ISRCTN68290510 https://doi.org/10.1186/ISRCTN68290510

Efficacy of humanistic counselling in schools for emotional distress

Submission date
02/12/2009

Recruitment status
No longer recruiting

Registration date
21/12/2009

Overall study status
Completed

Last Edited
15/02/2013

Condition category
Mental and Behavioural Disorders

[ ] Prospectively registered
[ ] Protocol
[ ] Statistical analysis plan
[X] Results
[ ] Individual participant data

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims.
The study aimed to look at the effectiveness of school-based humanistic counselling in reducing psychological distress in young people.

Who can participate?
The study was for people aged 13-18, who were experiencing some degree of emotional symptoms.

What does the study involve?
Participants were randomly allocated to six weeks of counselling, or asked to wait for counselling.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?
The benefits were that young people in both conditions had an opportunity to experience counselling, which we know from previous research is generally experienced as helpful and is associated with positive gains in psychological wellbeing. However, there was a small risk that people would find the counselling unhelpful or, for a very small percentage, actively hindering.

Where is the study run from?
It was run in Glasgow and in the north-east of England by the University of Strathclyde.

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?
It ran for approximately six months from January 2009, and is now complete.

Who is funding the study?
It was funded primarily by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy, with some additional funding from Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS.

Who is the main contact?
Professor Mick Cooper
Mick.cooper@strath.ac.uk

Contact information

Type(s)
Scientific

Contact name
Prof Mick Cooper

Contact details
76 Southbrae Drive
Glasgow
United Kingdom
G13 1PP
mick.cooper@strath.ac.uk

Additional identifiers

Protocol serial number
UEC0809/19

Study information

Scientific Title
Efficacy of humanistic counselling in schools for emotional distress: a pilot randomised controlled trial

Acronym
SCOOLS

Study objectives
For young people (13 - 18 years old) experiencing psychological distress, weekly counselling will be more effective than waiting list conditions.

Ethics approval required
Old ethics approval format

Ethics approval(s)
University of Strathclyde Ethics Committee approved on the 17th December 2008

Study design
Multicentre randomised controlled pilot study

Primary study design
Interventional

Study type(s)
Treatment

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied

Emotional distress

Interventions
Counselling:
Young people were offered weekly counselling for up to six sessions. The nature of the counselling was therapeutic rather than advice- or career-orientated, and was based on the competences for humanistic psychological therapies developed at University College London through funding from Skills for Health. Counselling, defined in this way, puts particular emphasis on the development of a trusting relationship between the therapist and client, and tries to understand the client's 'world' from their point of view. Counsellors were BACP accredited practitioners or equivalent, working within a set of professional ethical guidelines for counselling and psychotherapy. They had experience of working in humanistic ways with young people. A selection of session recordings were audited by the research team to monitor adherence to humanistic psychological therapy competences. The Humanistic Competences Compliance Checklist Version 3 was developed for this purpose. The Checklist was based on the format of the NICE(R) Record Sheet.

Waiting list:
Young people allocated to the control condition were not offered any formal counselling intervention for the six week period. However, they were informed that they had access to the school's full pastoral care provision at any point during the trial, including the school's pre-existing counselling service. At the endpoint assessment, participants in the waiting list condition were offered the option of direct entry to counselling.

Follow-up on both arms was at six weeks from baseline assessment.

Intervention Type
Other

Phase
Not Applicable

Primary outcome(s)
Emotional Symptom Score on SDQ (SDQ-ES), measured at baseline and six weeks

Key secondary outcome(s))
Measured at baseline and six weeks:
1. Total Difficulties Score on SDQ (SDQ-TD)
2. Mood and Feelings Questionnaire (MFQ)
3. Clinical Outcomes in Routine Evaluation for Young People (YP-CORE)
4. Experience of Service Questionnaire (ESQ)
5. Social Inclusion Questionnaire (IQYP)
6. Adapted Change Interview (for clients)
7. Adapted Change Interview (for waitlist)

Completion date
26/06/2009

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria

1. Aged 13 to 18 years, either sex
2. Experiencing borderline or abnormally high levels of emotional distress, as indicated by a score of 4 or above on the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) Emotional Symptoms Subscale at assessment
3. Motivated to attend counselling, as indicated by a response of 'somewhat true' or 'certainly true' on the Anxiety Control Questionnaire (ACQ) at assessment
4. Capable of consenting to participate in research, as indicated by a member of the pastoral care team
5. Greater than 85 per cent attendance at school, as indicated by a member of the pastoral care team

Participant type(s)
Patient

Healthy volunteers allowed
No

Age group
Adult

Lower age limit
18 years

Sex
All

Key exclusion criteria
1. Risk of significant harm to self or other, as indicated by a member of the pastoral care team and the researcher at assessment
2. Involvement with other child and young people mental health agencies, including the established school counselling service, as indicated by a member of the pastoral care team and /or the young person at assessment
3. Planning/likely to move school during period of study, as indicated by a member of the pastoral care team and/or the young person at assessment

Date of first enrolment
05/01/2009

Date of final enrolment
26/06/2009

Locations

Countries of recruitment
United Kingdom

Scotland

Study participating centre

76 Southbrae Drive
Glasgow
United Kingdom
G13 1PP

Sponsor information

Organisation
University of Strathclyde (UK)

ROR
https://ror.org/00n3w3b69

Funder(s)

Funder type
Government

Funder Name
British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (UK)

Funder Name
University of Strathclyde (UK)

Funder Name
Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS Trust (UK)

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan

IPD sharing plan summary
Not provided at time of registration

Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
	results				

Results article	22/04/2010	Yes	No