

# IMPROVING THE MENTAL HEALTH OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

**zinc**



# MISSION

## MISSION: To ensure that every child and young person can develop and maintain good mental and emotional health

We aim to improve the mental and emotional health of the 300m children and young people in the developed world. Over the next year, we will build brand-new, scalable ventures to tackle this mission. Would you like to be one of the 70 Founders who builds those ventures? Or be one of the 100 expert Fellows or 20 partner organisations who helps those Founders achieve their ambitions?

Every child and young person should be able to actively develop and maintain good mental and emotional health at each stage of their first 22 years. This is a challenge for individuals, and for those who can help them thrive, including their families, friends and schools.

Unfortunately, many children and young people struggle to develop and/or maintain the mental and emotional health they need to cope with life and to grow into healthy, well-rounded adults. Often this distress will be short-term or mild. But for many it develops into clinical-level and long-standing problems. In England, for example, 16% of 5-16 year olds have a mental health condition, a figure that increases sharply to 27% for young women aged

17-22. Half of children and young people with a common mental health condition will self-harm or attempt suicide. And the situation appears to be getting worse: the NHS reports that the proportion of 5-16 year old boys and girls with a mental health condition grew by almost 50% in the last 3 years.

We know that, for children and young people, good mental and emotional health is underpinned by:

- feeling loved, trusted, understood, valued and safe;
- having supportive family, friends, school and community;
- being optimistic and hopeful, whilst having resilience and the ability to solve problems;
- enjoying good physical health, diet, exercise, play and sleep;
- accepting who you are and recognising what you are good at;
- having fair access to life chances and not being discriminated against.



The quality of mental and emotional health in childhood can have lifelong implications. 50% of all adult mental health conditions are established by the age of 14 and 75% by the age of 18. A third of adult conditions relate to an adverse childhood experience.

When any of these things are missing, they can have both short-term and long-term impacts on mental and emotional health. We also know that the mental and emotional health of children and young people can be badly affected by events. These might be changing schools, family stress or breakdown, bereavement, physical illness, being bullied or abused, parents in distress, relocating, examinations, going to university, starting work, etc. For too many children and young people, their health is undermined by the environment in which they grow up, affected by poverty, unsafe communities and a lack of opportunities.

There has been a sea-change in attitudes to mental and emotional health in recent years. Stigma campaigns are addressing damaging attitudes. It is now more commonly acknowledged that 100% of people will face mental health challenges at different stages of their life.

This has created more awareness and demand for mental health support. At the same time, the quality of society's mental and emotional health has not improved and appears to be getting worse. The response to the increase in need, awareness and demand has been totally inadequate. COVID-19 has brought the issue to the fore and increased the urgency for innovation and impact at scale.





# OPPORTUNITY

## OPPORTUNITY AREAS FOR INNOVATION

**Our approach to innovation to improve the mental and emotional health of children and young people is:**

- **Aspirational:** We will help people to strive for excellence in their mental and emotional health, and we want everyone facing challenges, however severe, to have the support they need to recover and thrive.
- **Holistic:** We will improve the drivers of good mental and emotional health for children and young people, including their physical health and fitness, the support of their family and friends, their digital life, their experience of school and college and their opportunities to succeed in life.
- **Empowering:** We will empower all children and young people, and those who support them, to understand, manage and improve their own mental and emotional health and that of their loved ones, avoiding over-medicalisation and fully involving children and young people in testing and creating new solutions.
- **Comprehensive:** We will tackle all aspects of mental and emotional health, ranging from everyday coping to the most serious mental illnesses, for all children and young people at and across each stage of their first 22 years.
- **Evidence-based:** We will be led by evidence, powered by the behavioural sciences and committed to creating new evidence through rigorous experimentation.
- **Tech-positive:** We will embrace and improve the digital life of children and young people, and use and create technology to unlock new opportunities and solutions across all of our 9 opportunity areas.



# NINE OPPORTUNITY AREAS

- **Strong and Supportive Families**
- **Access to Effective Therapies**
- **Thriving at School and College**
- **Positive Recreation**
- **Positive Beliefs, Emotions & Skills**
- **Relationships and Sex**
- **Targeted Interventions for high-risk behaviours & conditions**
- **Healthy Behaviours**
- **Fairer Life Chances**

We believe that these are some of the most important and fertile areas for new products and services. Each of them holds the potential to develop and maintain good mental and emotional health for millions of children and young people across the world. We are inviting potential Founders, Fellows and Partners to choose which of these areas best match their passions, skills, experience and/or imagination:

## **Strong and Supportive Families**

Creating new products and services to tackle and/or support people through:

- parenting challenges
- family strains, breakdown and divorce
- financial stress and distress
- access to quality child care
- physical & mental health problems in the family
- neglect, abuse and domestic violence
- moving home
- bereavement
- activating the extended family

## **Access to Effective Therapies**

Improving the supply of and access to high-quality, affordable and timely evidence-based therapies for emotional distress & behavioural problems, including:

- Applied Behaviour Analysis
- Behaviour therapy
- Cognitive behavioural therapy
- Cognitive therapy
- Family therapy
- Dialectical behaviour therapy
- Interpersonal psychotherapy
- Motivational Interviewing
- Organisational Skills Training



## Thriving at School and College

Supporting the student's journey through their school years from ages 3 to 22 so that they thrive at each stage, creating products and services for:

- self-management and peer support
- managing classrooms and the whole school/college
- home/school relationships and collaboration
- behaviour management
- curriculum and learning opportunities which actively strengthen positive mental and emotional health
- school and college transitions
- addressing negative behaviours like bullying, discrimination and social isolation
- independent study outside the classroom
- the pre- and post-school day experience
- targeted, timely and effective interventions for children and young people who are struggling with poor mental health



## Positive Recreation

Supporting children and young people to actively participate in positive recreational activities, including new products and services for:

- socialising
- play and creative activities
- performing arts
- sport and exercise
- gaming
- accessing nature
- volunteering, service and civic action
- digital communities
- part-time work



## Positive Beliefs, Emotions and Skills

Creating new products and services which improve:

- self-esteem, self-identity and self-efficacy
- mental and emotional literacy and regulation
- optimism, ambition and a sense of control over one's own life
- resilience and coping skills
- ability to seek and benefit from help, when needed
- commitment to and capacity to support friends, family and community
- capacity and opportunities to overcome discrimination and unfairness



## Relationships and Sex

Creating age-appropriate products and services which help children and young people grow up to be able to:

- build and maintain close and nourishing friendships
- establish positive and supportive social networks
- understand and create healthy intimate and romantic relationships
- learn about and achieve good sexual health and satisfaction
- understand and be confident in their own sexual orientation, preferences and identity



## Targeted Interventions for High-Risk Behaviours & Conditions

Creating preventative and restorative products and services for common high-risk issues including:

- self-harm and attempts at suicide
- challenging behaviours
- eating disorders
- violence and crime
- substance misuse
- the consequences of trauma



## Healthy Behaviours

Creating new products and services which improve:

- sleep
- exercise
- social connectivity
- nutrition
- access to nature
- volunteering and supporting others
- physical health
- substance (mis)use



## Fairer Life Chances

Creating new products and services which address the unfair life chances faced by up to half of children and young people, including:

- early years support (0-4 years) for disadvantaged children and for their parents
- support for stressed and distressed families
- inspiration, mentoring & access to social capital new entrants where there is poor access to great nurseries, schools, apprenticeships, colleges and jobs
- equal access to educational opportunities outside the school day
- keeping young people safe from violence, gangs and crime
- new education, work and training opportunities for those aged 14-18 who don't thrive in the traditional academic route
- life, careers and financial guidance
- overcoming discrimination based on social class, gender, ethnicity, disability and/or sexual orientation





## Do you want to transform one of these opportunity areas? Apply for our latest Venture Builder Programme.

There are huge markets for new products and services that meet the needs of children and young people. The developed world spends more than \$2.5 trillion each year on education and \$600 billion on children's and young people's healthcare. Globally, teenagers directly spend \$1 trillion per year. It is estimated that children and teenagers influence at least as much again of their parents' spending. For example, the global gaming market totals \$160 billion each year.

The need to improve children's and young people's mental and emotional health was high-profile, urgent and unsolved before the COVID crisis. But the lockdown year has hit children and young people hard, denying them key pillars of good mental and

emotional health. They have lost education, social connectivity, recreation, freedom and, in many cases, hope and financial security.

This is the moment when the world's most passionate and determined innovators need to build new ventures to deliver on this mission and ensure that every child can develop and maintain good mental and emotional health. The time is now. Apply for the Zinc Venture Builder programme today.

Would you like to join 69 other Founders and build a brand-new, scalable venture which tackles this mission? Or would you like to support those Founders with your skills, knowledge and networks as one of our expert Fellows or one of our partner organisations?

To find out more about the programme  
and the support we offer, visit

[www.zinc.vc/vb4](http://www.zinc.vc/vb4)

To apply to be a Founder, Fellow or  
Partner Organisation, visit

[www.zinc.vc/get-involved](http://www.zinc.vc/get-involved)



To contact us at any time,  
please email [venturebuilder@zinc.vc](mailto:venturebuilder@zinc.vc) with questions.

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