

NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR HEALTH AND CARE EXCELLENCE

Medical technologies evaluation programme

Equality impact assessment: Topic selection and scoping

MT580 Guided self-help digital cognitive behavioural therapy for children and young people with mild to moderate symptoms of anxiety or low mood

The impact on equality has been assessed during this evaluation according to the principles of the [NICE Equality scheme](#).

1. Have any potential equality issues been identified during the development of the topic briefing note or during selection, and, if so, what are they?

A number of potential equality issues have been identified. However, there are multiple equality considerations for this class of technologies which are addressed in more detail in [NICE's guideline on depression in children and young people: identification and management](#). Key aspects include:

- Children and young people from certain socio-economic backgrounds and those with disabilities are disproportionately affected by higher risk of mental health issues.
- Patient-facing digital health technologies may be unsuitable for people with cognitive impairment, problems with manual dexterity or learning disabilities. Carer or advocate assistance may be required to navigate the program and consideration of this should be made by the company as well as the referring practitioner when considering appropriate intervention for the child or young person. Further considerations can be found in NICE Guidance on mental health problems in people with learning disabilities ([NG54, 2016](#)).
- Patient facing digital health technologies should ensure their program is accessible for screen readers (people with visual impairments) and those with hearing impairments.
- Children and young people with English as a second language may have difficulties navigating digital technologies provided in English.

- The way that children and young people with symptoms of anxiety or depression and their families view mental health problems may be affected by their ethnic, religion and cultural background.
- Specific groups may particularly benefit from improved access to CBT online, for example:
 - Adolescents may have increased engagement with this format of intervention.
 - Those living in rural areas might have problems with travelling to face-to-face appointments if public transport is sporadic and unreliable, and their parents are unable to drive them there.
 - Children and young people from lower socioeconomic groups may lack the financial support required to ensure that they attend face to face sessions. These families may also be less likely to seek help in the first place and or be less able to navigate the healthcare system.
 - Children and young people with more chaotic home lives may lack the family support required to ensure that they attend face to face sessions. These families may also be less likely to seek help in the first place and or be less able to navigate the healthcare system.
 - Children and young people from abusive homes may be prevented from seeking help and or attending face to face therapy sessions by controlling parents or carers.
 - Looked after children and young people may lack support needed to engage with mental health services.

However, accessibility would not be improved for those who are unable to engage with a digital service due to a lack of equipment, unavailability of internet connection, lack of experience with computers or lack the privacy needed to complete the intervention.

Age, disability, race and religion or belief are protected characteristics under the Equality Act (2010).

2. What is the preliminary view as to what extent these potential equality issues need addressing by the committee?

The committee should consider all the equality issues when making recommendations. In particular, accessibility to mental health care may not be improved for those who are unable to engage with a digital service due to a lack of equipment, unavailability of internet connection, lack of experience with computers or lack the privacy needed to complete the intervention.

3. Has any change to the draft scope been agreed to highlight potential equality issues?

No. No additional potential equality issues were raised than those already included in the scope.

4. Have any additional stakeholders related to potential equality issues been identified during the scoping process, and, if so, have changes to the stakeholder list been made?

No additional stakeholders related to potential equality issues were identified during the scoping process.

Approved by Programme Director: Sarah Byron

Date: 26 August 2022