**Using digital mood monitoring technology to support the assessment, engagement, and empowerment of young people presenting to mental health services with affective instability.**

**Abstract:**

**Background:** Young people are disproportionately affected by mental health and affective instability problems. Despite onset in childhood and adolescence, mental health problems are often not effectively treated until much later in life, which might have devastating consequences.

**Rationale:** The use of digital mood-monitoring technology, including mood-monitoring smartphone applications, are increasingly recognised as having great potential for youth mental health services. A systematic review of the literature however, which was completed as part of this PhD, indicated that little is known about the use of such technologies in young populations, whether mood-monitoring technology can improve young people’s affective self-regulation, therapeutic engagement with mental health services, and sense of empowerment.

**Aim:** The aim of this PhD is therefore to explore how a mood-monitoring smartphone application can be used to support the assessment, engagement and empowerment of young people presenting to mental health services with a range of diagnoses in which affective instability forms a key component.

**Methods:** A consultation group with young people was conducted and feedback from various field experts was acquired, through which the most suitable smartphone mood-monitoring application was identified. The clinical usefulness of the mood-monitoring application is currently being investigated in the digital mood-monitoring study. Focus groups and interviews will be carried out to explore young people’s experiences of using the application and the utility of the application from the perspective of clinicians.

**Results:** Digital mood-monitoring data and related outcomes will be analysed using quantitative methods (e.g., ANOVAs, multilevel modelling), and data acquired through focus groups and interviews will be analysed using qualitative methods (thematic analysis). By adopting a mixed methods approach, quantitative findings will be furnished with an in-depth understanding of young peoples’ attitudes towards mood-monitoring technology.

**Implications:** It is anticipated that the evidence acquired through this PhD will result in the development of innovative (adjunct) interventions and improved outcomes for young people with affective instability.