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## What is *In Hand*?

*In Hand* is a mobile phone 'app' co-produced by young people working with an arts organisation, digital agency and NHS mental health service.

The app was launched in May 2014, is free to use, with almost 6,000 downloads and 22,000 user sessions by the end of October 2014.

The app is designed to:

- **Bring balance to everyday life**

The *In Hand* website says... 'Life ain't easy. Some days are good. Some days are bad. Some are just fine. We understand this. Our team created this simple tool to help you focus on where you're at and bring back the balance.'

- **Help you, be you**

The *In Hand* website says.... 'In Hand is about the here and now. The app allows you to focus yourself in a moment of stress or low mood. Once the app knows how you are feeling it will take you through simple steps to help you, be you. These activities include talking to someone, reading inspirational quotes and taking pictures.'

## The research

The innovative co-design approach aimed to ensure the purpose, content, functions and design of the app met the young people's expressed needs. Our independent research aimed to find out how and why young people used *In Hand* and, in particular, whether they reported it promoted their mental wellbeing.

In September and October 2014, we gave young people using *In Hand* the option to fill in a survey from a link in the app. We offered entry into a prize draw (£50 in shopping vouchers) as an incentive to people for taking part. We also asked people to opt in to tell us more about how they'd used the app by talking with a researcher over the phone or via email.

We used the 7 dimensions of mental wellbeing from the Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale to ask *In Hand* users whether they thought it had helped them in any of these areas. Young people helping to design the survey also suggested 3 other questions which reflected their interests and experiences, meaning we had 10 questions about mental wellbeing included in the survey.

We received 131 completed questionnaires and carried out 8 detailed interviews.

'Sometimes, I'll think I'm not doing very good and I'll think I'm down and I won't feel good. But then when you look at it and you have to choose how you are feeling, it makes you think "Oh, I'm not feeling that bad after all" and you can really assess how you are feeling.'  
(*In Hand* user 7)

Example 'Great' screen



www.inhand.org.uk



*In Hand* home screen/main menu

Example 'So-So' screen



'I use the app in the morning, so if you are feeling better in the morning, your outlook on the day is a lot better on the whole. It's a way to start the day... especially if the bus is crowded and I get anxious.'  
(*In Hand* user 4)

'...it really kind of gave me the power to, sort of, well think "how am I feeling" rather than everyone else, and make my own mind up about the day – how I'm going to cope, it gives you that.'  
(*In Hand* user 1)



Example 'Not Good' screen



Example 'Awful' screen

'I use it frequently when I want to feel better fast. The main menu is what I use the most. Usually I like to play music or call a friend when I'm having a bad day. It reminds me to do this.'  
(*In Hand* user 5)

## Why are people using *In Hand*?

### They like it!

Across the survey respondents:

- 91% agreed or strongly agreed that it was easy to use
- 68% said it had partly (33%) or completely (35%) met their needs
- 65% said they would definitely use it again when they are not feeling good and 32% said they would definitely use it as part of their daily routine
- 84% of respondents would recommend it to their family or friends

Overall, survey respondents gave *In Hand* an average score of 7.27 out of 10.

### Being an app was important

Survey respondents and interviewees rated highly the aspects of *In Hand* that related to it being an app – using it anywhere, using their phone/tablet to manage how they are feeling and it being private. Interviewees also highlighted the importance of anonymity, that it didn't involve other people (personally or professionally) and that it was non-judgemental.

### Using it to regularly assess moods and feelings

Some people were using *In Hand* to increase awareness and understanding about their emotions and monitor how they were feeling. A few interviewees talked about how using *In Hand* was becoming a regular, or even daily, activity. Some noticed that by doing a simple reflection, they often concluded their mood may not be low as they initially thought (see user quotes on the left hand side above).

### Using it for a boost and positive lift

Other people described how they used *In Hand* as a tool for distraction when feeling low and to give their mood a boost when they needed it (see user quotes on the right hand side above).

## How does *In Hand* help with mental wellbeing?

As shown in the table, the majority of survey respondents reported that *In Hand* helped them on 8 of the dimensions of wellbeing. We can also see that those dimensions rated most highly relate to the purpose of *In Hand*, for example promoting a positive outlook, relaxation and thinking clearly. It is important to note that across all dimensions, most respondents rated this help to be 'a little bit', with a smaller proportion rating it as 'a lot'.

Mental wellbeing dimension	Percentage of users rating <i>In Hand</i> as helpful (n = 108*)
Have a positive outlook#	82%
Less stressed	78%
Feel relaxed#	77%
Think clearly#	74%
More able to take control	70%
Make my own mind up about things#	63%
Deal with problems well#	61%
Feel useful#	59%
Ready to talk to someone else	51%
Feel close to other people#	40%

# dimensions from the Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale  
\* number of survey respondents who had used *In Hand* at least once

## Conclusions

This study has shown that simple digital tools like *In Hand* can have a role in promoting mental wellbeing. In particular, users identified how it could support self-awareness, monitoring and in some cases regulation of mood as part of everyday life. As the use of tools such as *In Hand* grows, it will be important to provide clear information for users about the value, limitations and possible risks of using such tools independently. Further research is required to assess whether using tools like *In Hand* can have a preventative function and reduce the incidence of mental ill health in the longer term.