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A feasibility study of a combined mental health and neurodevelopmental assessment for young people in crisis services

Submission date
15/06/2026

Recruitment status
Recruiting

Registration date
17/06/2026

Overall study status
Ongoing

Last Edited
16/06/2026

Condition category
Mental and Behavioural Disorders

[ ] Prospectively registered
[X] Protocol
[ ] Statistical analysis plan
[ ] Results
[ ] Individual participant data
[X] Record updated in last year

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims
Many children and young people who come to mental health crisis services because of self-harm or suicidal thoughts may also have underlying neurodevelopmental differences, such as autism, ADHD, language and communication differences, dyslexia or dyspraxia. These differences are often not recognised at the time of the crisis and many young people wait a long time for further assessment.

This study aims to find out whether it is practical and acceptable to combine a therapeutic crisis assessment with a rapid assessment of possible neurodevelopmental differences. We want to understand whether this approach is helpful for young people, families and clinicians, and whether it could be tested in a larger study in the future.

Who can participate?
Children and young people aged 12 to 18 years who:
1. Have recently presented to a crisis mental health service because of self-harm or suicidal thoughts.
2. Are thought by clinicians to possibly have an underlying neurodevelopmental difference that has not yet been formally identified.
3. Are able to provide consent or assent to take part, together with their parent or carer where appropriate.

What does the study involve?
Families who are interested in taking part will be invited to meet with a study clinician after their initial crisis has been managed.

If they decide to participate, they will:
1. Complete a questionnaire about the young person’s development and behaviour
2. Attend a neurodevelopmental assessment appointment

3. Receive feedback and recommendations based on the assessment
4. Be invited to complete a short survey about their experience
5. Have the option of taking part in an interview to discuss their views of the assessment process

Clinicians involved in delivering the assessments may also be asked to provide feedback about their experiences of using the approach.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?
Possible benefits include:
1. Receiving a structured assessment of possible neurodevelopmental differences
2. Gaining a better understanding of the young person's strengths and support needs
3. Helping researchers improve services for future children and families

The study is not expected to involve significant risks beyond those associated with discussing personal experiences and mental health difficulties. Some participants may find parts of the assessment or interview emotionally sensitive. Clinicians conducting the assessments are experienced professionals and appropriate support will be available if needed.

Participation is entirely voluntary and families can withdraw from the study at any time without affecting their care.

Where is the study run from?
The study is being carried out through NHS Ayrshire and Arran in partnership with the University of Glasgow. Recruitment will take place through the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) Urgent and Acute Intervention Team in Ayrshire.

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?
June 2026 to June 2027.

Who is funding the study?
The study is funded through a research grant awarded to the University of Glasgow and NHS Ayrshire and Arran.

Who is the main contact?
Dr Jason Lang
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Contact information

Type(s)
Principal investigator, Public, Scientific

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Integrated Research Application System (IRAS)
362920

Study information

Scientific Title
Therapeutic Assessment and Neurodivergence Assessment

Acronym
TANDA

Study objectives
Primary objective:
To determine the feasibility and acceptability of combining Therapeutic Assessment with a rapid neurodevelopmental assessment pathway for children and young people presenting to crisis mental health services with self-harm and/or suicidal ideation.

Secondary objectives:
1. To assess the feasibility of recruiting and retaining participants within the study pathway
2. To evaluate the acceptability of the assessment process to children and young people, parents /carers, and clinicians
3. To assess the feasibility of collecting clinical, service and outcome data required for a future larger-scale study
4. To explore whether the assessment pathway can identify previously unrecognised neurodevelopmental differences in young people presenting in crisis
5. To examine changes in participant and family understanding of the young person’s strengths, needs and support requirements following assessment and feedback
6. To identify barriers and facilitators to implementing the assessment pathway within routine clinical services
7. To generate preliminary data to inform the design, methodology and sample size calculations of a future definitive evaluation study

Ethics approval required
Ethics approval required

Ethics approval(s)

approved 19/01/2026, West of Scotland REC4 (Research Ethics – Room 29 2nd Floor Administration Building Gartnavel Royal Hospital 1055 Great Western Road, Glasgow, G12 0XH, United Kingdom; +44 141 314 4485; ggc.wosrec4@nhs.scot), ref: 25/WS/0190

Primary study design
Interventional

Allocation
N/A: single arm study

Masking
Open (masking not used)

Control
Uncontrolled

Assignment
Sequential

Purpose
Diagnostic, Supportive care

Study type(s)

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied
Neurodivergence. Mental health, suicidality, self harm

Interventions
Participants will receive a combined assessment pathway consisting of:
1. Therapeutic Assessment (TA) – a collaborative, brief therapeutic approach designed to help young people and families develop a shared understanding of the difficulties leading to the crisis presentation, identify key concerns and goals, and support engagement with services
2. Rapid Neurodevelopmental Assessment – a structured assessment of possible neurodevelopmental differences using the ESSENCE-D screening framework alongside a neurodevelopmental observational assessment and clinical history. This assessment aims to identify patterns of neurodevelopmental strengths and differences that may contribute to the young person's presentation and support needs
3. Collaborative Feedback Session – participants and families will receive feedback from the assessment, including a shared formulation, discussion of findings, and recommendations for future support and care

The assessment process typically involves approximately 90 minutes of direct assessment activity, although this may vary slightly between participants.
Participants are followed up after completion of the assessment pathway and invited to complete a survey and optional qualitative interview. Follow-up is expected to conclude approximately four weeks after the assessment process has been completed.

Intervention Type
Behavioural

Primary outcome(s)
1. Feasibility and acceptability of the TANDA pathway measured using recruitment rate, retention rate, assessment completion rate, and participant/clinician acceptability questionnaires at enrolment to completion of assessment pathway (approximately 4–8 weeks)

Key secondary outcome(s)

Completion date
01/06/2027

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria
1. Children and young people aged 12 years to 17 years 12 months
2. Presentation to crisis services following self-harm and/or suicidal ideation
3. Identified as potentially neurodivergent through clinical judgement and/or previous referral to a Neurodevelopmental Service
4. Participant and family willing and able to provide informed consent/assent as appropriate

Healthy volunteers allowed
No

Age group
Mixed

Lower age limit
12 years

Upper age limit
18 years

Sex
All

Total final enrolment
0

Key exclusion criteria
1. Requiring immediate inpatient psychiatric admission
2. Therapeutic Assessment deemed clinically inappropriate, including:
1.1. requirement for an interpreter
1.2. pre-existing intellectual disability
1.3. need for assessment of possible intellectual disability or FASD
1.4. psychosis or significant reality distortion
1.5. intoxication or inebriation
1.6. immediate risk of serious violence or suicide requiring admission
3. Existing established neurodevelopmental diagnosis
4. Lack of capacity to provide informed consent or assent

Date of first enrolment

01/06/2026

Date of final enrolment
01/03/2027

Locations

Countries of recruitment
United Kingdom

Scotland

Study participating centre
NHS Ayrshire and Arran
PO Box 13, Boswell House
10 Arthur Street
Ayr
Scotland
KA7 1QJ

Sponsor information

Organisation
University of Glasgow

ROR
https://ror.org/00vtgdb53

Funder(s)

Funder type

Funder Name
NIHR Mental Health Translational Research Collaboration

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan

IPD sharing plan summary

Not expected to be made available

Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
Participant information sheet	version 1.3	05/01/2025	16/06/2026	No	Yes
Protocol file	version 2.4	01/08/2025	16/06/2026	No	No