

A study exploring whether clinical hypnosis is helpful and acceptable for people with functional neurological disorder (FND)

Submission date 16/09/2026	Recruitment status Recruiting	☐ Prospectively registered ☒ Protocol
Registration date 03/10/2026	Overall study status Ongoing	☐ Statistical analysis plan ☐ Results
Last Edited 17/09/2026	Condition category Nervous System Diseases	☐ Individual participant data ☒ Record updated in last year

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims

Functional Neurological Disorder (FND) is a condition that causes symptoms such as seizures, movement problems, weakness, sensory changes, and other neurological symptoms that cannot be explained by structural disease of the nervous system. Clinical hypnosis is already offered as part of routine care in the specialist FND service at Royal Preston Hospital, but more research is needed to understand how helpful and acceptable it is for people with FND.

This study aims to explore whether clinical hypnosis may improve symptoms, psychological wellbeing, daily functioning, and quality of life for people with FND. It will also examine participants' experiences of receiving hypnosis and gather suggestions for improving this type of treatment.

Who can participate?

Adults aged 18 years or older with a confirmed diagnosis of FND who are patients of, or have been referred to, the specialist FND service at Royal Preston Hospital may be eligible to take part. Participants must be able to give informed consent and complete the study questionnaires in English.

What does the study involve?

Participants who agree to take part will first complete an online questionnaire before starting their course of clinical hypnosis. They will then receive three face-to-face hypnosis sessions as part of their usual NHS care. These sessions take place every 2 weeks over approximately 6 weeks and each session lasts about 45 to 60 minutes.

Participants will complete a second online questionnaire after their third hypnosis session and a final questionnaire 4 weeks later. Each questionnaire takes around 20 minutes to complete. Some participants will also be invited to take part in a one-to-one interview about their experiences of hypnosis. The interview is optional, lasts around 30 to 60 minutes, and can take place by telephone or Microsoft Teams. Overall, participants will be involved in the study for approximately 10 weeks.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?

Participants may not receive any direct benefit from taking part. However, some people with FND have found hypnosis helpful for managing symptoms, and participants may value contributing to research that could help improve care for others with FND in the future. Clinical hypnosis is generally considered a low-risk intervention. Some people may temporarily feel tired, light-headed, emotional, or more aware of bodily sensations. Occasionally, symptoms may briefly worsen. Some questionnaire or interview questions may also bring up difficult thoughts or feelings. Participants can pause or stop any part of the study at any time without affecting their usual care.

Where is the study run from?

The study is being run through the specialist FND service at Royal Preston Hospital, part of Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, in collaboration with Lancaster University.

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

September 2026 to June 2027.

Who is funding the study?

The study is funded by Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (UK).

Who is the main contact?

Chief investigator: Dr Daniela Di Babilio Lancaster University, d.dibasilio@lancaster.ac.uk

Principal investigator: Dr Abhijit Das Royal Preston Hospital, abhijit.das@lthtr.nhs.uk

Contact information

Type(s)

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Integrated Research Application System (IRAS)
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Study information

Scientific Title

Clinical hypnosis for functional neurological disorder: a mixed-methods feasibility study of outcomes and acceptability

Study objectives

Overall aim:

To preliminarily evaluate the effectiveness, feasibility, and usability of clinical hypnosis as a treatment for individuals diagnosed with Functional Neurological Disorder (FND), using a mixed-methods design.

Quantitative objectives:

The quantitative component of the study will specifically aim to:

1. Assess psychological well-being: Determine the impact of clinical hypnosis on key indicators of psychological well-being, namely levels of anxiety, depression, stress, and health-related quality of life, at three time points: baseline, after a course of three fortnightly sessions (6 weeks in total), and at follow-up (4 weeks post-treatment)
2. Measure changes in functional symptoms: Evaluate whether there are differences in functional neurological symptoms (e.g. functional seizures, motor disturbances) by comparing symptom frequency and severity at baseline, after 6 weeks of clinical hypnosis, and at follow-up
3. Examine the sustainability of treatment effects: Investigate the persistence of any therapeutic benefits by assessing whether improvements in psychological well-being, quality of life, and symptom severity are maintained at follow-up

Qualitative objectives:

1. Explore participants' experiences of receiving clinical hypnosis, including any perceived benefits and barriers to engagement
2. Understand how participants interpret any observed changes in symptoms or well-being in the context of their broader lived experience with FND
3. Identify service users' recommendations for improving the delivery and accessibility of hypnosis-based interventions for the FND population

Ethics approval required

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Ethics approval(s)

Approved 11/05/2026, HRA Proportionate Review Service (2nd Floor, 2 Redman Place, London, E20 1JQ, United Kingdom; +44 20 7104 8260; approvals@hra.nhs.uk), ref: 26/PR/0366

Primary study design

Observational

Secondary study design

Prospective, longitudinal, mixed-methods observational cohort study

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

Functional Neurological Disorder (FND)

Interventions

Participants with a confirmed diagnosis of Functional Neurological Disorder (FND) who are receiving, or are due to receive, clinical hypnosis as part of routine care at the Royal Preston Hospital FND service will be invited to take part. After reviewing the participant information sheet and providing electronic informed consent through REDCap, participants will complete baseline questionnaires before their first hypnosis session (T1).

Participants will then receive three face-to-face clinical hypnosis sessions delivered fortnightly over approximately 6 weeks, with each session lasting around 45 to 60 minutes. At the end of the third session (T2), participants will complete a second set of questionnaires assessing symptoms, well-being, functioning, and treatment experiences.

Four weeks after T2, participants will be contacted to complete a final follow-up questionnaire (T3). Information on any additional hypnosis sessions received during the follow-up period will also be recorded.

A subset of approximately 10 to 15 participants who have consented to the qualitative component may also be invited to take part in a single semi-structured interview lasting approximately 30 to 60 minutes, conducted by telephone or Microsoft Teams, to discuss their experiences of clinical hypnosis.

Total duration of observation: approximately 10 weeks (baseline to 4-week follow-up)

Total duration of follow-up: 4 weeks (from post-treatment assessment at T2 to follow-up assessment at T3)

Intervention Type

Behavioural

Primary outcome(s)

1. Clinical Global Impression – Improvement scale (CGI-I) measured using a brief, clinician-rated tool that asks the treating professional to judge how much a patient's condition has improved or worsened relative to baseline on a 7-point scale (from "very much improved" to "very much worse"). Because it is simple, fast, and applicable across diagnoses, it is widely used in neurological and FND-related practice to provide a standardised, global measure of treatment response in both clinical care and research settings at T1 (baseline), T2 (week 10), T3 (week 14)

Key secondary outcome(s)

Completion date

30/06/2027

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria

1. Diagnosis: Confirmed diagnosis of FND by a neurologist or specialist in the FND service (e.g. motor or sensory functional symptoms)
2. Age: Adults aged 18 years or above
3. Location of care: Currently a patient at the FND service (Lancashire Teaching Hospitals) or referred to this service for treatment
4. Consent capacity: Capable of giving informed consent to participate, and able to comply with study procedures (e.g. completing questionnaires and attending or participating in therapy sessions)
5. Language: Sufficient proficiency in English to understand the Participant Information Sheet (PIS), give consent, and engage in therapy and interview (as all materials and sessions will be conducted in English)

Healthy volunteers allowed

No

Age group

Mixed

Lower age limit

18 Years

Upper age limit

99 Years

Sex

All

Total final enrolment

0

Key exclusion criteria

1. Serious comorbid conditions: Presence of severe unmanaged physical or mental health conditions that would interfere with participation. For example, an active severe neurological disease other than FND, or severe psychiatric disorders (such as psychosis or significant cognitive impairment) that impair the ability to engage in hypnotherapy or complete questionnaires. These could confound results or pose safety/consent issues
2. Inability to consent or communicate: Individuals who lack capacity to give informed consent or who cannot participate in research activities due to communication barriers (e.g. non-English speakers without available translation, or those with severe language or cognitive barriers) will be excluded
3. Concurrent participation in conflicting research: Participants enrolled in another interventional clinical trial or research study that could conflict with this intervention's

outcomes will be excluded, to avoid confounding effects

4. Declines hypnotherapy: Patients who, after discussion and/or after trying an initial session of hypnotherapy, are unwilling to undergo hypnotherapy treatment would not be suitable, since the intervention is central to the study

Date of first enrolment

17/09/2026

Date of final enrolment

30/04/2027

Locations

Countries of recruitment

United Kingdom

England

Study participating centre

Royal Preston Hospital Laboratory

Royal Preston Hospital

Sharoe Green Lane

Fulwood

Preston

England

PR2 9HT

Sponsor information

Organisation

Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

ROR

<https://ror.org/02j7n9748>

Funder(s)

Funder type

Funder Name

Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

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?
Other files	Consent Form Stage One (Survey) version 1.0	23/02/2026	17/09/2026	No	No
Other files	Consent Form Stage Two (Interview) version 1.0	23/02/2026	17/09/2026	No	No
Participant information sheet	Stage One Evaluation of Intervention (Survey) version 1.1	01/05/2026	17/09/2026	No	Yes
Participant information sheet	Stage Two (Interviews) version 1.1	01/05/2026	17/09/2026	No	Yes
Protocol file	version 1.0	27/03/2026	17/09/2026	No	No