

## YMCA DownsLink Group: Transforming Young Lives

News Story 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2020

YMCA DownsLink Group Launch Phase 1 of 'e-wellbeing' Mental Health and Wellbeing Website for Children and Young People



[YMCA DownsLink Group](#), one of the South East's biggest provider of counselling services (YMCA Dialogue), is launching a new online service, [www.e-wellbeing.co.uk](http://www.e-wellbeing.co.uk), that supports young people with their wellbeing and mental health. [e-wellbeing](#) has been in development for a year and was due to launch in six months. However, increased pressure on young people's mental health, due to the COVID-19 outbreak, has meant that the development team at YMCA Dialogue have worked around the clock over the last four weeks to get the project live. Funding has been provided by Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, alongside support from the NHS Sustainability & Transformation Plan, to bring forward the launch date and ensure young people across Sussex can get the help they need.

At launch, e-wellbeing will be an accessible guide to the mental health services available to young people in Sussex and Surrey. However, interactive content will be added over the next few months to enhance the user experience and a marketing campaign will target young people. Young people have also been involved in developing the service and testing it at each stage of development.

Cat Pritchard, Wellbeing and Therapeutic Services Manager & Digital Lead, YMCA DownsLink Group, explains how the new service will work and why it is different to other 'wellbeing' websites:

"Mental health systems and pathways are often complicated and many young people, parents & carers, and professionals remark that they are difficult to navigate. This website works to simplify the process of accessing the right help, in the right place, at the right time.

Local services have worked incredibly hard to adapt their offers so they can continue to meet the needs of young people remotely. Now, more than ever, it's so important that young people know

there is support available to them and that there are lots of different ways they can help themselves and their peers.”

[e-wellbeing](#) is different to other websites, in that it poses a series of questions to help guide young people to the appropriate content. It provides young people with self-help guidance and information about different aspects of mental health difficulties and supports them to make the decision about whether they may need help from a professional service. Crucially, they will then be connected with information about services in their local area.”

Commenting on the launch of the new website, Dr Rick Fraser, Chief Medical Officer at Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, which provides specialist mental health services to people of all ages in Sussex said:

“We are living in a time of unprecedented change around COVID-19, a time when just about every part of our lives seem very different to how they were only a few weeks ago and a time when our usual sources of support, communication and connecting may not be there. For young people this can lead to feeling isolated, frightened and stressed which can lead to mental ill health problems. What I like about the digital platform for young people is that it provides a virtual place for young people to access good quality information, support and link with others in a way that is safe and managed. This is an innovation that works in COVID-19 times but should also work well in times beyond. I look forward to seeing how this develops.”

Kent Surrey Sussex Academic Health Science Network (KSS AHSN) have also been working with YMCA DownsLink Group on a number of activities to speed up the introduction of the new service, including identifying funding opportunities and potential partners. Commenting on the initiative Des Holden, KSS AHSN’s Medical Director, said:

“Wellbeing is not just about physical health, it is about mental and social health as well. To bring the information needed by children and young people, their families and other supports in their life together, in one place, accessed through one front door is a great step forward.

I’m very proud that, when so much focus is on dealing with a viral pandemic, organisations are coming together to offer something better for the health of young people. At KSS AHSN we’re delighted to have been able to play our part in this project locally, and we are championing the initiative nationally. Long may innovation in young peoples’ health continue.”

It is expected that [e-wellbeing](#) will have a range of impacts, including supporting more young people to develop skills to improve their mental health or maintain positive mental health, whilst providing faster access to the right service for children and young people. It should also ensure higher rates of

**appropriate** referrals to existing mental health services, and, in doing, should reduce pressure on frontline services, including GP surgeries and A&E.

[e-wellbeing](#) has been developed by the team YMCA Dialogue, part of YMCA DownsLink Group. YMCA Dialogue has been running for over twenty years, and provides a range of counselling services for children, young people and families. It is the largest provider of school counselling in Brighton & Hove, and, in 2019, it provided therapeutic services to over 3,500 people in schools and communities across Sussex and Surrey. [e-wellbeing](#) will extend the reach of their service and enable more children and young people to access mental health advice, support and professional services using digital solutions.

The YMCA Dialogue team are working with web development company Boz Boz to create the e-wellbeing service. Boz Boz are truly committed to creating a website that is engaging, easy for young people to use, and, upholds the values of YMCA DownsLink Group.

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For further information or images please contact Ruth Cobb, Head of Marketing & Communications  
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#### **Notes to editors:**

#### **YMCA DownsLink Group**

YMCA Downslink Group is a registered charity working across Sussex and Surrey providing a range of services to children, young people and families. It is one of the biggest providers of youth services in the South East and is committed to transforming the lives of vulnerable young people so that they can truly belong, contribute and thrive.

The charity's work covers a wide range of areas including accommodation, mental health, housing advice, counselling, sexual exploitation, mentoring, education, training and apprenticeships. Each year the charity supports over 10,000 young people operating from centres in Brighton & Hove, Guildford, Horsham, Crawley, Worthing, Eastbourne and Hastings. To find out more please visit [www.ymcadlg.org](http://www.ymcadlg.org)

#### **Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust**

Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust provides specialist mental health services to people of all ages in Sussex.

#### **Kent Surrey Sussex Academic Health Science Network**

[KSS AHSN](#) is one of the [15 AHSNs](#) across England, [established by NHS England in 2013](#) to improve health and generate economic growth by spreading innovation at pace and scale.

We connect citizens, NHS and academic organisations, local authorities, the third sector and industry to facilitate change across whole health and social care economies.

We have a clear focus on 'transforming lives through innovation'.

KSS AHSN covers the whole of Kent, Surrey and Sussex. Our impact comes from our ability to bring people, resources and organisations together, delivering benefits that could not be achieved alone.