

# Intensive support teams for adults with intellectual disabilities displaying challenging behaviour: the IST-ID mixed-methods study

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## Plain English summary

### The IST-ID mixed-methods study

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## Plain English summary

There are concerns that adults with intellectual disabilities (which are also known as learning disabilities) who display challenging behaviour often lack effective specialist support. To address this, NHS England proposes that intensive support teams should be part of all community intellectual disability services in England. However, there is currently very little evidence about how effective such teams are in reducing challenging behaviour and whether or not they provide value for money.

We found that these teams operate in one of two models: either as an enhancement of community intellectual disability services (which we call the 'enhanced' model) or as a standalone service (which we call the 'independent' model). We assessed the impact of each model for 9 months. Both models reduce challenging behaviour in adults with intellectual disabilities and have similar costs.

People with intellectual disabilities who were in the intensive support teams' caseloads and their carers said that they valued the accessibility of the service, the person-centred approach taken by intensive support team staff and the way carers were involved in both models. Intensive support team managers and staff emphasised good communication with other services and ongoing training as facilitators of good intensive support team care. However, maintaining adequate staffing levels in intensive support teams and the ability to reduce admission to psychiatric hospitals were concerns for intensive support team professionals. Regardless of model, participants remained engaged with intensive support teams and health-care professionals from community intellectual disability services were satisfied with the referral process and intensive support team practices.

The findings of the study will be valuable to professionals involved in the development of intensive support teams who aim to improve outcomes for adults with intellectual disabilities who display challenging behaviour. They will also be valuable to family carers and service users who need to be familiar with their processes and expectations of support and who should be involved in the development of future intensive support services.



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