


OVERVIEW

This preliminary report is based on data collected through a user validation evaluation (September 2024 - October 2025) that provided respondents with a 'walkthrough' of the prototype of the Sentinel app. It includes both **quantitative** and **qualitative** methods to evaluate user perceptions of the intervention prototype, identify strengths in design and functionality, and pinpoint areas for improvement to inform future design and development phases.

RESPONDENTS

N=
1,678



Participants were aged between **18** and **74** years with an average age of **43**.

GENDER DISTRIBUTION

63% identified as **Male**.
35% identified as **Female**
1% identified as **Non-binary**
1% identified as **Other**

ETHNICITY

84% identified as **White**
6% identified as **Asian/Asian British**
6% identified as **Black, African, Caribbean, or Black British**
2% reported **Mixed** or **Multiple Ethnicities**.
2% reported **Arab** or **Other**.

OCCUPATIONAL SECTORS

Rail & Transport: 64% (1,072 respondents)
Medical/Healthcare: 15% (246 respondents)
Police: 3% (45 respondents)
Ambulance Services: 1% (25 respondents)
Crisis Services: 1% (23 respondents)
Social Services/Care: 1% (15 respondents)
Military & Rescue: 1% (11 respondents)
Fire & Emergency Services: 1% (7 respondents)
Other: 13% (232 respondents) including education construction, security and retired professionals.

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION

62% based in **England**
27% based in **Scotland**
5% based in **Wales**
2% based in **Northern Ireland**
4% based in **United States**

YEARS OF SERVICE

Respondents ranged from having **1** year to over **49** years of service, with a significant portion reporting more than **15** years of experience.

KEY FINDINGS

Percentages reported are based on completed responses (excluding missing values).

APPROPRIATENESS

53% of respondents found the visuals and language to be designed specifically for the target audience, and no issues found.

32% of respondents suggested it was designed for the target audience, with only minor issues.

1% of respondents felt the app was either completely inappropriate or found it unclear/confusing in its design.

VISUAL APPEAL

62% of respondents found the look pleasant, seamless graphics, consistent and professionally designed.

11% of respondents described the app as beautiful, very attractive, memorable, and with standout.

2% of respondents found the look of the app to have bad use of colour and visually boring.

CONTENT AND RELEVANCE

54% found the app's content relevant, coherent, and appropriate for the target audience.

22% found the content of the app to be highly relevant, appropriate, coherent, and appeared correct.

2% indicated that the content was irrelevant, inappropriate, incoherent, and incorrect

PRIVACY AND ANONYMITY

Privacy and confidentiality emerged as key concerns for respondents, particularly those in high-stress professions where mental health disclosure could be sensitive.

TECHNOLOGY AND HUMAN CONNECTION

Some respondents raised concerns about over-reliance on technology in the context of mental health support. While AI and digital tools were appreciated, many felt that human interaction remains essential.

DESIRED FEATURES AND FUNCTIONALITY

Respondents offered several valuable suggestions for features they would like to see in the app. These ranged from real-time emotional support to more advanced mental health tools.

Desired features included:

- Personalised advice & guidance
- Help When I Need It Most
- Fully accessible online trauma resources
- Ability to interact with others in similar roles
- AI-assisted talking therapy
- Wellbeing and mindfulness tools
- Education and understanding
- Practical needs (yoga, journaling, grounding)

CONCLUSIONS

Preliminary findings from the user validation survey of the Sentinel app prototype indicate strong potential with opportunities for refinement. Users found the content highly relevant and accurate, validating its purpose in addressing trauma and stress. High satisfaction with the app's design and usability highlighted its intuitive, engaging and user-centric experience.

Key areas for improvement include sector and organisation-specific relevance incorporating more personalised, real-time interactions, practical coping strategies, and addressing privacy concerns. These insights offer clear opportunities to enhance the app's impact and usability for frontline workers.



For further information please contact:
Dr Nicola Cogan: nicola.cogan@strath.ac.uk
School of Psychological Sciences & Health,
40 George Street, Glasgow, G1 1QE

QUANTITATIVE ASSESSMENT SCORES

Overall the feedback was very positive. A number of recommendations were made and should be considered for further app development.

A significant proportion of respondents had some experience with mental health apps with **37%** having never used them.

There was a clear desire for such tools, particularly in high-stress environments.

Appropriateness: **8.7**

Visual Appeal: **7.6**

Content: **7.9**

Credibility: **8.3**

Need: **8.2**

QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

In their own words...

“I think it is an excellent idea. Lots of people keep quiet about their trauma so the interaction in this is fabulous”

“Very well-designed app. Interesting, clear and simple to follow.”

“Using Sentinel could help me calm down in the moment and recover more quickly.”

“I believe the Programme provides direct assistance or offers an alternative pathway to exploring and signpost to traditional face to face or talking therapy. In this respect I believe Sentinel has met its brief.”

“The job doesn’t stop when the shift ends, so having an app that helps me manage residual stress at home is absolutely invaluable.”

“Sometimes I just need reassurance that what I’m feeling is normal given what I’ve experienced, and the app provides that validation.”

“What I love about Sentinel is that it looks easy to use.”

“I think reassurance is required to show that interacting with the app, won’t affect employment or promotion chances. one of the major reasons people don’t talk is fear of ramifications and stigma from management, rather than peers.”

“I like that it will work for me, so over time its more like my personal toolkit.”

“Sentinel could help reduce burnout and help us support one another better.”

“Having immediate access to tools for managing flashbacks or panic attacks could mean the difference between feeling overwhelmed and staying grounded on the job.”

“Tell me where I can get this, just the walk through was enough to show me people understand how I feel, and it reaffirmed my feelings are a natural byproduct of the trauma I have experienced. I have long looked for something like this to help me,”

“Knowing there’s a trusted resource being developed has made me feel safer opening up about my experiences.”

“I wish this app had been available years ago - it could have made a big difference.”

“Some examples feel generic. I'd like to see content that reflects the challenges specific to my role.”

“The app does a good job of being practical. It isn’t overloaded with theory but feels informative.”

“The app feels professional, but it must remain intuitive and straightforward for those in crisis.”

“A phone number of a decent support organisation with a qualified and competent human at the end.”

“I need something that helps me process difficult shifts without waiting for a scheduled counselling session.”

“This is a great app and I can see myself and colleagues of mine using this.”