

THE TIMES



Saanvi Kaushik's app, Stellar, provides easy access to occupational therapy services for children

Teenager's occupational therapy app reaches international tech finals

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Tuesday July 13 2021, 12.01am BST, The Times

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A 13-year-old from Cork has reached the finals an international technology and entrepreneurship competition.

Saanvi Kaushik, from Cork city, is one of six junior finalists of Technovation and will pitch for the world title in August.

Her smartphone app, Stellar, provides easy access to occupational therapy services for children and was developed under the mentorship of Teen-Turn, a charity that helps female students to gain experience in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

Nicole Ryan, the project coordinator of Teen-Turn, said: "It's only the second time someone from Ireland has gotten this far."

Ireland

More than 5,000 girls from 60 countries developed 1,700 apps as part of the competition, which asked participants to create an app that solved a problem in society.

Kaushik's mother works as an occupational therapist, and during lockdown Saanvi witnessed the struggle she faced delivering care remotely.

"She saw this issue and decided it was something she was passionate about and that she wanted to do," Ryan added.

The app allows occupational therapists to deliver remote appointments, monitor progress, and develop individualised programmes for children.

In a statement, Kaushik said: "Unfortunately, there are currently 30,000 children waiting for occupational therapy in Ireland, and these waiting times are only getting worse due to Covid-19.

"Every child, no matter where they live, should have access to the highest quality services."

The app is not available at present, but the competition will allow Kaushik to get the "financial support to further develop the app and get the professional help that's needed to get the app fully functioning on the market," Ryan said.

She added: "We supported her the whole way through, but obviously she's the brains of it. She's the one who put it all together, came up with the idea, did all the work. We just gave her the motivational support and push that she needed.

"She's a fantastic kid so she'll do everyone proud."

The final is usually hosted in California, but will be online this year due to pandemic restrictions.

Last year's senior winners were an Irish team — Rachael Akano, Margaret Akano and Joy Njekwe, who designed Memory Haven, an app to help families affected by dementia.