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**CONFERENCE ABSTRACT****The development process of four new digital tools in Flanders: how blended care could be an answer to the challenges of integrated care**

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Child and youth care services are facing several challenges these days, such as a high caseload, waiting lists, fragmented care, excessive focus on administration and staff shortages (Naert et al, 2017). These challenges are often obstacles for high-quality care, tailored to the needs of children, youngsters and their families. Innovative solutions, such as digital tools, can help to cope with these challenges. While international research shows that blended care (the combination of on - and offline care) is promising (Wentzel et al., 2016; Van Orden et al., 2018), research on blended youth care programs is scant (De Witte et al., 2021). In recent years, both governmental actors, researchers and nonprofit organizations in Flanders are increasingly involved in the implementation of digital approaches and are experimenting with blended care. As a result, practices are more and more convinced of the added value of digital tools. Initial research results show that these new applications could stimulate integrated care, help to build up a sustainable network for clients, focus on continuity of care, strengthen clients in their competences and give more ownership to children, youngsters and families about their care trajectory and their case files. These innovative tools may facilitate the conversation and lower the threshold for seeking and signing up for care.

In this presentation, we will present four different digital applications that are being developed and implemented in youth care in Flanders: Opla, LifeCity, LifeTree and B-Adult. All four apps were created through a co-creation process involving clients, youth workers, researchers, government actors and software developers. Different research methods were used to develop these apps, such as workshops, interviews, focus groups, brainstorm sessions and user testings. On the ICIC23, we will discuss the development process of the four applications and tensions and obstacles we have experienced during the co-creation process with practitioners and young care leavers. Finally, we will present how we try to find an answer on the current challenges youth care is facing these days through using these new blended care programs.

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