Theme: Mental Health

Good mental health is important, it affects every part of your life - influencing how you think, feel and act. Mental health issues are very common and many people will have personal experience of them at some point in their lives. It's increasingly common that young experience mental health issues. Treatment and support can be very helpful, however, because of the stigma that exists many people do not feel comfortable talking about how they are feeling or asking for the help they need.

- **11.5% of young people** aged between 11-16 years have a **mental disorder**.
- In many European countries, suicide is the main cause of death for the 15-29 year olds.
- In the last 10 years the number of young people being admitted to hospital because of **self-harm has increased by 68%**.
- The poorer or more disadvantaged someone is, the more likely they are to experience mental health issues.
- **70% of young people** who experience a mental health issues **do not receive the appropriate support.**
- More than half of adults with mental health issues were diagnosed in childhood. Less than half of them were treated appropriately at the time.

How can we use the Internet of Things to support young people's mental health?

When thinking about how Internet of Things solutions could support young people's mental health you need to think about the problem you're trying to solve.
The term 'mental health issues' covers a lot of different things. There are many conditions that can affect someone's mental health. They range from things that can be relatively mild to very serious, from short term to long lasting. This means that solutions might work for one type of issue but not others.

There are many reasons why a young person might experience issues with their mental health. They can be caused by a number of different things including a family history of mental illness, biological factors (such as their brain chemistry or genes) and life experiences (including bullying, moving to a new town, divorce, pressure from social media, money problems, changes in relationships, stress). When developing your solution, it's important to think about what the causes of mental health problems might be and how they could influence what the user wants and needs.

Looking after your mental health is just as important as keeping fit and healthy but we usually only think about mental health when someone has already developed an issue. It's just as important to think about how to prevent problems and help people be mentally healthy. Explore how solutions might be able to help prevent young people from developing issues and support them to stay mentally healthy.

Finally, the Internet of Things is about internet connected devices capturing, monitoring and sharing data. Data privacy is very important but it is especially important because of the stigma that surrounds mental health issues. You should think about how your solution captures data, why, who can access it and how the data could help manage the young person's mental health.

Questions for brainstorming

- What examples of the Internet of Things do people know of? What makes something part of the Internet of Things?
- What does mental health mean to us?
- What are the different ways mental health/mental health issues affect young people?
- What support to young people with mental health issues receive? How do they find out about support available to them? Who supports them and how? How could Internet of Things solutions enhance this support?
- What are things that can help young people stay mentally healthy? How could Internet of Things solutions support or facilitate this?
- Are there any examples of Internet of Things solutions that support young people's mental health? How could we improve them?
- What stops young people from asking and getting support? Could an Internet of Things solution help overcome these barriers?
- What would a solution need to consider when it comes to data privacy? Think about how the data is collected, stored and shared, who controls it and who can access it.

**See our design toolkit for guidance on how to come up with new ideas!**

Examples

The Internet of Things is an exciting area of tech that is still growing and expanding into different areas of life. This means that although there are currently lots of apps and internet based solutions that aim to support young people's mental health there aren't many Internet of Things solutions in this area. To help get your ideas flowing, we've gathered together some interesting examples of internet based support for young people. The purpose of these examples is to help you to start thinking about what's already out there, consider how these solutions could be improved by linking them to the Internet of Things.

Silent Secret is an app that allows young people, aged 11-19, to safely and anonymously share their secrets, thoughts and news.

It's a social community built by and for young people. It aims help reduce young people's stress and anxiety by providing a safe place to share and connect with other young people as well as expert support organisations in times of need.

See more details at: http://www.silentsecret.com/
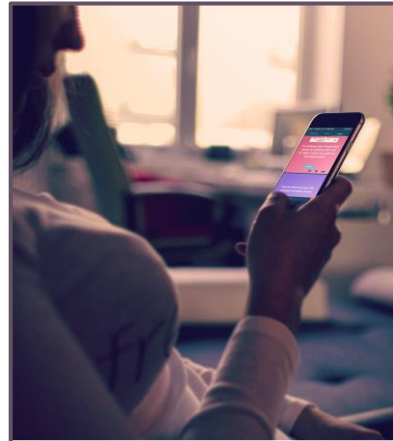
Moodometer is an easy to use interactive mood diary, developed by the NHS, which helps you monitor, understand and receive top tips on your emotional wellbeing, whenever or wherever you are.

Users can rate and track their moods. Moodometer has an in bult reminder system to support users as well as providing direct access to help and support, 24/7.

http://www.2gether.nhs.uk/moodometer-app

Pokémon Go didn't set out to help people manage their mental health but that's what is has done by getting users active and out of the house as well as making it easier to interact with friends and strangers alike.

Decades of research has shown the positive effects of exercise on people's moods. By presenting as a game, rather than a way to manage anxiety or depression, Pokémon Go is able to reach people who might not want to get professional help as well as helping people to avoid problems and stay mentally healthy.

See more details at: www.pokemongo.com

Other information

Here are some additional resources that might help to explore this theme:

- [Time to Change mental health facts](#)
- [Healthy Schools resources](#)
- [Sport England Research](#)
- [NHS Health apps](#)
- [NHS videos on young people and mental health](#)
- [Health and Social Care Information Centre](#)
- [Video: young people talking about their experience of eating disorders and recovery.](#)
- Mental health charities[: Young Minds, Papyrus, Samaritans, Children & Young People's Mental Health Coalition, Teen Mental Health, Mental Health Foundation](#)
- [Resources on mental health](#)
- [Directory of mental health/emotional wellbeing service providers in the UK](#)
- Some articles exploring issues around the Internet of Things:
  - [The Internet of Things Grows Up](#)
  - [The Mood Aware Internet of Things](#)
  - [Imagining The Future Of Lifelogging](#)