

Guided self-help treatment for children and young people with eating disorders: a case series

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Registration date 04/10/2023	Overall study status Completed	<input type="checkbox"/> Statistical analysis plan <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Results
Last Edited 11/08/2025	Condition category Mental and Behavioural Disorders	<input type="checkbox"/> Individual participant data

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims

Eating disorders are common and serious mental health conditions that typically begin in adolescence. There are some effective psychological treatments for eating disorders in children and young people, including family-based therapy and cognitive behavioural therapy. However, these treatments are costly and time-consuming, and the demand for treatment far outweighs the availability of resources. One way to increase access to psychological support for children and young people with disordered eating would be to develop a guided self-help intervention, which is brief and requires less therapist time/input than traditional psychological treatments. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) recommend guided self-help interventions for adults with bulimia nervosa and binge eating disorder. They are also widely used in the treatment of anxiety disorders, depression and behavioural difficulties in children and young people. However, child and adolescent eating disorder services in the UK do not routinely use guided self-help interventions as they have not been sufficiently researched. The overarching aim of this project is to improve access to psychological treatments for children and young people affected by disordered eating. Specifically, this preliminary study aims to examine the feasibility, acceptability and preliminary effectiveness of a guided self-help intervention for children and young people (aged 8-19 years) with impairing symptoms of disordered eating using a case series design.

Who can participate?

Children and young people (aged 8-19) with impairing symptoms of disordered eating, and their parents/carers.

What does the study involve?

The study involves a battery of questionnaires to assess the presence or absence of eating disorder symptoms. Depending on clinical need, young people and their families will receive a CBT-guided self-help intervention, with 8 x 30-minute sessions with a guide. Families are asked to complete standardised questionnaires at baseline and 12-week follow-up. Families are also asked to complete weekly questionnaires throughout the intervention.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?

The project aims to benefit young people's mental health and improve access to psychological support. The research team do not foresee any risks in taking part but answering some of the baseline and follow-up questionnaires may cause some emotional distress.

Where is the study run from?

The study is run by UCL Great Ormond Street Institute of Child Health (UK) and is open to multiple eating disorder services across the UK.

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?

January 2023 to July 2024

Who is funding the study?

This study is funded by a Child Health Research PhD studentship at UCL Great Ormond Street Institute of Child Health (UK)

Who is the main contact?

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Additional identifiers

Clinical Trials Information System (CTIS)

Nil known

Integrated Research Application System (IRAS)

323971

Protocol serial number

23PP09, IRAS 323971

Study information

Scientific Title

Guided self-help treatment for children and young people with eating disorders: a case series

Study objectives

The hypothesis is that guided self-help will be feasible and acceptable to children and young people with impairing symptoms of disordered eating.

Ethics approval required

Ethics approval required

Ethics approval(s)

approved 26/06/2023, West of Scotland Research Ethics Committee 5 (Ward 11, Dykebar Hospital, Grahamston Road, Paisley, PA2 7DE, United Kingdom; +44 (0)141 314 0213; WoSREC5@ggc.scot.nhs.uk), ref: 23/WS/0097

Study design

Single-arm non-randomized case series

Primary study design

Interventional

Study type(s)

Treatment

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied

Psychological intervention for children and young people with impairing symptoms of disordered eating.

Interventions

This is a single-arm trial with no control group.

Referral methods:

Specialist child and adolescent eating disorder services have been identified as research sites for this project. Participants will be referred by their clinician, who, after gaining families' consent to contact, can share their details with the study team. The study team will then contact the family with more information and details for the next steps and consent process.

Observations for all groups:

All participants will fill out baseline measures after consenting to be part of the study. Baseline measures include the Eating Disorder Examination Questionnaire (EDE-Q), the Clinical Impairment Assessment (CIA), %Weight-for-height, the Revised Child Anxiety and Depression Scale (RCADS) and the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ).

Following this, all eligible families will be offered a cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), guided self-help intervention. The intervention consists of 8 modules with 8 x 30-minute support sessions with a guide. The core aims of the intervention are to provide psychoeducational material provided as part of the cognitive-behavioural treatment of eating disorders for children and young people and to encourage young people to change a variety of thoughts and behaviours relating to eating, body weight and body shape. Participants will be asked to read the relevant module of the programme before each session, and will also be asked to complete some activities between each session.

Participants will complete weekly questionnaires throughout the intervention to assess week-to-week changes. Session-by-session measures include the Eating Disorder-15 for Youth (ED-15-Y), Goal Based Outcomes (GBOs), the Outcome Rating Scale (ORS) and the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire Session by Session (SDS SxS).

Follow-up for all groups:

All participants will complete follow-up questionnaires, 12 weeks after completing their baseline questionnaires. This includes the Eating Disorder Examination Questionnaire (EDE-Q), the Clinical Impairment Assessment (CIA), %Weight-for-height, the Revised Child Anxiety and Depression Scale (RCADS) and the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ). Participants will also be asked to complete an acceptability questionnaire and will be invited to take part in an optional interview to explore their experiences of receiving the intervention.

Intervention Type

Behavioural

Primary outcome(s)

Self-reported eating disorder symptoms measured using the global score on the Eating Disorder Examination Questionnaire (EDE-Q) at baseline and 12-week follow-up.

Key secondary outcome(s)

1. Self-reported psychosocial impairment due to eating disorder symptoms measured using the Clinical Impairment Assessment (CIA) at baseline and 12-week follow-up
2. Self-reported %Weight-for-height at baseline and 12-week follow-up
3. Self-reported and parent-reported anxiety and depression symptoms measured using the Revised Child Anxiety and Depression Scale (RCADS) at baseline and 12-week follow-up
4. Self-reported and parent-reported psychological well-being measured using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) at baseline and 12-week follow-up
5. Self-reported and parent-reported acceptability ratings measured using an acceptability questionnaire

Completion date

05/07/2024

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria

1. Aged 8-19 years
2. Has a threshold or sub-threshold eating disorder (anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, binge eating disorder and otherwise specified feeding and eating disorder [OSFED]) which impairs their psychosocial functioning
3. Is a UK resident
4. Has a parent/carer who is also willing to take part in the study

Participant type(s)

Patient

Healthy volunteers allowed

No

Age group

Mixed

Lower age limit

8 years

Upper age limit

19 years

Sex

All

Total final enrolment

6

Key exclusion criteria

1. Does not speak/understand English sufficiently well to access the measures and intervention materials
2. Has an intellectual disability at a level meaning that they cannot access the measures and/or intervention
3. Acute risk not considered suitable for the trial due to the clinical need for specialist intervention, e.g., rapid weight loss, very low mood, high medical or psychiatric risk, acute suicidality, recurrent or potentially life-limiting self-harm and/or significant safeguarding concerns
4. If they have been prescribed psychotropic medication, the dosage must have been stable for the past two months
5. Currently receiving other overlapping psychological support/interventions
6. Does not have access to a telephone or laptop/computer which can be used for the interviews and guidance sessions

Date of first enrolment

16/10/2023

Date of final enrolment

31/03/2024

Locations

Countries of recruitment

United Kingdom

England

Study participating centre

Gloucestershire Eating Disorders Service

Brownhill Centre

St Pauls Medical Complex

Swindon Road

Cheltenham

United Kingdom

GL51 9EZ

Study participating centre

The Maudsley Centre for Child and Adolescent Eating Disorders

Michael Rutter Centre

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Sponsor information

Organisation

University College London

ROR

<https://ror.org/02jx3x895>

Funder(s)

Funder type

Charity

Funder Name

The Child Health Research Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CHR CIO)

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan

The datasets generated during and/or analysed during the current study are not expected to be made available.

IPD sharing plan summary

Not expected to be made available

Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
Results article		02/01/2025	11/08/2025	Yes	No