to supervise teenagers on it, how to discuss appropriate and inappropriate topics, pictures, how to get teenagers to think, reflect on what they say or upload”

  “People who work in offices forget there is a huge volume of parents who don’t really know much about computers. A young person can very quickly minimise something or delete histories, so you are up against it. We need training in this”
Additional Suggestions - Focus Group Sessions

- Practical parenting skills

  “Just to help parents to be aware of all the things kids are facing, the things that we never faced when we were younger”
Additional Suggestions - Focus Group Sessions

- Joined up approach – link to other mental health sites, how to navigate, determine most trustworthy

“There are so many websites and resources. Could organisations come together and have fewer, more focused websites?”
Additional Suggestions - Focus Group Sessions

- Parent face-to-face training

“Often just getting together with other parents gives you a sense of your own abilities with regard to parenting, a sense of solidarity, a sense of ‘Yes, I’m doing ok’

“I feel that reading a lot of information can confuse you. I personally think that all issues dealing with mental health need to be dealt with by people talking to each other”
“Anything at all which would help me understand, support and encourage my child would be greatly appreciated”
Topics parents most interested in receiving information on

- Alcohol and drug awareness
- Bullying
- Addressing school problems
- Developing adolescent coping skills and self-esteem
- Promoting positive family relationships
- Technology
Additional resources

The online resource should provide mental health resources for adults working with young people

86.3% agreed / strongly agreed
Parents needs in relation to using the resource

- Validity and reliability of information provided

  “There’s websites for everything but it’s knowing that this is the trusted and recommended site”

  “I’d prefer to go to a GP and ask them “What website would you recommend. If they gave me a website by all means I’d go to it”
Parents needs in relation to using the resource

- Complicated style
  “If it was too technical, not user friendly, e.g. design and information needs to be parent friendly”
  “If it came across as moralistic / judgmental and overly prescriptive”

- Awareness of website / resource
  “They should advertise it in GPs waiting rooms or on TV”

- Content
  “Needs to be updated regularly”
Implications: Resource Development

- Youth mental health
- Skills, practical tips
- Technology and communicating safely online
- Current topics
- Support – how it works, other online resources
- Minding yourself
Additional Information

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