

Factors that promote or inhibit screening within local authority social work teams: findings from a feasibility trial



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Supporting Looked after children and care leavers In Decreasing drugs, and alcohol (SOLID)

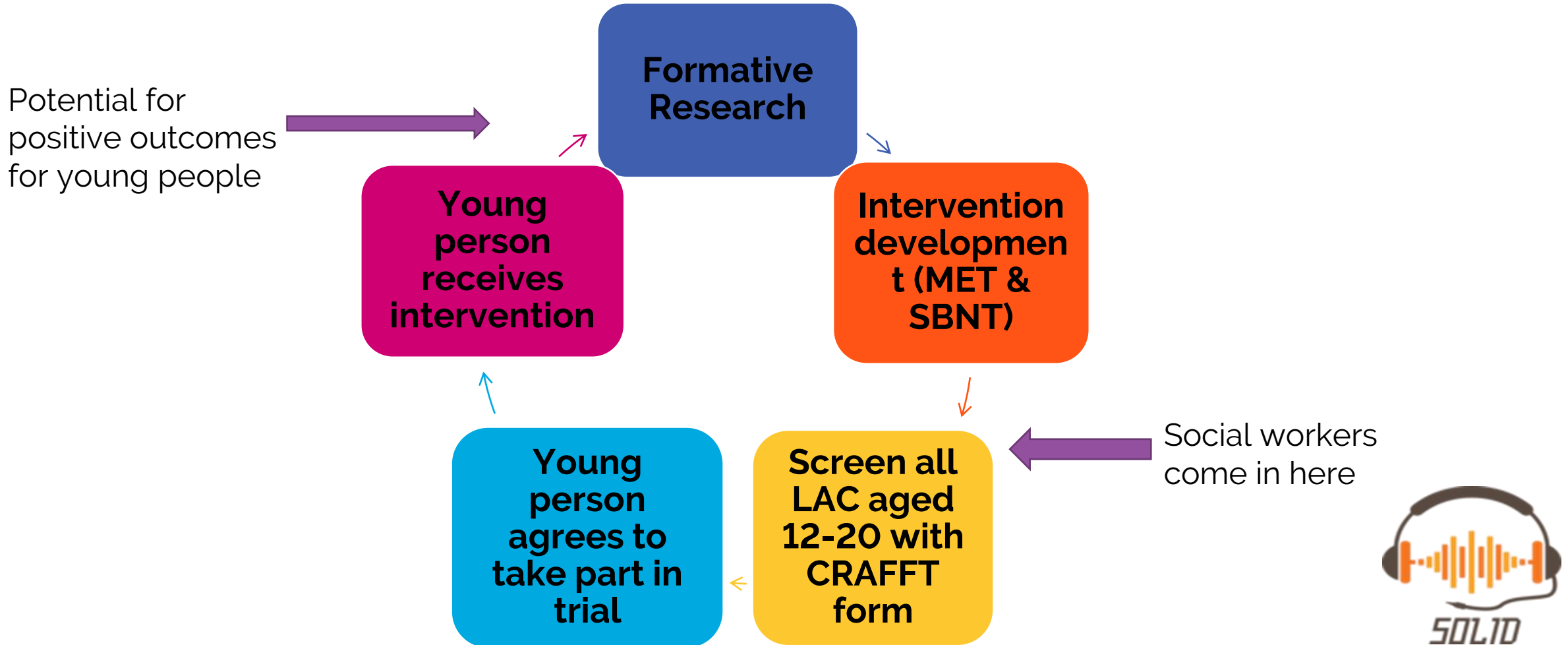
Aim of the SOLID study:

To adapt and test the feasibility of delivering two behaviour change interventions to reduce risky substance use (illicit drugs and alcohol), and improve mental health in Looked After Children and Care Leavers (LAC aged 12 -20 years).

1. Formative study phase, followed by
2. Pilot feasibility randomised controlled trial (RCT)



Project stages & progress



Phase 2 Pilot Feasibility RCT

Primary Objective:

To conduct a three arm pilot RCT (comparing: i. MET, ii. SBNT, and iii. Control – usual care), to determine if rates of eligibility, recruitment and retention of LAC, and acceptability of the interventions are sufficient to recommend a definitive multi-centre randomised controlled trial.



Research screening in social work practice

Social workers were asked to screen all young people on their caseloads aged 12-20 years with a standardised instrument.

Training sessions were conducted with social workers from each of the recruitment sites; these sessions introduced the CRAFFT (Car, Relax, Alone, Forget, Family, Trouble) screening tool.



CRAFFT

(Car, Relax, Alone, Forget, Family, Trouble)

9 Item tool

CRAFFT has been used extensively with young people, and is sensitive and specific to identify problem substance use

The CRAFFT Interview (version 2.0)

Begin: "I'm going to ask you a few questions that I ask all my patients. Please be honest. I will keep your answers confidential."

Part A

During the PAST 12 MONTHS, on how many days did you:

1. Drink more than a few sips of beer, wine, or any drink containing alcohol? Say "0" if none. # of days
2. Use any marijuana (pot, weed, hash, or in foods) or "synthetic marijuana" (like "K2" or "Spice")? Say "0" if none. # of days
3. Use anything else to get high (like other illegal drugs, prescription or over-the-counter medications, and things that you sniff or "huff")? Say "0" if none. # of days

Did the patient answer "0" for all questions in Part A?

Yes

No

Ask CAR question only, then stop

Ask all six CRAFFT* questions below

Part B

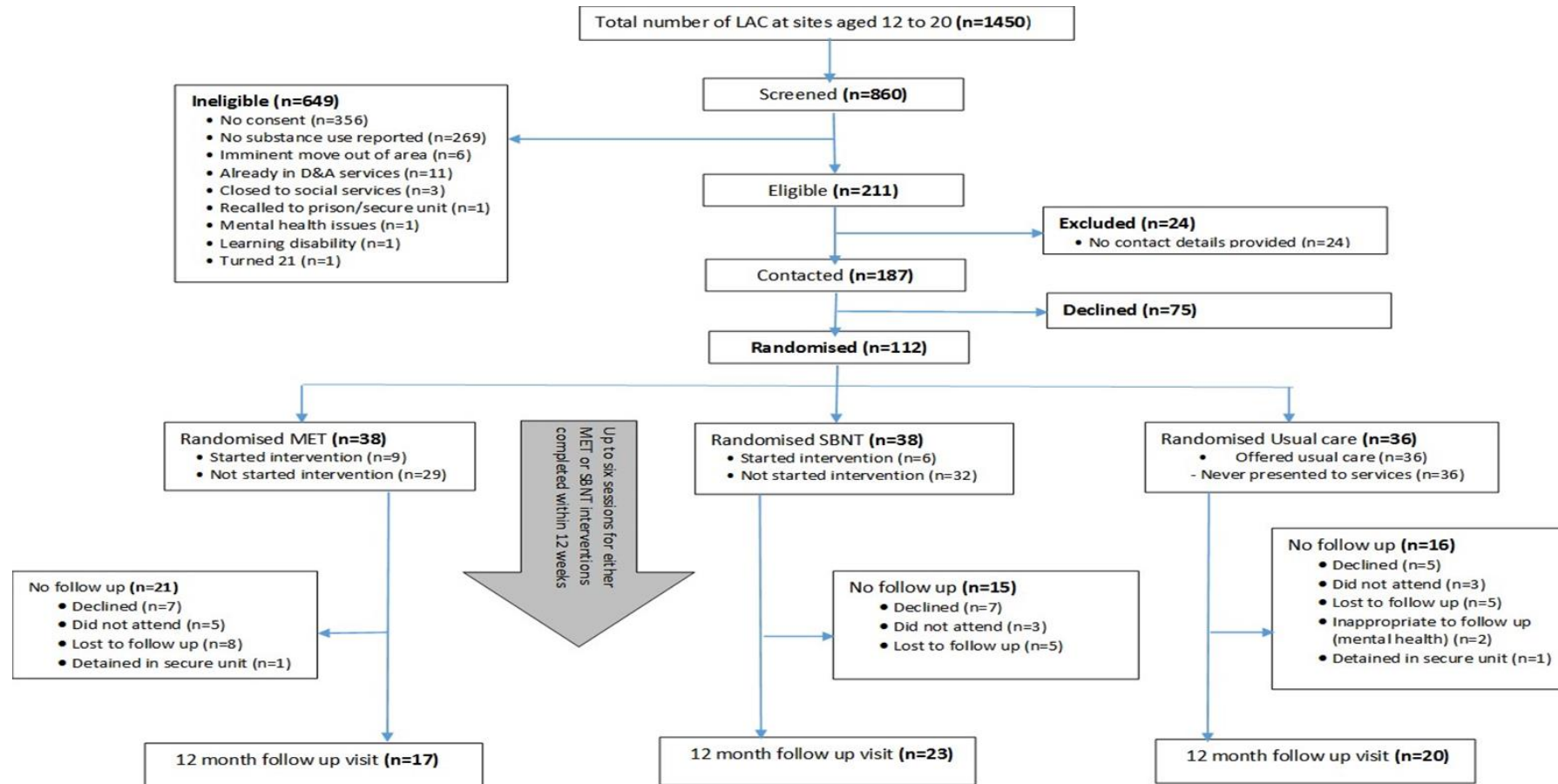
- | | No | Yes |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| C Have you ever ridden in a CAR driven by someone (including yourself) who was "high" or had been using drugs? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| R Do you ever use alcohol or drugs to RELAX, feel better about yourself, or fit in? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| A Do you ever use alcohol or drugs while you are by yourself, or ALONE? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| F Do you ever FORGET things you did while using alcohol or drugs? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| F Do your FAMILY or FRIENDS ever tell you that you should cut down on your drinking or drug use? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| T Have you ever gotten into TROUBLE while you were using alcohol or drugs? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

*Two or more YES answers suggest a serious problem and need for further assessment. See back for further instructions →

NOTICE TO CLINIC STAFF AND MEDICAL RECORDS:
The information on this page is protected by special federal confidentiality rules (42 CFR Part 2), which prohibit disclosure of this information unless authorized by specific written consent. A general authorization for release of medical information is NOT sufficient.



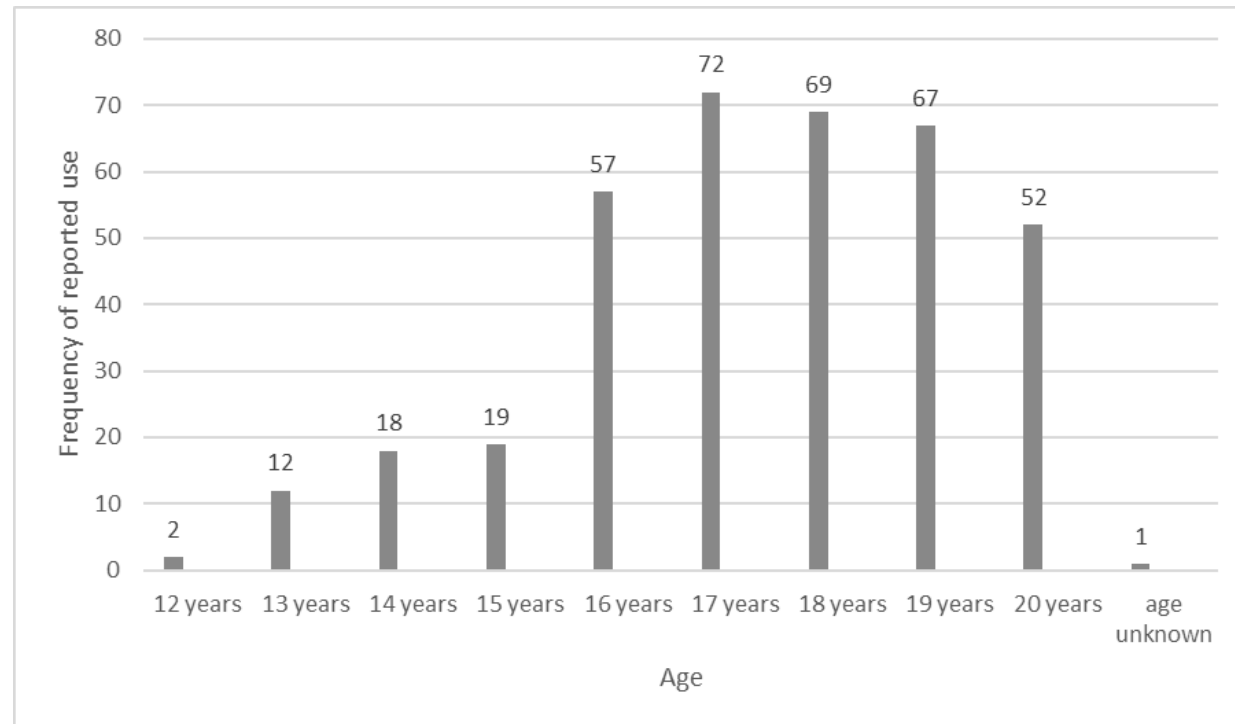
RCT screening and recruitment



Scale of drug and alcohol use

860 children in care screened for drug and alcohol use

369 reported drug and/or alcohol use in the last 12 months



Was the screening process acceptable?

CRAFFT form; young people to identify their substance use within the last 12 months

Professionals, both social workers and drugs and alcohol practitioners, thought that this timeframe was too long and that a shorter timeframe would produce more accurate results, and suggested modifying the CRAFFT form to capture data within a shorter timeframe.

Agreement that screening should NOT be completed by posting CRAFFT forms out to children in care. None of the sites reported any forms being returned if they had been sent out for young people to complete independently.



How young is too young?

Social workers raised concerns that 12 years was 'too young' to screen for drug use;

"I thought twelve was a little bit young. I think from the responses that I got in terms of talking to workers, they were a little bit edgy around the twelve remit."

(Social work manager)

This was also voiced by one of the personal advisors who felt that screening younger children in care may have caused participants to 'panic';

"I think, personally, the age limit was a little bit low, just because some of the younger ones were like, "I've never done drugs, I've never done drugs, so what are you asking me this for?" They were panicking."



Social workers as gatekeepers

Uncertainty about children feeling they could be honest with their social worker

"There was a potential for some of the children to not want to share that information with the social worker. I don't know, in some cases, it's not going to have a significant impact on the responses but there would be some children who may not feel that they can be entirely honest with the social worker"

(Social work manager)

Concern appeared to be unfounded. Majority did not have any concerns regarding completing the CRAFFT form in the presence of their social worker, although for some they would not choose their social worker.



Complexities of conducting research in the real world

The process evaluation interviews identified the real-world organisational barriers that created challenges.

Limited research culture within children's social care.

The below quote makes reference to the fact that within this study social workers were expected to recruit children in care into the trial;

"They are very important learning points about your study group, about the difficulties of multi-centre trials and recruiting people from different occupations, recruiting people into research studies who have no research orientation, no research knowledge and no research motivation"

(Clinical trainer/supervisor)



Barriers to screening- social work perspective

Office relocation

Key members of staff absent for long periods

OFSTED inspections

Capacity/firefighting

Commitment to other research projects/no previous research experience



Barriers to screening- our perspective

Social Workers acting as gatekeepers

Lack of experience or involvement in research/research processes

SOLID study not being identified as a 'priority' piece of work by managers



Facilitators to screening

Variation in screening process across research sites in response to the capacity and standard procedures of each site team.

In one site two personal advisors within the social work team led the screening.

Student social work students completed CRAFFT forms in two sites.

In one site, the leaving care manager completed weekly 'floor sweeps'.

'Stop the clock' sessions over a three month period (May- July 2017) for social workers to have dedicated time allocated to contact young people.

Across four sites a researcher spent time within the social work offices to support social workers in completing the screening.



Learning for future social care trials

Future trials to consider how we deliver harm reduction and preventive care for children who are care experienced (Pragmatic research design).

Local Authorities have experienced reduced funding due to economic austerity and many social work settings are under-staffed and over stretched in terms of workload.

Organisational readiness study with social work teams and drug and alcohol services to be involved in research and deliver interventions prior to implementation of an RCT or evaluation study.