

MEDIA RELEASE

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Funding to improve health help for smartphone generation

An innovative local health messaging helpline, developed by Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust (LPT), has been awarded more than £100,000 funding to help improve young people's access to healthcare nationally. The money will be used to give other organisations a helping hand to set-up similar services.

The award-winning ChatHealth messaging service was developed in association with LPT's school nursing service, and offers 65,000 11-19 year olds in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland access to confidential health advice and support through text messaging. School nurses have received 3,500 messages from young people in secondary schools over the last 12 months.

Teens say they are more likely to ask for health support from a qualified professional now they have the option of asking questions remotely or anonymously - they say it can be less embarrassing to talk about difficult issues in writing and often make initial contact by text message before seeing a school nurse in person. The nurses say they are speaking to more new service users, offering help earlier across a broader range of health issues.

The funding is provided by the East Midlands Academic Health Science Network and follows ChatHealth winning a healthcare innovation award for improving access to services for under-served teenagers.

Jimmy Endicott, ChatHealth project lead at Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust, said: "We are delighted to have this support in helping other healthcare providers work as effectively as possible. It is great news for NHS teams that want to improve access to health support and for young people, who otherwise might not engage with healthcare."

The funding will subsidise set-up of messaging programmes in not-for profit organisations. It will enable the ChatHealth team to support a number of organisations adopting the service, including;

- training staff at new sites, focusing on how nurses can safeguard vulnerable people who are seeking advice;
- project management to help get new services up and running in within three months;
- access to secure text messaging software which helps keep users safe;
- ongoing guidance and support for new teams which are implementing changes.

Chris Hart, Commercial Director at EMAHSN said: “It is great to be able to provide extra support to enable the spread of ChatHealth throughout the East Midlands and beyond. It is a truly inclusive and innovative way for reaching out to patients, making use of technology that the smartphone generation is familiar with. We expect lots of interest from teams that support younger people like school nursing and health visiting teams, mental health and sexual health services.”

The service is already in use in a number of NHS Trusts across the UK.

For more information or if you would like to make an expression of interest please contact Jimmy Endicott on 0116 295 7937, email jimmy.endicott@leicspart.nhs.uk or contact via [@jimmyendicott](https://twitter.com/jimmyendicott) on Twitter.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust (LPT) provides a range of health and wellbeing services mainly for people living Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. The Trust serves a population of one million, has a budget in excess of £267 million and employs approximately 5,400 staff. For more information visit: www.leicspart.nhs.uk.

Awards won by ChatHealth include the NHS England Innovation Challenge Prize for Digital Patient and Clinician Engagement, overall winner of the UK’s Patient Experience Network Awards 2014 and the East Midland Innovation Healthcare Award for Improving Access to Care for Underserved Communities.

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East Midlands Academic Health Science Network (EMAHSN) is one of 15 Academic Health Science Networks in England. EMAHSN brings together the NHS, universities, industry and social care to transform the health of the region’s 4.5M residents and stimulate wealth. Current priorities focus on identifying and spreading innovations that address challenges including cancer, obesity, diabetes, mental health, Technology Care Enabled Services and support for frail older people.

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