



Synopsis

A digital intervention to improve mental health and interpersonal resilience for young people who have experienced online sexual abuse: the i-Minds non-randomised feasibility clinical trial and nested qualitative study

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Plain language summary

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Why did we do this project?

The number of young people who have experienced technology-assisted sexual abuse (e.g. non-consensual sexting, online grooming by adults) has increased; no specific treatments to support these young people are available. We developed the i-Minds app alongside young people who have experienced technology-assisted sexual abuse and tested whether using the app improves well-being and helps prevent further harm.

What did we do?

With child and adolescent and specialist healthcare professionals and young people, we developed the i-Minds app. Between May 2022 and March 2023, 43 young people (12–18 years old) agreed to use the app. We collected information about young people's mental health and well-being, how young people used the app, and its safety. Afterwards, we talked to young people who took part in the study and healthcare professionals who referred young people to the study to see what they thought about the app and our study procedures and how these could be improved, as well as how the app can be made available in the future.

What did we find?

Young people liked using the app, and it was safe to use. Young people said the app helped them feel better able to manage their mental health. Referring healthcare professionals would value more training on how to work with young people affected by technology-assisted sexual abuse; in particular, guidance on how to ask young people about their online interactions and how to provide appropriate support.

What does this mean for relevant young people?

The i-Minds app could be helpful in supporting young people who have experienced technology-assisted sexual abuse. Professionals need more support and training in understanding technology-assisted sexual abuse and its impact. Support is also needed for organisations when introducing digital health interventions into practice.