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Evaluating Solution Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) in 10–17-year-olds coming into contact with the police

Submission date 10/03/2023	**Recruitment status** No longer recruiting	[_] Prospectively registered [X] Protocol
Registration date 16/06/2023	**Overall study status** Ongoing	[X] Statistical analysis plan [_] Results
Last Edited 01/07/2026	**Condition category** Other	[_] Individual participant data [X] Record updated in last year

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims

Children and young people who come into contact with the police often need help. This trial aims to test whether offering these children and young people a psychological treatment called Brief Solution Focused Therapy is helpful. Brief Solution Focused Therapy is a short-term therapy that helps people to change by focusing on building solutions rather than getting stuck thinking about problems. We want to find out whether this treatment works by running a clinical trial. We will give some children and young people Brief Solution Focused Therapy plus the routine treatment that they would normally get. Other children and young people will only get the routine treatment that is currently offered when they come into contact with the police. We will decide who gets which treatment at random, which is like flipping a coin.

In order to work out whether Brief Solution Focused Therapy is helpful, our trial has two parts. In the first part, we will run what is called a 'pilot'. This is a test version of the trial which tests whether the trial can be run. If we find that this is the case, we will then move to do the second part, which is continuing with the main trial by inviting more children and young people to take part.

All of the children and young people who take part will be asked to complete some measures of things that may change because of taking part in Brief Solution Focused Therapy. We are particularly interested in whether they are involved in any antisocial behaviours over the course of the trial. We will also ask about their background, their general well-being, any criminal activity they have been involved with in the past and any gang connections. We will also interview some of the children and young people receiving SFBT, their parents/guardians, and the professionals that deliver the SFBT therapy. We will ask them about their experiences of taking part in the trial.

Who can participate?

Young people aged between 10 to 17 years who have been referred to the L&D team by the police in Lancashire and South Cumbria.

What does the trial involve?
The trial involves completing questionnaires and being randomly allocated to receive SFBT and usual services, or usual services alone. You may also be invited to take part in an interview.

What are the benefits and risks of participating?
We don't know if SFBT is helpful to young people in your situation. Taking part will be helpful to us and may help others. We do not think there are any bad things that will happen because of this research. You will be asked to complete some questionnaires and you might receive SFBT. Some of the questions in the questionnaires, and some of the things discussed during the therapy (if you are randomly selected to receive it) will be about stuff that is private and might lead you to feel upset.

Where is the trial run from?
University of Warwick (UK)
Cardiff University (UK)

When is the trial starting and how long will it run for?
April 2022 to February 2027

Who is funding the trial?
Youth Endowment Fund (UK)

Who is the main contact?
Dr Gwenllian Moody, MoodyG@cardiff.ac.uk

Contact information

Type(s)
Principal investigator

Contact name
Dr Samantha Flynn

ORCID ID
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3466-9506

Contact details
Centre for Educational Development, Appraisal and Research
University of Warwick
Coventry
United Kingdom
CV4 7AL
+44 7823362152
s.flynn.1@warwick.ac.uk

Type(s)
Principal investigator

Contact name
Prof Peter Langdon

ORCID ID
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7745-1825

Contact details
University of Birmingham, Intellectual Disabilities Research Institute (IDRIS), School of Social Policy and Society
Birmingham
United Kingdom
B15 2TT
+44 751 115 9516
p.langdon@bham.ac.uk

Type(s)
Scientific

Contact name
Dr Gwenllian Moody

Contact details
Research Associate
Centre for Trials Research (CTR)
Cardiff University
7th Floor
Neuadd Meirionnydd
Heath Park
Cardiff
United Kingdom
CF14 4YS
+44 (0)2920 687257
MoodyG@cardiff.ac.uk

Additional identifiers

Study information

Scientific Title
Solutions Trial: Solution Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) in 10–17-year-olds presenting at police custody: A randomised controlled trial with internal pilot.

Study objectives
To determine whether there is a benefit of support as usual (SAU) plus Solution Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) over SAU alone in reducing offending behaviours in 10–17-year-olds presenting at a police custody suite.

Ethics approval required
Old ethics approval format

Ethics approval(s)

Approved 16/11/2022, Yorkshire & The Humber - Leeds West Research Ethics Committee (NHSBT Newcastle Blood Donor Centre, Holland Drive, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE2 4NQ, UK; +44 207 1048134; leedswest.rec@hra.nhs.uk), ref: 22/YH/0198

Primary study design
Interventional

Study design
Randomized controlled trial with internal pilot

Study type(s)
Treatment

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied
Offending behavior

Interventions
Participants in the intervention arm will receive Brief Solution Focused Therapy (SFBT) alongside services as usual. SFBT is a six-session manualised intervention, delivered face-to-face bi-weekly over 12 weeks, on a one-to-one basis, that helps people to change by focus on building solutions rather than getting stuck thinking about problems. Through a programme of SFBT, it is hoped that children and young people can be diverted away from the criminal justice system, reducing their risk of serious youth violence. The six sessions are detailed below.

The intervention will be delivered from month six to 19 of the trial. The therapists have been recruited from the existing Liaison and Diversion workforce within LSCFT. Practitioners are from a health and social care skill mix and are in band 5 / 6 clinical roles as per Agenda for Change. All three practitioners recruited to support the trial already have experience in supporting children through custody. For the trial, they have then undertaken 36 hours of SFBT training, facilitated by the same training provider at the same time.

Children will be offered a choice of where to participate in the sessions, but choice will be limited to home, school, LSCFT clinical site, community clinic e.g. youth centre. Six sessions will be included and will last no less than 15 minutes and no more than one hour each. The six sessions will be facilitated over a 12-week period. Sessions will be no more frequent than once a week and no less frequent that bi-weekly- this should allow for sickness / absence and inconsistent engagement. Existing fidelity measures are to be adapted.

Usual practice arm
Participants in the usual practice arm will receive services as usual.

Follow-up duration
Participants in the intervention and usual practice arms will be followed-up at 6 month and 12 months post randomisation.

Randomisation
CYP will be randomised on a 1:1 basis to either the intervention (SFBT and SAU) or control arm (SAU only) using stratified permuted block randomisation, ensuring balance on prognostic factors (i.e., Verbal Comprehension Index), and stratifying by custody suite. The randomisation system will be embedded within the trial database, and outcome assessors, trial statisticians

responsible for analysing the data, and the research team excluding the trial manager, Data Manager, Senior Trial Manager and those undertaking the process evaluation will remain blind to allocation. The online system also ensures allocation concealment is blinded for researcher recruiting participants.

Intervention Type
Behavioural

Primary outcome(s)
Antisocial behaviours are measured using the Self Report Delinquency Measure (CYP completed) at baseline, 6 months and 12 months post randomisation.

Key secondary outcome(s)
1. Criminal offence data are collected from the Police National Computer over the 6-month period prior to the commencement of treatment, and at 12-months post randomisation.
2. Emotional and behavioural difficulties are measured using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) (parent completed and CYP completed) at baseline, 6 months and 12 months post randomisation.
3. Gang Affiliation is measures using The Gang Affiliation Risk Measure (CYP completed) at baseline and 12 months post randomisation.
4. Details of other therapies received will be collected (parent completed for under 16s and CYP completed for 16+) at baseline and 12 months post randomisation.

Potential moderators:
In addition to the primary and secondary outcomes, we have considered that the following outcomes may moderate the outcomes of this trial.
1. Callous and Unemotional Traits will be measured using the 24-item Inventory of Callous and Unemotional Traits (parent completed and CYP completed) at baseline and 12 months post randomisation.
2. Learning disabilities (LD): Children and young people will be invited to complete two subtests of the Wechsler Abbreviated Scale of Intelligence-II (WASI-II; Wechsler, 2011) to index their Verbal Comprehension Index at baseline only. We are also including a closed question asking if the child has a learning disability (parent completed for under 16s and CYP completed for 16+).

Completion date
28/02/2027

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria
1. Aged between 10 to 17 years
2. Referred to the L&D team by the police

Participant type(s)
Healthy volunteer

Healthy volunteers allowed
No

Age group

Child

Lower age limit
10 Years

Upper age limit
17 Years

Sex
All

Total final enrolment
0

Key exclusion criteria
1. A clinician has judged that the child or young person is presenting with a mental illness of a nature and degree warranting immediate intervention from specialist services, including assessment for detention under the Mental Health Act.
2. The young person is to be remanded into custody.
3. A child or young person aged 16 years or older judged to lack mental capacity to decide about participating in this trial by staff responsible for gaining informed consent.
4. The child or young person is living outside the area served by Lancashire and South Cumbria NHS Foundation Trust.
5. The child or young person is unable to converse in English.
6. Parents/guardians are unable to converse in English (at least one must be able to converse in English to complete parent/guardian measures)
7. Parents/guardians of under 16s judged to lack mental capacity to decide about participating in this trial by staff responsible for gaining informed consent.

Date of first enrolment
01/10/2022

Date of final enrolment
31/08/2026

Locations

Countries of recruitment
United Kingdom

England

Study participating centre
Lancashire and South Cumbria NHS Trust
Sceptre Point
Sceptre Way
Bamber Bridge

Preston
England
PR5 6AW

Study participating centre
Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust
Prestwich Hospital
Bury New Road
Prestwich
Manchester
England
M25 3BL

Study participating centre
Hertfordshire Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust
The Colonnades
Beaconsfield Close
Hatfield
England
AL10 8YE

Study participating centre
Midlands Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust
Trust Headquarters
St Georges Hospital
Corporation Street
Stafford
England
ST16 3SR

Sponsor information

Organisation
Lancashire and South Cumbria NHS Foundation Trust

Funder(s)

Funder type
Charity

Funder Name
Youth Endowment Fund

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan
The datasets generated during and/or analysed during the current study are/will be available upon request from solutions@warwick.ac.uk

IPD sharing plan summary
Available on request

Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
Protocol article		02/03/2024	05/03/2024	Yes	No
Participant information sheet	Participant information sheet	11/11/2025	11/11/2025	No	Yes
Statistical Analysis Plan		28/09/2024	30/09/2024	Yes	No
Study website	Study website	11/11/2025	11/11/2025	No	Yes