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Co-development of a web-app for young people with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder

Submission date	Recruitment status	[X] Prospectively registered
22/06/2026	Recruiting	[X] Protocol
Registration date	Overall study status	[_] Statistical analysis plan
08/07/2026	Ongoing	[_] Results
Last Edited	Condition category	[_] Individual participant data
17/11/2026	Mental and Behavioural Disorders	[X] Record updated in last year

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims
Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a condition that affects how people think, process information, and interact with others. It is characterized by challenges with attention, focus, restlessness, and/or impulsivity.
For young people aged 16-30 years, managing their ADHD can be particularly difficult. They are at increased risk of mental health crises and other challenges. Treatment and support can reduce these risks, with benefits for individuals and society.
However, many young people with ADHD struggle to get the healthcare they need during this vulnerable time. Facing long waiting times, or gaps in support between child and adult services. Digital interventions could help improve access to care.
This project aims to co-develop and test an app to help improve access to care. The app will provide trusted healthcare information, psychological support, and practical tools to help young people manage their daily lives and ADHD symptoms.

Who can participate?
Young people aged 16-30 years with a diagnosis of ADHD or on the waiting list for an ADHD assessment.
Young people will need to be able to test the prototype on their own or with help from a supporter.
Healthcare professionals working in the NHS, with experience of supporting people with ADHD or suspected ADHD

What does the study involve?
Young people who are participants will be invited to take part in a workshop to try out a prototype of the app. The workshops will take place in person or online. Participants will be asked questions about using the app and asked to give feedback on how to improve it and make it more useful for young people living in the ADHD. Participants will also be asked how well this app might work in the NHS. After the workshops have finished, participants may be invited to a follow-up interview about their experiences of using the app.
Healthcare professionals who are participants will be invited to take part in an interview or focus

group, where they will be invited to view a prototype of the app. Then they will be asked to answer questions about the app and ways it could be embedded into NHS care pathways. These activities will take place in person or online (depending on the preferences of participants).

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?
By taking part, participants will help the research team to gather valuable information to help improve the design of the SmartADHD app. Helping to meet our long-term aim of improving the lives of young people with ADHD and making it easier for healthcare professionals to support them.
Young people and healthcare professionals will be offered a voucher, as a thank you for participating in the research and contributing their time, energy and expertise. Healthcare professionals will be provided with a continuing professional development certificate.

Where is the study run from?
The SmartADHD study is being run by the University of Exeter.
Work package one (WP1) will be conducted from the University of Exeter, with workshops taking place in a range of community settings (in-person or online).
Work package two (WP2) will be conducted from the University of Exeter, with some participants being recruited from primary care practices across the UK.

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?
September 2026 to March 2029

Who is funding the study?
The National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) (UK)

Who is the main contact?
Associate Professor Anna Price: a.price@exeter.ac.uk

Contact information

Type(s)
Principal investigator, Scientific, Public

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Additional identifiers

Integrated Research Application System (IRAS)
341254

Central Portfolio Management System (CPMS)
61309

National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR)
305363

Study information

Scientific Title
Protocol for co-development, initial evaluation, and implementation of a digital health intervention, for young people (aged 16-30 years) with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, including optimisation for sustainable delivery via health and social care settings

Acronym
SmartADHD

Study objectives
Primary objectives:
1. Investigate the required content, design, and delivery mechanisms for a digital psycho-educational and self-management app for young people with ADHD (prototype development)

Secondary objectives:
1. Assess the usability and acceptability of the co-designed prototype (proof of concept)
2. Evaluate the feasibility of delivering the app via NHS settings (feasibility study)

Cross-cutting objectives:
1. Prepare for an effectiveness-implementation trial in NHS settings
2. Explore digital inclusion and meet the health needs of underserved communities, such as socio-economically disadvantaged groups

Ethics approval required
Ethics approval required

Ethics approval(s)
Approved 15/07/2026, Yorkshire & The Humber - Sheffield Research Ethics Committee (2 Redman Place, Stratford, London, E20 1JQ, United Kingdom; No telephone number provided; sheffield.rec@hra.nhs.uk), ref: 26/YH/0101

Primary study design
Interventional

Allocation
N/A: single arm study

Masking
Open (masking not used)

Control
Uncontrolled

Assignment
Single

Purpose
Device feasibility, Health services research

Study type(s)

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied
Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)

Interventions
WP1:
Consented participants will be invited to group workshops or one-to-one sessions in which they will trial Prototype 1. Workshops/sessions will last approximately 110 minutes and be hosted in-person or virtually depending on participant preference. Participants will complete pre- and post-questionnaires using secure online survey software. Pre-questionnaires will take ~20 min, post will take ~10 min. They will complete a comprehensive ‘think-aloud’ interview (approx. 40 mins) while actively navigating the prototype, where they will verbalise their thoughts, feelings, and behavioural actions, providing feedback on usability and real-time interactions.

A sub-sample will provide qualitative data on their experiences of engaging with the prototype and research involvement via semi-structured interviews/focus groups (online/in-person, approx. 60 minutes). These interviews will be arranged as soon as possible following the workshop/session but without a fixed timepoint, to facilitate engagement.
Total duration of participation, from enrolment to follow-up, will depend on how soon workshops/sessions can be arranged and, for those taking part in interviews, how soon after these the interviews take place. The workshops/sessions will take approximately 110 minutes, allowing 40 minutes for the think-aloud sessions and 30 min total for questionnaires. For those taking part in the interviews, these will take approximately 60 mins. The likely time of enrolment

in the study will be 4 days to 4 weeks. This has been kept deliberately flexible to allow for time between consent into the study and attendance at workshops/sessions and for the interviews. This flexible approach will help facilitate engagement of young people with diverse needs and characteristics.

WP2:
Young people will be 'prescribed' the web app prototype then prompted to access it via one or two supported 1-to-2 sessions or group workshops, held online or in person, depending on preference. Workshops/sessions will be held over a 4-week period. Participants will be invited to involve a supporter and provided with a link to the prototype for use between sessions. Pre- and post-measures will be collected via online survey platforms, trialling processes, and measures to inform a future trial. A sub-sample of participants will complete think-aloud interviews during sessions. Another sub-sample will complete semi-structured interviews as soon as possible following the workshop/session to inform prototype development.

Healthcare professionals will be invited to access the web app via a supported session. They will provide qualitative data on their experiences signposting patients to the study and, if relevant, of engaging with the web app via think-aloud interviews and/or semi-structured interviews or focus groups.

The total duration of participation, from enrolment to follow-up, will depend on how soon workshops/sessions can be arranged and whether the young person engages with one or two workshops/sessions. If they engage in two sessions, these may take place with up to 4 weeks between each. For those taking part in interviews, how soon after these the interviews take place. The workshops/sessions will take approximately 110 minutes, allowing 40 minutes for the think-aloud sessions and 30 min total for questionnaires. For those taking part in the interviews, these will take approximately 60 min. The likely time of enrolment in the study will be 4 days to 8 weeks. This has been kept deliberately flexible to allow for time between consent into the study and attendance at workshops/sessions and for the interviews. This flexible approach will help facilitate engagement of young people with diverse needs and characteristics.

Intervention Type
Other

Primary outcome(s)
1. Acceptability of the prototype measured using the Acceptability of Intervention Measure (AIM) at immediately post intervention

Key secondary outcome(s)
1. Patient activation (a person's knowledge, skills, and confidence to manage their own health and care) measured using the Patient Activation Measure (PAM) at immediately post intervention

2. Usability of prototype measured using the System Usability Scale (SUS) at immediately post intervention

Completion date
31/03/2029

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria
Eligible participants will be young people aged 16-30 years with an ADHD diagnosis or awaiting assessment (WP1 and WP2) and healthcare professionals involved in delivering healthcare to people with ADHD (WP2 only).

Young people (WP1 and WP2):
1. One of the following
1.1. A person aged 16 to 30 years diagnosed with ADHD, or
1.2. A person aged 16 to 30 years who have been referred for an assessment for ADHD
2. Able to engage in a test of the prototype and communicate their experience, either
2.1. Independently or
2.2. With a supporter
3. Resident, working, or studying in the UK

Additional criteria (WP2 only):
4. Registered with a GP or an NHS service for people with ADHD

Healthcare professionals (WP2 only):
1. Healthcare professional (involved in NHS care, including clinical, managerial, leadership and administrative roles)
2. Has experience of supporting patients with ADHD or suspected ADHD
3. Resident or working in the UK

Healthy volunteers allowed
Yes

Age group
Mixed

Lower age limit
16 Years

Upper age limit
70 Years

Sex
All

Total final enrolment
0

Key exclusion criteria
Young people (WP1 and WP2):
1. Not a person aged 16 to 30 years with a diagnosis of or awaiting assessment for ADHD
2. Not resident, working, or studying in the UK
3. Not able to engage in a test of the prototype, independently, or with help from a supporter

Healthcare professionals (WP2 only):
1. Not a healthcare professional
2. Does not have experience of supporting patients with ADHD or suspected ADHD
3. Not resident or working in the UK

Date of first enrolment
15/09/2026

Date of final enrolment
31/05/2028

Locations

Countries of recruitment
United Kingdom

England

Northern Ireland

Scotland

Wales

Study participating centre
University of Exeter
Stocker Road
Exeter
England
EX4 4PY

Sponsor information

Organisation
University of Exeter

Funder(s)

Funder type
Government

Funder Name
National Institute for Health and Care Research

Alternative Name(s)
National Institute for Health Research, NIHR Research, NIHRresearch, NIHR - National Institute for Health Research, NIHR (The National Institute for Health and Care Research), NIHR

Funding Body Type
Government organisation

Funding Body Subtype
National government

Location
United Kingdom

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan
Once the project is complete, with findings published in academic journals, an anonymised subset of the data will be securely deposited in Open Research Exeter (ORE). ORE is the University of Exeter's open access repository for storing, preserving, and disseminating the research outputs of the University. Each publication in ORE has a unique persistent identifier (URI or handle), providing secure and permanent access. https://ore.exeter.ac.uk/

IPD sharing plan summary
Stored in publicly available repository

Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
Protocol article		20/10/2026	17/11/2026	Yes	No