

Non-traditional support workers delivering a brief psychosocial intervention for older people with anxiety and depression: the NOTEPAD feasibility study

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Declared competing interests of authors: Peter Bullock is Chief Executive of Age UK North Staffordshire and reports that a contract between Keele University and Age UK was set up to enable Age UK support workers to deliver the intervention during the study. Carolyn A Chew-Graham, Simon Gilbody and Peter Bower are and have been in receipt of funding from the National Institute for Health Research outside the submitted work. Simon Gilbody is a member of the Health Technology Assessment (HTA) Commissioning Board, HTA Efficient Study Designs, HTA End of Life Care and Add-on Studies and HTA Funding Boards Policy Group.

Published July 2019

DOI: 10.3310/hsdr07250

Plain English summary

The NOTEPAD feasibility study

Health Services and Delivery Research 2019; Vol. 7: No. 25

DOI: 10.3310/hsdr07250

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Plain English summary

Anxiety and depression are common in older people, but may not be identified or properly managed. Older people may not present to their general practitioner because of stigma, or because the treatments offered are not acceptable. Third (or voluntary) sector support may be more acceptable and less stigmatising.

We worked in partnership with Age UK North Staffordshire. The research study was supported by a patient and public involvement and engagement group. After talking to older people and voluntary sector workers, we developed a treatment programme, training for support workers (employed by Age UK) and materials for older people involved in a feasibility study to see if we could recruit older people from general practices. Older people who agreed to take part in the study were allocated either to receive support from one of the six support workers for depression and/or anxiety symptoms, which might include being accompanied to a local community group, or to receive care as usual from their general practices. This study did not aim to tell us whether or not the new treatment was effective.

We recruited 38 older people to the study. Older people reported that they found working with the support workers useful and that it had helped in a variety of ways. Not all older people wanted to attend a community group. The support workers found the training useful and could work with older people suffering from symptoms of anxiety and depression.

General practitioners in the participating practices recognised the need for additional care for older people with anxiety and depression, but did not feel able to provide this.

The study has given us some information about how we may further develop the support worker intervention, which could be tested in a larger trial to find out if it is effective in helping people with anxiety and depression to recover.

Health Services and Delivery Research

ISSN 2050-4349 (Print)

ISSN 2050-4357 (Online)

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Editorial contact: journals.library@nihr.ac.uk

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The research reported in this issue of the journal was funded by the HS&DR programme or one of its preceding programmes as project number 13/54/34. The contractual start date was in September 2015. The final report began editorial review in January 2018 and was accepted for publication in November 2018. The authors have been wholly responsible for all data collection, analysis and interpretation, and for writing up their work. The HS&DR editors and production house have tried to ensure the accuracy of the authors' report and would like to thank the reviewers for their constructive comments on the final report document. However, they do not accept liability for damages or losses arising from material published in this report.

This report presents independent research funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). The views and opinions expressed by authors in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the NHS, the NIHR, NETSCC, the HS&DR programme or the Department of Health and Social Care. If there are verbatim quotations included in this publication the views and opinions expressed by the interviewees are those of the interviewees and do not necessarily reflect those of the authors, those of the NHS, the NIHR, NETSCC, the HS&DR programme or the Department of Health and Social Care.

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