

New mental health resource puts the power in your pocket

March 17 2015

A [new app and educational programme](#) designed to help young people manage mental health problems is being launched today (17 March) at an event at St Stephens High School in Port Glasgow.

The event will bring mental health practitioners together with 300 school pupils to mark the launch of a unique pilot scheme called SafeSpot. SafeSpot uses digital technology to put vital coping strategies and support in the pockets of those most at risk and utilises social media to increase Mental Health Awareness in young people.

Developed with NHS clinical staff, in collaboration with the University of Glasgow, SafeSpot is available on mobile devices and provides greater access to advice and resources that allow young people to manage stress in a positive and healthy way.

There are two components to SafeSpot – a mobile [app](#) and an educational programme –both of which will today be implemented in secondary schools in Inverclyde as part of a pilot scheme which is the first of its kind to be trialled in Scotland.

The SafeSpot app brings together personalised coping strategies and techniques, a personal safety plan and easy access to crisis numbers and emergency contacts in a single mobile resource. It comes pre-loaded with information about local services and clinically tested audio psychological techniques which are developed with mental health professionals for all Young People to use.

The SafeSpotter Programme will train selected older students to be first points of contact in schools for pupils experiencing mental health difficulties and provide them with increased mental health awareness and teaching.

When used together, the two elements of SafeSpot offer comprehensive preventative measures we hope will reduce the development of maladaptive coping skills that may require medical, education and social services intervention in the future.

The initial pilot programme will be launched for free at St Stephen's High School in Inverclyde with the support of Inverclyde Council, meaning that young people in the area will be able to download the app for free. The first group of Safe Spotters will also be given training to support the scheme in local schools. The pilot will test the uptake and effectiveness of SafeSpot before funding is sought for a wider rollout across Scotland. The app is also available for anyone else to download from Apple's App Store for free for a limited period whilst the pilot is being carried out.

Should the trial scheme be a success, [mental health professionals](#) will call for local councils, health boards and GP practices around Scotland to invest in making the app free to download for young people across Scotland.

The project is being developed by Dr MallikaPunukollu and Dr Fiona Mitchell, both of whom are Specialist Registrars in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Honorary Clinical Lecturers at the University of Glasgow. They are also both members of the Royal College of Psychiatrists.

Dr Mitchell said: "SafeSpot is a response to the need for more targeted, accessible and effective treatments around [mental health](#). It has been

designed to deliver information, techniques and external help in moments of crisis or distress and to be available to young people as and when they need it.

"The app offers preventative strategies which may ultimately reduce the burden on educational and social services later in life. The costs involved are a relatively cheap preventative measure when compared to the cost of treating long-term mental illness. It also allows young people to engage more with their academic and social lives during a vital part of their development, and reduce the rate of mental illness in young people.

"We wish to thank Inverclyde Council for supporting this pilot and allowing us to take the first step to ensuring that one day this app can be free for all young people in Scotland."

Helen Minnis, Professor of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at the University of Glasgow, said: "Safe Spot looks likely to be a very interesting innovation for helping young people feel safe and knowing where to find help. The research based on Safe Spot will be important in finding out whether it can help reduce distress in young people."

Shona Cardle, Chief Executive of Yorkhill Children's Charity, said: "We were delighted to support the development of SafeSpot. We could immediately see the benefit of providing [young people](#) with a timely, accessible coping mechanism - both in dealing with the immediate anxiety of hospital visits, as well as distressing circumstances in their daily lives."

Provided by University of Glasgow

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