



Prime Minister's Youth Mental Health Project

IMPROVING YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH

FACT SHEET

Online initiatives

The Internet is a second home for the current generation of teenagers and their uptake of new technologies is very fast. Facebook and smartphones are now the media that many of them use when they are looking for information or help.

E-therapy

- E-therapy is proving to be an effective and more accessible option for those with mild mental health issues. E-therapy is an interactive computer-administered therapy. The proposed E-therapy programme for youth will provide a treatment that will focus on the common problems of anxiety and depression.
- E-therapy is an additional mental health treatment option which has real potential to extend mental health services to a wider population, particularly youth. It can be made available 24 hours a day, in a person's own environment, and can overcome barriers such as privacy, stigma, travelling time for people living in rural areas and delays in being able to access treatment.
- E-therapy has the potential to provide an effective alternative to traditional treatments. It can also provide health professionals with the opportunity to monitor progress and outcomes online.

Improving the youth-friendliness of mental health resources

- The Government provides a range of information and resources to support youth mental health. Agencies will overhaul this information to ensure it is up to date and youth-friendly.
- Today's young people are used to accessing information and advice "on the move". There has been huge growth, for example, in access to internet services through mobile means, and young people interacting by text and email rather than using helplines or making appointments to visit service sites.
- The Government will focus on improving the youth-friendliness of mental health-related resources for helplines, websites, young people, their parents, peers, schools and the community. This may involve, for example, adding Smartphone technology, using Facebook, text alerts, and other mobile and Internet tools.

Social Media Innovations Fund

- The Government is going to launch a public-private partnership fund designed to help youth providers keep their services technologically up-to-date.
- Over four years \$2 million will be invested to create a Social Media Innovations Fund to help youth service providers use social media to help young people.
- Contributions from corporates and philanthropists will be sought to help fund, alongside government, good ideas which could bring breakthroughs in youth mental health services.
- The Fund will foster innovation and the fast tracking of ideas, and help existing helplines and websites to improve their use of social media technology to engage with young people.



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Q & A

Online initiatives

E-therapy

What is E-therapy?

E-therapy can be defined most simply as computer-administered therapy. E-therapy requires direct input by patients through the Internet or a stand-alone computer. It can be carried out at home. The Ministry of Health currently funds an E-therapy treatment programme for adults called "Beating the Blues". This is a Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, for people 18 years and older with mild to moderate mental health problems. An E-therapy programme targeted at young people is not yet being provided publicly in New Zealand, but a sense of how it might work can be gained at: www.beatingtheblues.co.nz

Why might young people be attracted to this?

Offering a broad range of ways for young people to access mental health services, including using technology, makes sense. Young people can be reluctant to approach face-to-face health services for help, so E-therapy has the advantage of being both private and portable.

What evidence do you have that it works?

E-therapy has been shown to be an effective treatment option. Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), often used in E-therapy, has been shown to be an effective psychological therapy that helps people to critically evaluate the way their thoughts and behaviour can influence their mood and the way they feel.

How much will this cost?

A total of \$2.7 million over four years has been budgeted to introduce E-therapy for young people in New Zealand.

When will it start?

Consideration of which E-therapy tool will be used will begin this year. The selected programme is expected to be rolled out in 2013.

Improving the youth-friendliness of mental health resources

Why do we need to make mental health resources more youth friendly?

Young people are big users of technology and this is reflected in how mental health resources are being accessed. For example, there has been a sharp rise in texting helplines rather than using 0800 numbers. Smartphones and social media are also now widely used.

There are already some effective government and non-government resources and information channels for addressing youth mental health. There is scope to make information even more youth friendly and widely available

to young people seeking support and advice. For example, existing channels will be improved through smartphone technology, Facebook, text alerts and other mobile and Internet tools.

How will you test youth friendliness?

Where possible, new approaches will be tested with young people through the Ministry of Youth Development's youth networks.

Social media innovations fund

What is the Social Media Innovations Fund?

The Social Media Innovations Fund will be a public/private partnership to support youth service providers to update and upgrade the technology they use in their work with young people.

How will it work?

The Government will put \$2 million over four years into the fund and contributions will be sought from corporate and philanthropic donors. Government will help providers develop promising ideas and will then broker private sector funding for them where appropriate.

What are the kinds of things it might fund?

The fund will help providers of youth services such as helplines and websites to improve their use of social media technology to engage with young people. For example, if providers want to update the way they reach young people, they might access funding for the development of things like smartphone apps. Or, they might be funded to develop new software.