

## The Lucy Booth: a drop-in centre for mental health and psychological wellbeing

**20**  
YEARS OF  
**NICE**  
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Children and young people with physical illnesses are at much higher risk of mental health problems. This can negatively impact their quality of life and make the physical illness worse. NICE recommended evidence-based psychological treatments for common mental health disorders can be difficult to access. Our project evaluates the effectiveness of these treatments at Great Ormond Street Hospital.

*“Thank you so much for helping us. It changed our lives for the better. It’s bad enough when you have a child who has to cope with an illness, and from that you can quickly develop other issues.”*

**Parent,** Great Ormond Street Hospital



### What we did and why

People with long-term physical health problems are approximately 3 times more likely to have mental health problems than the general population. Children and young people with both physical and mental health problems have worse clinical outcomes and a significantly lower quality of life than those with a physical health problem alone.

The aim of this project was to develop, evaluate and share the outcomes of a psychological wellbeing drop-in centre in a children’s hospital. This was done by testing guided by young people, carers and staff to continually improve care.

We hope that this initiative will transform access and delivery of mental health care in children and young people with physical health problems. This will pave the way for future service developments, which will allow this population to have convenient access to high-quality, low-intensity psychological therapies that are recommended by NICE.

The drop-in centre was run for 1 week to evaluate the need for such a resource and to characterise the patients seeking support.

The project is funded by the Beryl Alexander Charity and Great Ormond Street Hospital Charity.

### Outcomes and impact

Children and young people recruited to the project (n=31) were similar to patients seen within the wider hospital with respect to age and gender. With respect to ethnicity, those from a BAME background (45%) were over-represented in the study relative to hospital-wide data.

The majority of children and young people were above the clinical threshold for common mental health disorders (n=24). While 83% experienced symptoms for over 12 months, 35% had not previously accessed mental health support.

Of the children and young people in the project, 30% had a low-intensity intervention from the centre, 36% were referred to internal paediatric psychology services and 10% were referred for further assessment (for example, for autism).

Feedback from those who took part in the project from interviews and questionnaires included: *“We think that the service is amazing. We’ve tried to get this kind of help since our daughter was a baby, to no avail. The thing we’ve liked best is that we’ve felt listened to. I just feel it is a shame that the wider community can’t benefit from services such as this, as psychological help for children in the community is woefully lacking”.*

### What we learnt

Overall, the initiative suggests that a drop-in self-referral centre for mental health problems in a paediatric hospital is an acceptable and feasible way to make sure that physical and mental health services are integrated for children and young people with chronic illnesses.

The next phase of this initiative will use quantitative clinical outcome and health economic data.

Most children and young people in the project met the clinical threshold for common mental health problems and had limited previous support. This indicates an unmet need in this population.

A combination of onward referrals and immediate or planned interventions met the needs of this population. This suggests that the centre could have a dual role as a single point of access as well as a way to offer NICE recommended, low-intensity psychological interventions.

Regular meetings with stakeholders, including patient and public research advisory groups, have been invaluable in making sure that barriers to implementation are addressed.