

Virtual Therapeutic Relationships

Developing principles and practices for meaningful digital therapy

Demand for counselling services to provide specialist treatment for perinatal mental health needs has grown exponentially. As a charitable organisation, CrossReach have been delivering perinatal services for nearly thirty years but recognise that there are significant barriers to accessing meaningful support including geography, time and social stigma.

CrossReach Online Therapy is a collaborative research project between the Digital Health and Care Institute (DHI) and CrossReach.

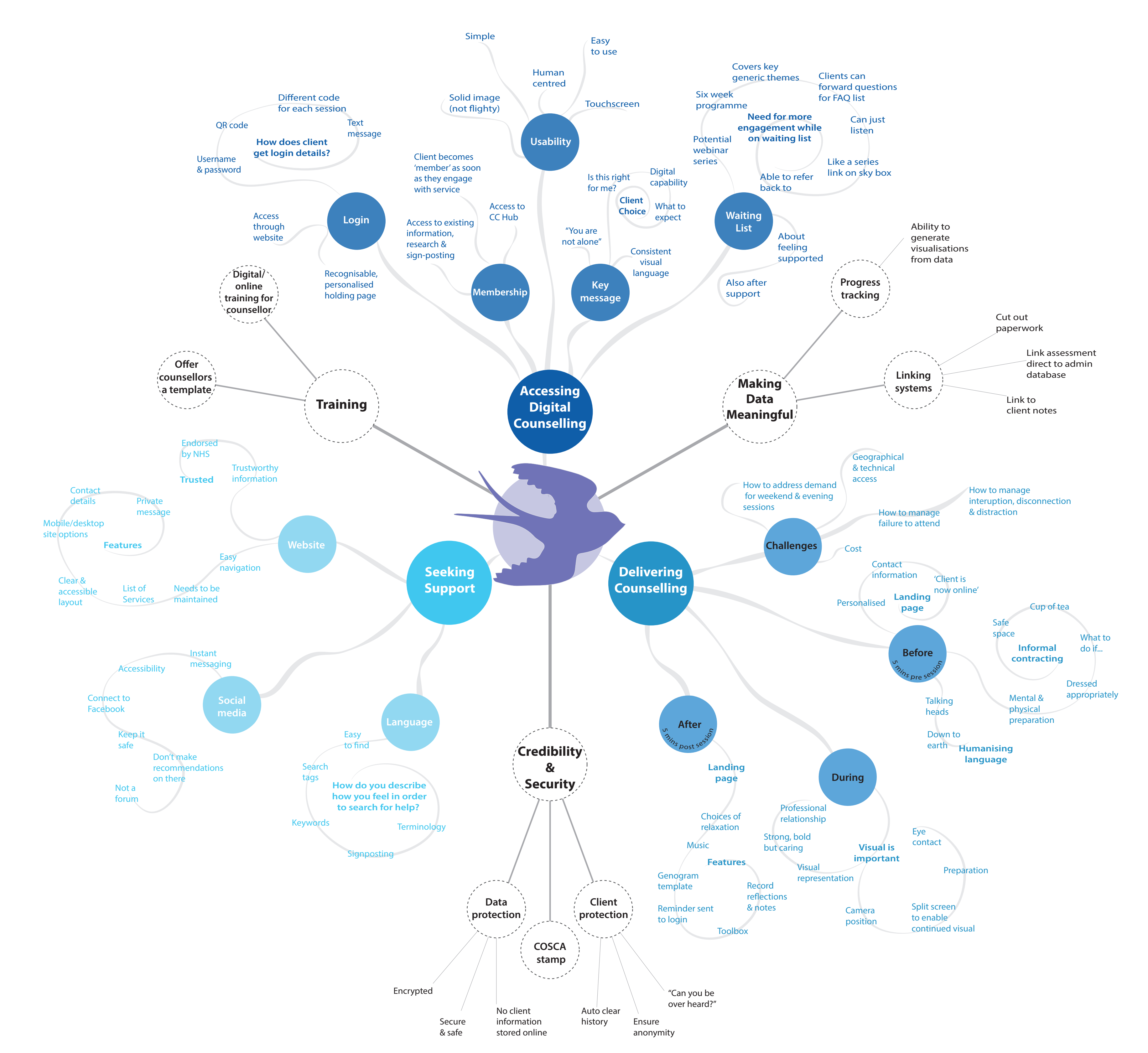
Using design as a methodological approach, the project aims to co-design a new model of digital counselling that is driven by user experience and can enable people with peri-natal depression (PND) to access and experience meaningful counselling services remotely.

Key Questions

What makes a counselling experience meaningful?

How might a meaningful experience be delivered digitally?

Digital Recommendations



Key Findings

This research presents a series of principles relevant to the delivery of counselling on a digital platform and are underpinned by a number of key digital recommendations. The principles, co-designed by people accessing and delivering counselling services for PND are:

- Support a client-centred approach
- Enable and support initial contact
- Create a safe and secure space for counselling
- Support sustained engagement
- Provide an integrative framework for digital delivery



Conclusion

This study offers deep insights into the requirements for enabling meaningful virtual therapeutic relationships. Drawing on the perspectives of people who have experienced counselling for PND, counsellors who deliver support and academics working in the field of maternal mental health, the proposed principles and recommendations provide a shared underpinning for creating the conditions conducive to a meaningful digital interaction.

Future research activity will focus on the technical specification of digital delivery of counselling and the development of new models of interaction to support those involved.

Glasgow School of Art / Digital Health & Care Institute
CrossReach

CrossReach Online Therapy

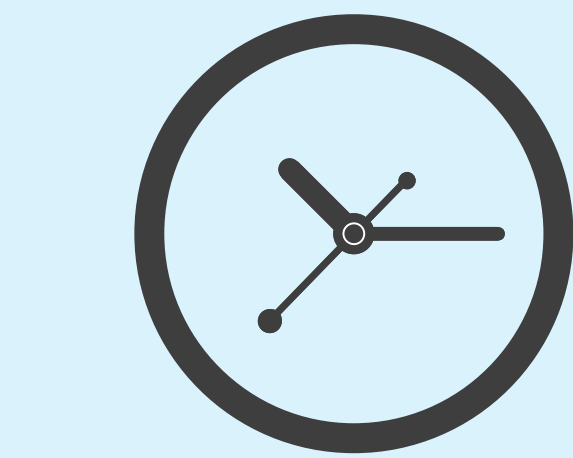
- Methodology:
- 2 Experience Labs
 - 3 Pre-Lab Workshops/Observation
 - Journey Mapping
 - Visual Storytelling
 - Digital Prototyping

Participants:

- 6 people who have experienced PND
- 8 PND counsellors
- 1 maternal mental health academic

2016/17

Location:



14+ Hours of data capture

Research Team:

- Dr Leigh-Anne Hepburn
- Angela Tulloch