

# The effectiveness, acceptability and cost-effectiveness of psychosocial interventions for maltreated children and adolescents: an evidence synthesis

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## Plain English summary

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# Plain English summary

## What is the problem?

Sometimes children and adolescents are abused or neglected by their parents or other adults. Abuse can be physical, sexual or emotional, and many children experience more than one kind of abuse and neglect. We call this child maltreatment. Maltreated children often do less well than other children. For example, they often have poorer physical and mental health, do less well at school and find it more difficult to establish good relationships than non-maltreated children. Psychosocial interventions are ways of helping that do not rely on drugs, for example counselling, group work and music therapy.

## What did we do?

We looked internationally for studies that assessed the effectiveness of psychosocial interventions for maltreated children and whether or not they were worth paying for (cost-effectiveness). We also looked for studies that told us something about what children and other people (such as parents or therapists) think about psychosocial interventions. We completed our searches in June 2014.

## What did we find?

We found 198 effectiveness studies, six cost-effectiveness studies and 73 studies that told us what people thought of these interventions. Only a handful of these were conducted in the UK and most did not address outcomes that young people told us were important.

## What does this mean?

Although we found some interventions that *might* improve outcomes for maltreated children, these need to be independently evaluated in the UK. Importantly, many of the interventions currently offered to children in the UK have not been evaluated at all. Our report makes recommendations for improving services for maltreated children, including looked-after children, and for future research.

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