

# Brief education supported psychological treatment for adolescent borderline personality disorder: the BEST feasibility RCT

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## Plain English summary

### BEST feasibility RCT

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# Plain English summary

## Why the study was needed

The Brief Education Supported Treatment (BEST) intervention was designed for young people experiencing symptoms of borderline personality disorder such as unstable emotions, difficulties in getting along with others, risky behaviour and self-harm. Because existing treatments for adolescent borderline personality disorder are time intensive and can be delivered only by highly trained professionals, many young people experience long waits for appropriate support.

This study investigated a novel approach to supporting adolescents experiencing borderline personality disorder symptoms. Pastoral staff from the young person's school or college received training to prepare them to work alongside a mental health professional to deliver up to six support sessions. Each session followed a manual containing a series of interactive exercises, which practitioners completed with the young person. Based on key elements of existing treatments, sessions were designed to help young people gain a better understanding of their difficulties and to develop skills and strategies to manage these difficulties.

This study aimed to find out if this approach is practicable and liked by staff and young people and if it would be possible to run a future trial testing whether or not it leads to improved outcomes and offers value for money.

## What we did

In stage 1, we reviewed previous research and carried out a small pilot study to provide information to enable us to fine-tune the intervention before progressing to the next stage. In stage 2, participants aged 13–18 years with symptoms of borderline personality disorder were allocated at random to receive either the BEST intervention or standard care. A wide range of information was collected to assess whether or not it would be possible to run a future trial.

## What we found out

We found that it is possible to deliver the BEST intervention within schools and colleges. Feedback from staff and young people suggested that they liked the intervention and thought that it was beneficial, both for young people themselves and for those delivering it. This suggests that a future trial would be worthwhile; however, we also identified several challenges that would need to be overcome for it to be successful. Therefore, we plan to use our learning from this study, together with additional work to answer remaining questions, to design a future full-scale trial.

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