

# i-Minds: a digital intervention for young people exposed to online sexual abuse

<b>Submission date</b> 21/03/2022	<b>Recruitment status</b> No longer recruiting	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Prospectively registered <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Protocol
<b>Registration date</b> 12/04/2022	<b>Overall study status</b> Completed	<input type="checkbox"/> Statistical analysis plan <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Results
<b>Last Edited</b> 12/01/2026	<b>Condition category</b> Mental and Behavioural Disorders	<input type="checkbox"/> Individual participant data

## Plain English summary of protocol

### Background and study aims

Online sexual abuse (OSA) of young people has increased, can have serious effects on their development and mental health, and has become an important priority for health and social care services. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has recognised the identification of effective interventions for improving the wellbeing of young people who have experienced OSA and preventing further harm as a research priority. Young people can report OSA to government agencies and social media companies, but there are currently few tried and tested (evidence-based) or helpful treatments available. The NHS urgently needs an accessible intervention to support young people who have experienced OSA. Interventions aimed at improving mentalisation (the ability to understand one's own thoughts and feelings and those of others) is increasingly applied to treat young people with varied mental health difficulties. Young people who have experienced OSA are reluctant to seek in-person support and are generally comfortable receiving online support. A digital intervention aimed at improving mentalisation in OSA may reduce the risk for future harm and help young people become more resilient and able to manage distress that might result from OSA experiences.

### Who can participate?

Young people aged 12-18 years who have experienced OSA that has led to distress who are receiving support from a service such as the NHS or Kooth for their mental health, though OSA does not necessarily have to be the primary focus of their support.

### What does the study involve?

Participants use an app-based intervention over the period of 6 weeks. The intervention is largely based on mentalisation approaches which aim to boost the ability to understand the mental states of oneself and others. This approach has seen increasing application in the support of young people's mental health. The purpose of the i-Minds app is to help people better mentalise and therefore make them less vulnerable to the ongoing risk of online harm and further re-victimisation online. It is not intended to prevent or treat a medical condition.

### What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?

The study hopes that the intervention may reduce distress by supporting young people to develop their mentalisation capacity and gain valuable psychoeducational insight into OSA and

how best to avoid further re-victimisation in the future. Whilst all possible steps have been implemented to ensure the safety of young people taking part in the study, it is possible that when accessing the materials in the app, young people may become upset due to reliving memories of the OSA. Appropriate support will be provided throughout the study and there are a number of methods used in the app to help calm and soothe young people if they start to feel upset.

Where is the study run from?  
University of Manchester (UK)

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?  
March 2018 to April 2023

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

Who is the main contact?  
Prof. Sandra Bucci  
sandra.bucci@manchester.ac.uk

## Contact information

**Type(s)**  
Principal investigator

**Contact name**  
Prof Sandra Bucci

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## Additional identifiers

**Clinical Trials Information System (CTIS)**  
Nil known

**Integrated Research Application System (IRAS)**  
301517

**Protocol serial number**

IRAS 301517, CPMS 51349

## Study information

**Scientific Title**

i-Minds: a digital intervention to improve mental health and interpersonal resilience for young people who have experienced online sexual abuse - a non-randomised feasibility clinical trial and nested qualitative study

**Acronym**

i-Minds

**Study objectives**

As this is a feasibility clinical trial, there are no a-priori hypotheses. Instead, the study aims to determine the feasibility, acceptability and usability of the digital intervention (an app) and how to best integrate the app into existing routine care pathways.

**Ethics approval required**

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**Ethics approval(s)**

approved 15/12/2021, West of Scotland Research Ethics Committee 4 (Ward 11, Dykebar Hospital, Grahamston Road, Paisley, PA2 7DE, United Kingdom; +44 (0)141 314 0213; WestofScotland.ResearchEthicsCommittee4@ggc.scot.nhs.uk), ref: 21/WS/0160

**Study design**

Multi-center non-randomized mixed methods feasibility clinical trial and nested qualitative study

**Primary study design**

Interventional

**Study type(s)**

Treatment

**Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied**

App-based support for young people who have experienced distress associated with online or technology-facilitated sexual abuse

**Interventions**

Non-randomised mixed methods feasibility clinical trial with all participants receiving the intervention (novel app-based intervention using a mentalisation-based approach to improve resilience and reduce risk of re-victimisation and further harm associated with online sexual abuse). The intervention window is 6 weeks.

**Intervention Type**

Other

**Primary outcome(s)**

1. Feasibility of delivering the app will be assessed via recruitment and retention data congruent with all relevant fields of the CONSORT statement for feasibility studies. Assessment will take place across the recruitment and data collection period (months 1-11 of trial).
2. Usability, safety and acceptability:
  - 2.1. Usability assessed by the proportion of participants who complete intervention, dropout rates, reason for withdrawal, app usage and engagement (using secure software analytics guided by AMUsED framework)
  - 2.2. Safety assessed using detailed adverse events/serious adverse events reports
  - 2.3. Acceptability assessed using in-depth interviews with trial participants (YP-OSA) to examine whether expectations met, level of support needed to engage with the app, overall impressions, likes/dislikes about the app, how it helped/did not help, changes required, barriers to participation/engagement.

Assessment will take place across the recruitment and data collection period (months 1-11 of trial).

### **Key secondary outcome(s)**

1. Exploration of whether the app brings about clinically meaningful change in outcomes, measured via a battery of questionnaires measuring mentalisation, problematic internet use, emotional distress, online abuse-related stress, emotion regulation, interpersonal sensitivity, views/attitudes towards close interpersonal relationships and resilience, app satisfaction. Assessment will take place at baseline (pre-app use) and post 6-week intervention window (post-treatment).
2. Exploration of differences in engagement and potential clinical benefit across key demographic groups, measured by a registration form requesting demographic (e.g. gender, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, internet use, level of social deprivation) and clinical (e.g. diagnosis, treatment regime in referring service, other sources of support) details. Assessed at baseline.
3. Exploration of barriers and enablers to app integration and uptake into existing National Health Service (NHS) Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) & Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARC) and e-therapy provider pathways, assessed with qualitative interviews with healthcare professionals and service managers from referring services to examine ways to maximise uptake, utility, user experience, acceptability, satisfaction, reach of the app; how the app can be locally adapted and translated into practice; referral routes to the app via existing care pathways; strategic perceptions about whether the app can be scaled up. This will be assessed throughout the data collection period.

### **Completion date**

30/04/2023

## **Eligibility**

### **Key inclusion criteria**

1. 12-18 years old
2. Have been exposed to online sexual abuse and report associated distress
3. Are receiving support from NHS CAMHS, SARC or e-therapy providers (Kooth) and will continue to be actively supported by the service over the duration of the trial
4. Willing to use an app designed to support YP-OSA
5. Proficient in speaking and writing in English
6. Have the capacity to consent
7. Consent to providing their username to the research team (Kooth participants only)

**Participant type(s)**

Patient

**Healthy volunteers allowed**

No

**Age group**

Mixed

**Lower age limit**

12 years

**Upper age limit**

18 years

**Sex**

All

**Total final enrolment**

46

**Key exclusion criteria**

1. Have insufficient verbal and written command of English
2. Have moderate learning difficulties (as assessed by their direct care team)
3. Are at risk of current or recent (past month) suicidality

**Date of first enrolment**

01/05/2022

**Date of final enrolment**

31/03/2023

**Locations****Countries of recruitment**

United Kingdom

England

Scotland

**Study participating centre**

**Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust**

Prestwich Hospital

Bury New Road

Prestwich

Manchester  
England  
M25 3BL

**Study participating centre**

**Pennine Care NHS Foundation Trust**

225 Old Street  
Ashton-under-lyne  
England  
OL6 7SR

**Study participating centre**

**Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust**

Cobbett House  
Oxford Road  
Manchester  
England  
M13 9WL

**Study participating centre**

**NHS Lothian**

Waverley Gate  
2-4 Waterloo Place  
Edinburgh  
Scotland  
EH1 3EG

**Study participating centre**

**Kooth Digital Health Limited**

2 Eastbourne Terrace  
London  
England  
W2 6LG

## **Sponsor information**

**Organisation**

Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust

ROR

<https://ror.org/05sb89p83>

## Funder(s)

### Funder type

Government

### Funder Name

National Institute for Health 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

Future requests to access data will be via the project's CI (Prof. Sandra Bucci; [sandra.bucci@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:sandra.bucci@manchester.ac.uk)) and will be only approved on a case-by-case basis when sharing of data will not incur any risk of participant identification, and only when secondary users will be from a bona fide research organisation and have been granted suitable regulatory approval to further interrogate the data. The exact procedures for accessing the final datasets, as well as relevant meta-data and statistical code used in all quantitative analyses, will be approved by the PSC and made available to prospective future users upon request addressed to the CI and in keeping with our ethical approvals.

### IPD sharing plan summary

Available on request

### Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
<a href="#">Results article</a>		06/01/2026	12/01/2026	Yes	No
<a href="#">Protocol article</a>	protocol	21/03/2023	24/03/2023	Yes	No
<a href="#">Basic results</a>			25/11/2024	No	No

<a href="#">HRA research summary</a>			28/06/2023	No	No
<a href="#">Other publications</a>		28/03/2024	02/04/2024	Yes	No
<a href="#">Protocol file</a>	version 3	09/05/2022	07/03/2023	No	No
<a href="#">Study website</a>	Study website	11/11/2025	11/11/2025	No	Yes