



CaTS-App© Digest Report

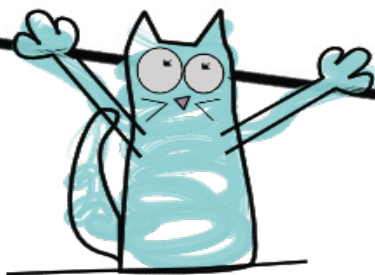
Phase 2 Design and Development

&

Phase 3 Feasibility

Update on development of Higher
Functioning Prototype and launch of Dyad
Study in NHS settings

September 2026



The CaTS-App work package with Digital Youth will co-develop and test a new digital tool based on the Card Sort Task for Self-Harm (CaTS) to facilitate collaborative understanding, assessment and intervention for self-harm for young people and those working with them.

Researchers: Joanna Lockwood, Camilla Babbage, Lily Roberts, Priya Patel
(University of Nottingham)

Tech Developer: Kevin Glover (University of Nottingham)

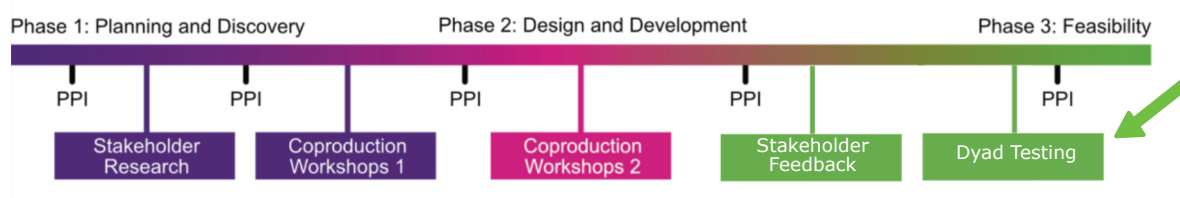
Co-Investigator: Chris Greenhalgh (University of Nottingham)

Principal Investigator: Ellen Townsend (University of Nottingham)



CaTS-App Programme

Our programme consists of three phases: Planning and Discovery (Phase 1); Design and Development (Phase 2) and Feasibility and Testing (Phase 3).



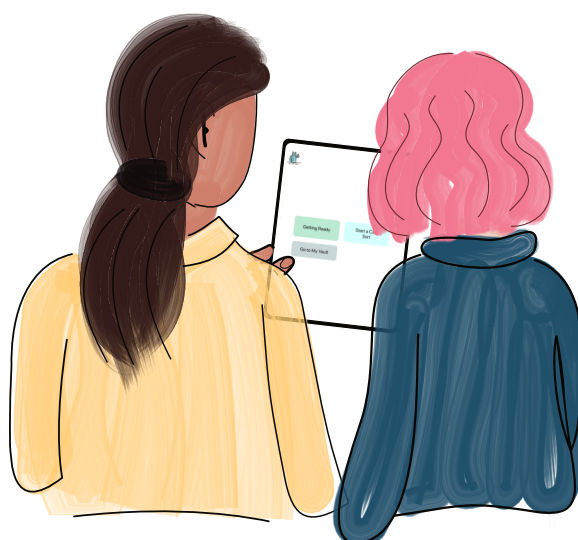
In this Digest we report findings from the final stage of Phase 2 (Design and Development) and early stage of Phase 3 (Feasibility testing) of CaTS-App©.

Towards the final higher functioning prototype

Following our co-production workshops, we worked with computer science partners to create a prototype version of CaTS-App. We then gathered feedback from professionals and young people via online Showcase feedback events at which stakeholders could try out the prototype version. This feedback helped us to pinpoint the core elements needed for a final working prototype version ready for testing in real-world clinical settings.



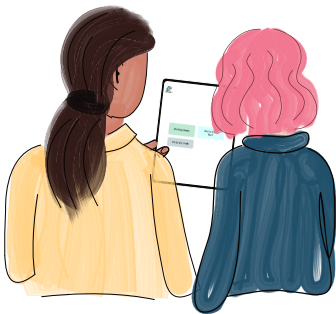
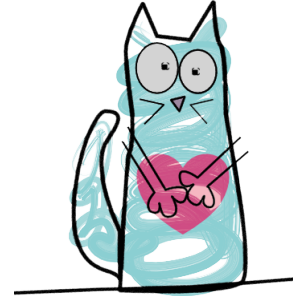
At this point of development, our aim is to include sufficient functionality to enable us to safely, effectively and engagingly deliver CaTS-App© as part of routine care for young people.





What we did following professional stakeholder insights

- Added more structured reflection points throughout the process of using the app.
- Embedded the Bleu character more consistently to provide recognition, prompt pauses, and support self check-ins.
- Expanded wellbeing check-ins to allow user-defined emotional description, while reducing their overall number.



- Reinforced that users can revisit, adjust, and reorder card choices.
- Simplified the card sort into a streamlined three-step process, set out clearly in wraparound materials.
- Introduced a notes-based function for each card to support individual-led clarification and reflection.

Familiarisation with
the tool

Doing a card sort

Review and Reflect

- Included short explanatory videos for young people and practitioners to support understanding of the app's purpose and use.
- Clarified through manuals and training materials how the app can be used flexibly across different settings and intervention models.

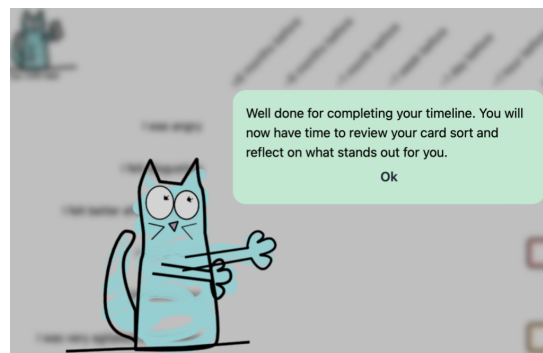


Removed routine in-app safety planning, retaining only a simple, user-led safety check-in, with supporting documentation clearly outlining how broader safety planning and risk management are addressed through usual practitioner-led processes and service protocols.



What we did following young people insights

- Built in regular reflection points signalled by Bleu.
- Structured the app to support slower, multi-session use, with smaller sections that can be worked through gradually.
- Added clearer familiarisation and onboarding, allowing time to explore cards and make notes before completing a full sort.
- Strengthened notes and blank card options to support personal language,
- Simplified the interface using a more visual, minimalist design.
- Refined the look and feel to be warmer and less clinical
- Addressed usability issues (e.g. search, deleting or hiding cards, scaling and scrolling).



Core insights from Phase 2

Design for reflection and understanding, not speed or linearity

Keep it simple, flexible, accessible and not clinical

Support meaning-making and continuity over time

Position safety and support thoughtfully





Phase 3 - Feasibility and Acceptability testing (ongoing)

We obtained ethical approval to run the CaTS-App© Dyad study with Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, and Harmless CIC. During the study, young people and practitioners will work through CaTS-App© side-by-side as part of a usual care session, using tablets pre-loaded with the tool. We'll capture measures of acceptability and usability, alongside safety and user-experience. We'll also gather qualitative data from feedback.



Study launched

The study launched in April 2026 and will run until December 2026. We will be back in touch once the study closes to share our findings.

Keep in touch



Interested practitioners can sign up to our updates by registering [here](#)

To find out more about how to be involved in our research delivering CaTS-App© you can contact us at CaTS-App@nottingham.ac.uk

Digital Youth is a UKRI funded research programme to understand the complex risks and opportunities for mental health associated with young people's engagement with the digital world - digitalyouth.ac.uk

A UKRI funded project

