Project 5: Being a Parent

Client: Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology and Neuroscience.

Context: The Centre for Parent and Child Support (CPCS) is an NHS specialist child and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS), part of the South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust. CPCS specialises in developing, evaluating and delivering innovative programmes that make a difference to children's and families' lives. One such programme developed at the centre, "Empowering Parents, Empowering Communities" (EPEC), trains local parents to deliver parenting courses in their own community. This group intervention lasts for 8 weeks and a number of research studies and trials have shown that it is highly effective at improving parenting confidence and skills and reducing child behaviour problems.

EPEC runs courses all over London and the UK, with almost 1000 parents per year benefiting from the interventions. However, the demand and need for this intervention outweighs EPEC's ability to deliver it. Many struggling parents are unwilling or unable to attend face to face groups. Barriers include stigma at attending mental health services, lack of local provision, work commitments, other family members to look after, lack of transport and disability. This means that a large number of parents who could benefit from EPEC's courses are not able to attend.

Project objective: We seek the expertise of a team of software developers to help turn our evidence-based EPEC intervention in to an engaging and effective online intervention in the form of an app. Our ultimate goal is to have the online intervention available for parents as a standalone intervention so that they can access it in a time and place that suites them, however the goal of the current project will be to develop an app to work in conjunction with the face to face groups. We hope that parents will be able to interact with each other, complete homework tasks, write reflective logs, speak with the group facilitators and access extra information in between weekly sessions.

Expected product: Either a web or a mobile device application, to be negotiated with the client.

Challenges and opportunities:

1. The team has considerable flexibility to negotiate with the client what the project will be like. However, this represents a risk. The team will need to keep the project and the emerging product focussed. If the team becomes overambitious and tries to deliver too much, what is achieved may become less useful.
2. Full supervision and clinical instruction will be provided by qualified clinical psychologists and a team of experienced parenting professionals. Course materials will be provided by EPEC and included into the app in partnership with the software team. Broad ideas for how the app might want to function have already been drawn out by the clinical team, but this will be developed with the software team.
3. As the client has limited technical ability and the end-product is potentially complex, the team will need to carefully consider how the end product will be deployed.

Intellectual property arrangements: All IP will remain with the client but with recognition of authorship and the potential for future paid development.

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