



**Trialling an Optimised social Groups intervention in services to Enhance social connecTedness and mental Health in vulnERable young people:
A feasibility study**

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TOGETHER





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Background: What do we know so far?



Theoretical
& empirical
findings

- **Social cure theory:** health and well-being benefits of feeling connected/identifying with multiple social groups (e.g. book club, partner/family, culture) (Haslam et al., 2009)
- **Recommendations** made to implement practice innovations that address social isolation (Department of Health, 2015; O'Sullivan et al., 2021).
- **Typical service focus** (e.g. diagnostic remission, promotion of paid employment) does not always match the heterogeneity of youth mental health presentations, or what is most meaningful to young people themselves (van Os et al., 2019)

What do young people think about an intervention that focuses on social connectedness?

3 young people aged 18-25 with lived experience were presented with the idea of an intervention that:

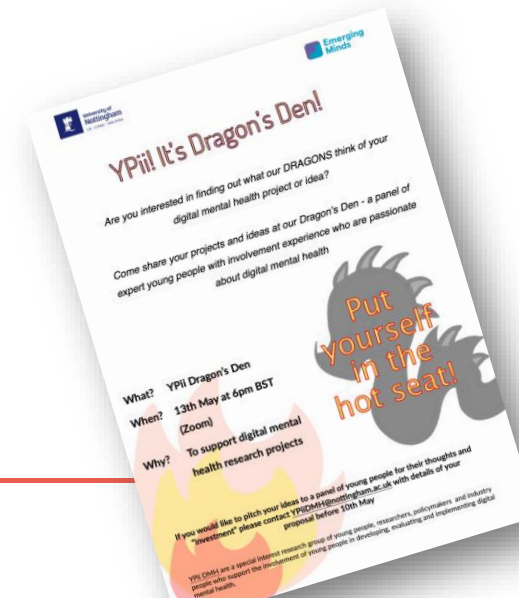
- targets social connection for young people's mental health
- may be delivered online or blended with online components

Feedback

- Most supported proposal (won the most 'money')
- Favoured face to face delivery (but saw value in online access)
- Access should be tailored to the individual



Young People's involvement in Digital Mental Health (YPIi DMH) research group event, organised by the University of Nottingham & Emerging Minds research network



- Investigating the social and mental health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic for vulnerable young people (January 2021 – December 2021)
- Semi-structured interviews & survey data (baseline + 6 months later)

Survey Participants
N = 105

93.3% pre-existing
mental health difficulties

35.2% NEET

Mean age
= 24

During the COVID-19 pandemic:

Maintaining multiple group memberships, social connectedness and **hope** were significantly associated with lower self-rated scores of **depression, anxiety** and **psychosis-like experiences**

Groups 4 Health (G4H): What is it?

What evidence is there so far?

Details

- Developed by a team from the University of Queensland, Australia
- Theory-driven 5 session group based social intervention
- Fully manualised + workbook
- Focuses on the importance of social connection/identifying with groups for health and well-being

Evidence so far...

G4H reduces loneliness, stress & depression relative to:

- matched no-treatment control group of vulnerable adults (*Haslam et al., 2016*)
- randomized control group of adults seeking help for loneliness (*Haslam et al., 2019*)
- randomized control group of young people undergoing group-CBT for depression (*Cruwys et al., 2021*)

Groups 4
Health
intervention

Haslam, C., Jetten, J., Cruwys, T., Dingle, G. A., & Haslam, S. A. (2018). *The new psychology of health: Unlocking the social cure*. Routledge.

<https://game-changers.habs.uq.edu.au/article/2018/12/groups-4-health-unlocking-social-cure>



Key Research Questions

Is it feasible to conduct a randomised controlled trial when delivering an adapted version of the G4H intervention for young service-users with mental health difficulties aged 16-25 accessing youth mental health services in the UK?

Is the G4H intervention acceptable, accessible and safe? What changes are indicated to improve the intervention?

What are the attitudes, experiences and contextual factors relevant to implementing an intervention for social connectedness by practitioners' working with young people?

ISRCTN Registered Trial
ID: ISRCTN12505807

Study recruitment:
May 2022 to Jan 2023

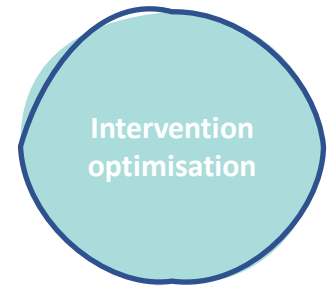
Trial data collection
ends May 2023

Optimising the Groups 4 Health intervention:

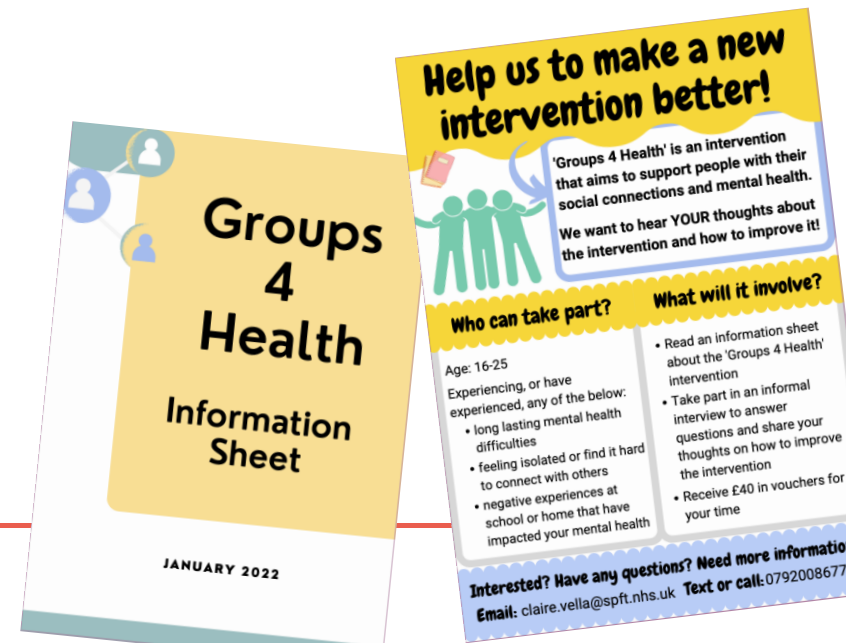
Focus group: 4 practitioners from an NHS Children's Assertive Outreach Team

Interview: 1:1 interview with 4 young people with lived experience of mental health difficulties and/or social isolation (paid £40 voucher)

- Sent information about the G4H intervention in advance
- Unstructured feedback sessions – but follow up interview questions evolved iteratively



Are there any immediate changes that need to be made to the intervention to improve accessibility for vulnerable young people in the UK?



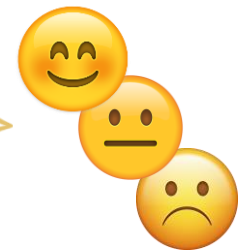
Optimising the Groups 4 Health intervention:

Feedback

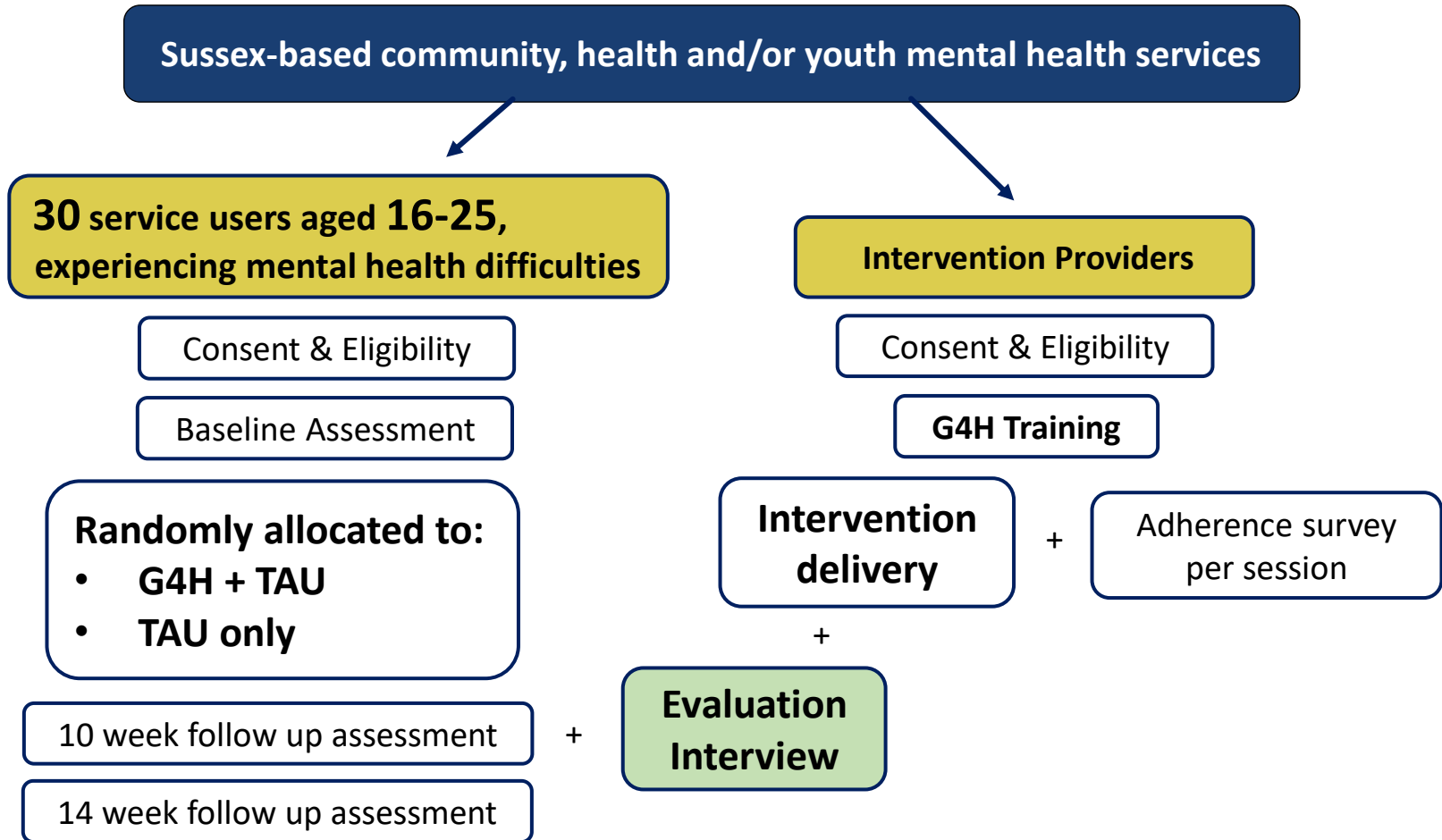
- Start with 1:1 delivery & introduce group sessions
- Person centered approach [online/face-to-face/location]
- Adapt language e.g. use “connections” instead of “groups”
- Avoid ‘school’ connotations (language & room set up)
- Option to present rating scales as words or pictures
- Support/prompts to carry out action plan between sessions 4 & 5

Intervention
optimisation

Are there any immediate changes that need to be made to the intervention to improve accessibility for vulnerable young people in the UK?



Feasibility randomised controlled trial:




Feasibility randomised controlled trial:

Feasibility parameters:



50%
or more

... of referred young people will be **eligible**



80%
or more

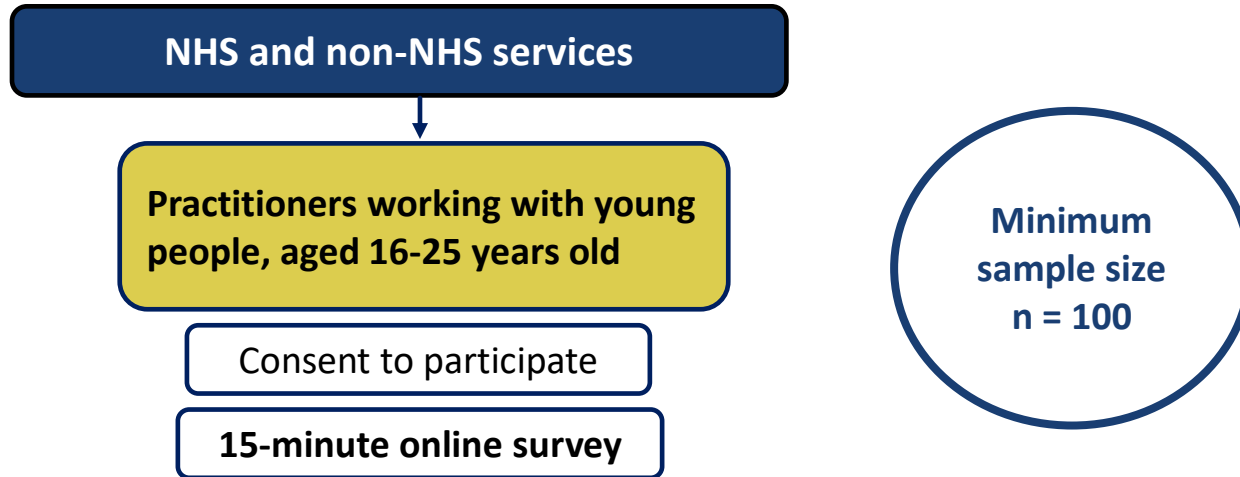
...of consenting eligible young people will be **retained** in the study **at each follow up time point**

...assessment data completeness

...of young people allocated to receive G4H will complete at least **four intervention sessions**

...of the core **G4H intervention items will be delivered**

Practitioner survey:



What does the survey cover?

Demographic Information

Employment & Experience

Attitudes toward:

- supporting social connectedness in routine practice
- a social-based intervention for young people with mental health difficulties
- testing a social-based intervention in a research trial

Practitioner survey:

Currently recruiting from NHS & non-NHS services in the geographical areas covered by:

- Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust
- Norfolk & Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust

**Open to new sites & services across the UK
... if you're interested, get in touch!**

Email: c.vella@sussex.ac.uk

Would you like
to participate?



https://universityofsussex.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9GHkh8iv22oEiW

Conclusion:

What do we hope to learn from the **TOGETHER** study?

- Do our plans for this research study work?
- What is the Groups 4 Health intervention experience like for young people with mental health difficulties and intervention providers in the UK?
- What do practitioners think about a social-based intervention for young people experiencing mental health difficulties?





Thank you for listening!

If you'd like more information, get in touch:

Email: c.vella@sussex.ac.uk

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