

MindMate. My trusted friend.

Industry sector

Public sector

Client

NHS Leeds South
and East Clinical
Commissioning Group

Design consultancy

Thompson Brand Partners

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Executive summary

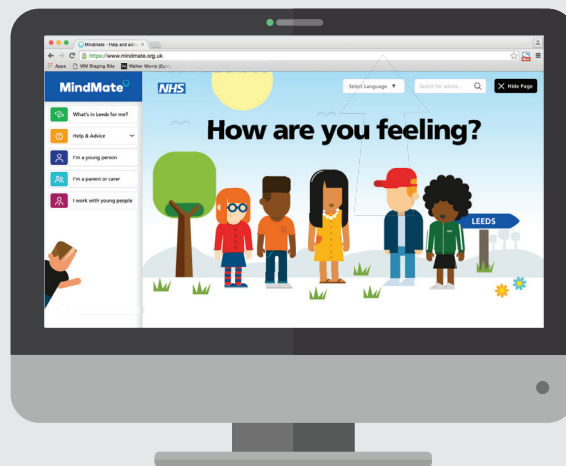
Alarmingly in the UK, there's a 20-year difference in life expectancy between those suffering mental ill health and the average.* Mental health service providers are struggling with increases in demand, with referrals to CAMHS (Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services) increasing five times faster than the workforce.**

Yet mental health services are still shockingly under-resourced and ineffective.

NHS Leeds South and East Clinical Commissioning Group (Leeds CCG) was determined to bring the city together on these distressing issues. Their focus was the creation of a safe place for young people. Young people aged between 12 and 19 suffering with all types of emotional and mental health concerns – from stress about school to feelings about food to coping with self-harm.

Thompson created this place and called it MindMate. Through agile, user-centric design we created a website that makes sense of the help available. We used design to make services more accessible and helped transform support for young people with complex issues.

We ran workshops, created forums and tested everything with the people who mattered most – the young people themselves. Our writers, designers and developers consulted on everything from naming, branding and colour, through to UX and functionality.



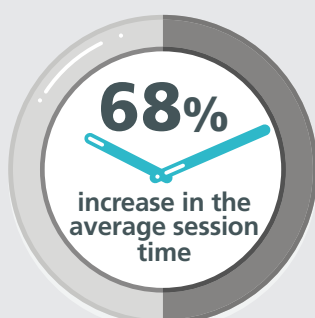
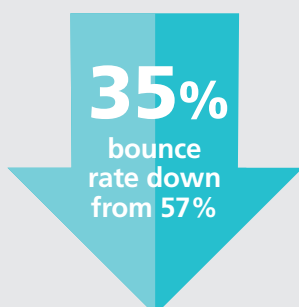
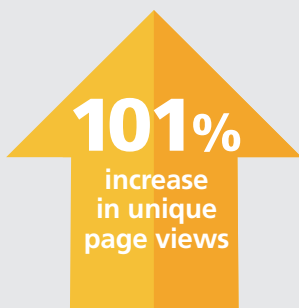
Executive summary

MindMate is much more than a website. It has quickly become the trusted friend that young people turn to – designed with them for them.

Since launch, MindMate has exceeded expectations. As well as smashing targets, it has inspired the sector, created an ambassador programme and become a template for other CCGs. Its unique design approach has ensured it deals with the most extreme sensitivities in a way that relates rather than patronises.

MindMate is a service that the Leeds is truly proud of, and has given young people a place they can trust. A place that welcomes them when they need it most.

(300 words)



“We are pleased to have commissioned such an important resource for the young people of Leeds. We are very proud that young peoples’ thoughts, opinions and experiences have helped to shape the way the MindMate website looks and works: from initial research through to the final branding functionality of the site. We feel we have learnt a lot from this process and are excited to see how MindMate continues to develop to become a valuable source of support for young people and their families.”

Matt Ward, Chief Operating Officer,
NHS Leeds South and East Clinical Commissioning Group

Video link:
<https://vimeo.com/171122103>

Website:
www.mindmate.org.uk

Project overview

Outline of project brief

The brief was to help create a place that young people suffering from mental health issues could go to for help. Apart from the key output being an online facility and needing to comply with NHS brand guidelines, the brief was very open.

The target audience was young people aged from 12 to 19. Many of these will not know yet exactly how to describe what they're feeling or experiencing and all can vary hugely in terms of literacy skills, age and mental health issues. This makes for a challenging and diverse user group.

The key objectives were to create a place that:

1. Helps young people to feel safe and understood, without being overwhelmed and confused.
2. Speaks their language without them feeling patronised.
3. Acts as a centralised resource for mental wellbeing in Leeds, making sense of the disconnected services available.
4. Helps rally the city to improve mental health service provision.

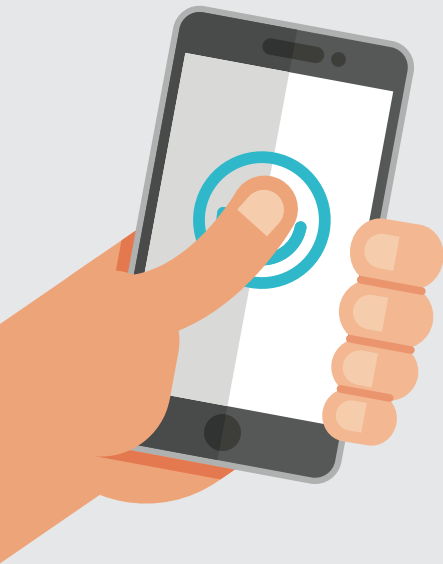
From a technical point of view the site needed to be:

Scalable – plenty of room to grow the site, add more content and develop future partnerships.

Accessible – suitable for young people from a range of backgrounds and abilities. Whether they had low literacy, English was a second language, or they required a screen-reader, it had to be accessible to all.

Responsive – as with just about all websites these days, but with a large proportion of young people accessing the site through mobiles, responsiveness was key to its success.

Finally we wanted to make sure that it would be a service that partners and organisations were keen to be involved with. It couldn't just be a static site that young people went to when they were feeling a bit low – it had to capture the community's imagination through design and inspire them to join forces in changing the landscape of emotional wellbeing services for the better. The more people who were involved with it, the more valuable it would be to the community.



Project overview

Description

Leeds CCG is one of the NHS's commissioning groups, with responsibility for improving the health and wellbeing of its communities. Its key challenges are tackling health inequalities, a growing elderly population and a health and social care system in which any funding growth will be limited.

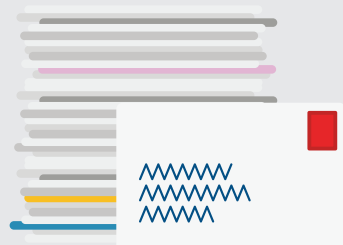
Mental health issues are higher in South and East Leeds than the national average. The young people who suffer mental illness are provided with a range of services. Getting these young people to speak about their illness and to engage with the mental health teams is extremely difficult. Many avoid contact altogether, whilst others feel patronised and marginalised by the traditional approaches. Many don't understand the way they are feeling, and don't know where to go for the right advice and support.

Overview of market

Until recently mental health has been a taboo subject. Only in the last five years have people begun to talk about it more openly. But that's just the grown-ups; it's a completely different matter when it comes to the emotional wellbeing of young people.

According to Public Health England, Leeds benchmarks as having a larger number of teenage pregnancies and a higher incident rate for domestic abuse compared to the national average.*** These are key indicators of an increased risk of emotional and mental health needs.

In 2014, data was released indicating a rising demand for emotional wellbeing and mental health service provision among children and young people aged between 12 and 19. In reaction, Leeds CCG and Leeds City Council aim to tackle critical issues such as lengthening waiting times of up to 12 weeks for an appointment (with no support) and a national rise in referrals relating to self-harm. In particular, the rise of, and increasing pressure from, social media, has presented a huge challenge in terms of dealing with issues.



Project overview

Project launch date

Work started in January 2015, with MindMate officially launched in October 2015.

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Size of design budget and production costs

Given the funding constraints in the NHS, the budget was a modest £30,000. This had to include research, naming, branding, design and build of the website, population with content and service information, a search functionality and the management of both in-person and virtual focus groups.

(705 words)



Outline of design solution

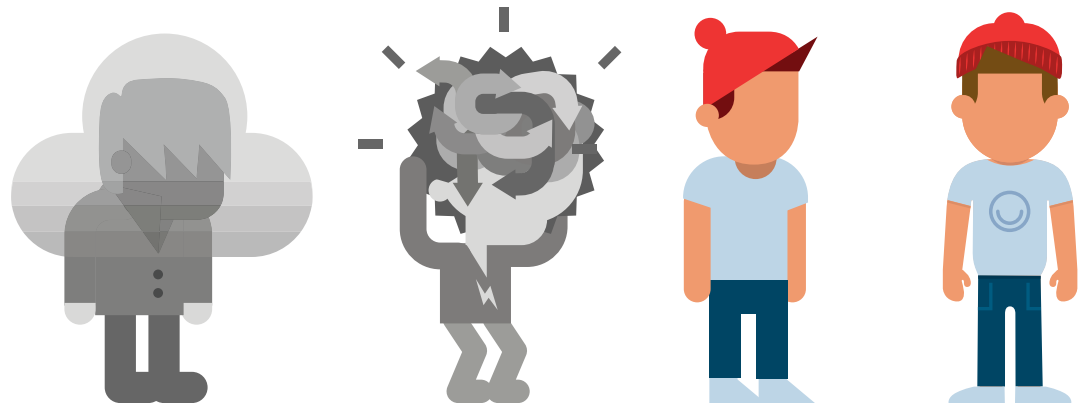
Our approach was based on the idea that if the service was going to be central to the lives of children and young people, then children and young people must be central to its creation.

This presented its own set of challenges, as the outcomes might have suffered if we tried to incorporate everyone's ideas. So we adopted an agile, user-centered workflow that let young people and mental health professionals see how everything was progressing and feel included in the project, at every single stage.

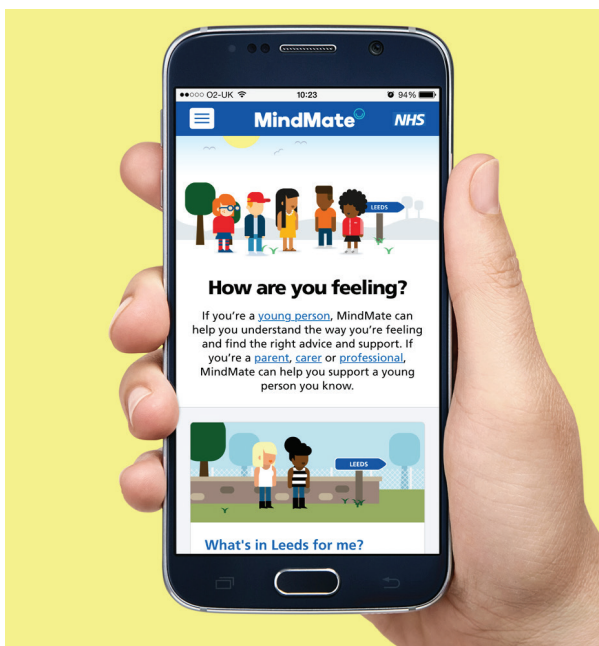
We recognised that giving the service a name that young people in Leeds could feel comfortable with and love was very important. And so MindMate was born.

MindMate[©]

From the initial naming process to the launch of the site in October 2015, we ran workshops, research groups and set up online forums on platforms such as Basecamp and Facebook, to get everyone talking about what really mattered to them. And instead of simply sitting them down with an account manager and some biscuits, asking what they thought and cut-and-pasting it into a brief, we brought writers, designers and developers into the groups, asking questions and really understanding the project first-hand. It wasn't the easiest way to do things, but it definitely helped improve the final output.



Design development to a brighter, happier style of character.



Outline of design solution

The overall look and tone of voice for MindMate were of particular importance, especially as both needed to adhere to NHS guidelines. Too clinical or too kiddy, and we risked alienating the people we wanted to welcome.

Our groups told us that using photography of real people posed the risk of our visitors not seeing their issues in the people chosen. It is also very hard to see mental health issues, so photography was eliminated.

Instead we worked closely with young people to develop an illustration style that allowed them to project their own emotions into the characters. The range of characters ensured all visitors could see themselves and we have also created a game where visitors can create their own. A vibrant colour palette was created to bring the site to life and engage users of all ages. The tone of voice is inclusive and engaging, and never patronising. Every last piece of content on the site was written with the help of young people and approved by them, too. Our research with them led us to use terms like 'feeling low' or 'worried' instead of 'depressed' or 'anxious'. The result? A site that is easily understood and truly useful.



Outline of design solution

Accessibility was also a key consideration, so we made sure everything on the site was simple to translate into multiple languages and easily read by screen-readers, adhering to the WCAG AA rating throughout.

Finally, we also needed to ensure that young people felt their confidentiality was protected. To help, we added a visible 'Hide Page' button that quickly took them away from MindMate to another site if visitors got too close.

(483 words)



Summary of results



The site launched in October 2015 and the results have been excellent.

The main purpose of MindMate was to educate and engage with children and young people. The success of this can be measured using website analytics, but this would only give us part of the story.

The most important objective was getting young people involved with the whole process. This was never going to be 'crowd-sourcing' ideas from students, but rather to incorporate their thinking into every aspect of the project, from written content and information hierarchy to functionality and design.

We've seen great success in the way the people of Leeds have embraced the concept and expanded upon it, something that the visual style has contributed to enormously. What started as a name and a website has grown into a movement that young people are proud to be associated with, and that professionals love to use, too.

Summary of results

I really like the idea of MindMate, it helps young people all around Leeds if they have any worries about their mental health. Really recommend.
Paige, 17



Simple and easy to use. The website gets across the appropriate message and gives young people the help and support they need.
Sam, 17



A wide range of options and help on the homepage of the website for not only young people.
Beka, 17



As MindMate did not replace another website, we cannot easily compare the effectiveness before and after. The analytics do though clearly show how popular the site has become and how its performance has improved significantly since launch.

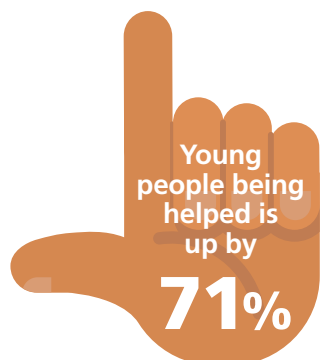


1,495
young people helped
in May 2016 alone

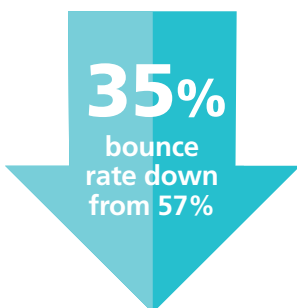
1,495 young people have come to MindMate in May 2016 alone – these are real people with real problems, who might not have found help otherwise.



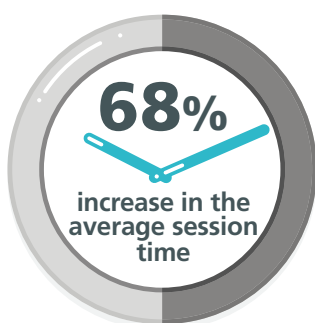
101% increase in unique page views between launch and May 2016. The young people are staying longer, telling us that they're finding the site useful.



71% increase in the number of young people who are coming to MindMate for help between its launch in Oct 2015 and May 2016.



The bounce rate by May 2016 has fallen to 35%, from 57% at launch. This level is considered 'excellent' by the industry and shows that young people are staying on the site, not heading off.



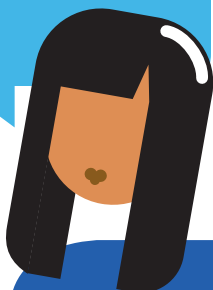
68% increase in the average session time. I.e visitors are staying nearly twice as long on the site.

Summary of results

Leeds City Council has endorsed MindMate in recognition of its success, and schools across the city now have MindMate plaques on walls in schools across the city, to show their commitment to mental health. There are MindMate Ambassadors across the schools in the city, and a number of charities have approached MindMate to offer their services.

Finally, as proof of the pudding, other NHS CCGs have approached MindMate to learn about creating their own versions of the site, using MindMate as an example of best practice. That, as they say, is the sincerest form of flattery.

I really enjoyed the MindMate website and mini-me's and I feel that they will be extremely beneficial to younger people who need the help.
Robin, 17



MindMate is a fantastic free service for young people in Leeds. It offers great advice and assistance for anyone suffering from mental health issues.
Matt, 16



Very thorough knowledge on mental health. It's also anonymous which is good for people who aren't ready to talk to people in person.
Annie, 17



"Having worked at CAMHS (Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services) and understanding the issues young people face, it was key to get the design and presentation of the website correct for the right audience. MindMate hit the nail on the head with the fantastic choice of colour, animation and the easy to use web content"

"From our third sector and school ambassadors, I have heard positive comments about the resource and it is something that has formed a brand, which young people can feel comfortable talking about."

Sadiya Salim, Business Support & Leadership,
Children's Services, Leeds City Council

Results

Other influencing factors

These results have been achieved predominantly through word of mouth referral, effective content and young people trying MindMate for themselves. The results are comparisons from launch in October 2015 and May 2016, showing the increase in popularity and effectiveness over that period.

MindMate was not a replacement, so its success has been hard earned and from a standing start. As the site and content has worked harder, the SEO ranking has improved, which in turn has helped attract more traffic.

Leeds CCG continued to communicate the availability of mental health services for young people, as they had prior to the launch of MindMate, in the form of school promotions and local advertising. Budgets after and prior to launch were similar.

Research resources

* <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/feb/15/the-guardian-view-on-mental-health-still-underfunded-after-too-many-false-promises>

** <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Mental-Health-Taskforce-FYFV-final.pdf>

*** *Public Health England*