

# Behavioural activation versus guided self-help for depression in adults with learning disabilities: the BeatIt RCT

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## Plain English summary

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## Plain English summary

Depression is as common among adults with learning disabilities as it is among the general population and is the most frequent type of mental ill health they experience. Psychological (talking) therapies are the recommended treatment for most people with depression. However, many adults with learning disabilities do not have the verbal ability to participate in talking therapies. Behavioural activation is a psychological therapy shown to be effective in treating depression. It relies less on talking, gets people with depression involved in positive activities and helps them to engage in tasks that people with depression tend to avoid. We wanted to see if a behavioural activation intervention adapted for adults with learning disabilities and depression, called BeatIt, was effective.

To achieve this, we compared BeatIt to a guided self-help therapy, StepUp. Guided self-help is an educational approach, helping people to have a better understanding of depression and the skills to cope better. Adults with a learning disability were randomly assigned to either BeatIt or StepUp. They, and their carers, were asked to rate their symptoms of depression before therapy, immediately following therapy and 12 months later.

No difference was found between BeatIt and StepUp in terms of their clinical effectiveness in treating depression. Although BeatIt was more expensive than StepUp, the cost of both interventions was small compared with the participants' overall support costs. Although we cannot say that BeatIt was more effective than StepUp, they may be better than no treatment. However, this could be discovered only in a future study making this comparison.



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