The ERA Study

Effectiveness of group arts therapies (art therapy, dance movement therapy and music therapy) compared to group counselling for diagnostically heterogeneous patients in the community: **RA**ndomised controlled trial in mental health services





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• We know from a PhD linked to the ERA study that patient preferences are important in mental health interventions

• Preferences are even more important when it comes to use of the arts. People can hold strong opinions as to

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Background

Arts therapies are important to service users but evidence for their effectiveness at present is mixed. There has been limited research in the UK and many studies have been small in size and with methodological limitations.

Research has often focused on a single diagnostic group, not reflecting clinical practice where members in therapy groups often have a range of diagnoses. Furthermore, studies have not taken into account participants' preference for the arts modality despite people often having a strong preference for or against certain art forms.

Objective

The ERA study aims to overcome these limitations to test the effectiveness of group arts therapies, compared to group counselling, for diagnostically mixed groups, where participants are asked their preference of arts modality. The arts therapies that are being tested in this trial are art therapy, dance movement therapy and music therapy.

NIHR MHRI Additional Funding

How we matched preferences

Additional funding was applied for from the NIHR Mental Health Research Initiative (MHRI) to set up a site with Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust (CNTW).

It was important to have a site outside of London and the South of England for generalisability of the study, as well as to improve recruitment efficiency especially following a pause in the study due to COVID-19.

and are linked to lower dropout rates and stronger therapeutic alliance (1)

fully informed about what each of the arts therapies groups entailed

whether or not they feel able to engage with them and how accessible the arts medium is. (2)

• We developed a video with service users and arts therapists to ensure participants were

• Potential participants watched the video and were then invited to choose the one they felt



'The Colourful Collective Seven', ERA group artwork

Methods

Pragmatic, parallel arm randomised controlled trial



Invitation to participate

Inital Meeting

(60 minutes)

Informed consent

Eligibility check

questionnaire (£10)

If eligible, view video and

chose arts modality

preference

Questionnaires (£10)

43 groups delivered = 1700 therapy sessions



Randomisation

If you are not eligible,

team





CNWL, CNTW and AWP

5 sites across ELFT,

• At randomisation, participants were randomised either to their choice of arts therapy, or to group counselling.

Choice of arts therapy 5 months of twice weekly group sessions (60-90 minutes) Groups of up to 10 people ----

Group Arts Therapies

Group Counselling

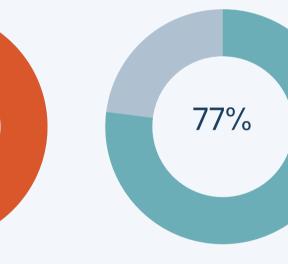
Person-centered counselling we really appreciate 5 months of twice weekly group your effort and interest sessions (60-90 minutes) in the study Groups of up to 10 people Referred back to care

they could best engage with

Outcomes

- Outcomes collected at post intervention, 6 months after intervention & 12 months after intervention (1 hour, £20)
- Interview (optional, 1 hour, £20)
- To date we have at least one follow-up from 89% of our participants which is within the window of 15% attrition that we allowed for in our sample size calculation

Follow Up Completion Rates



6 months

72%

12 months (currently ongoing)

NIHR MHRI Funding for CNTW Site

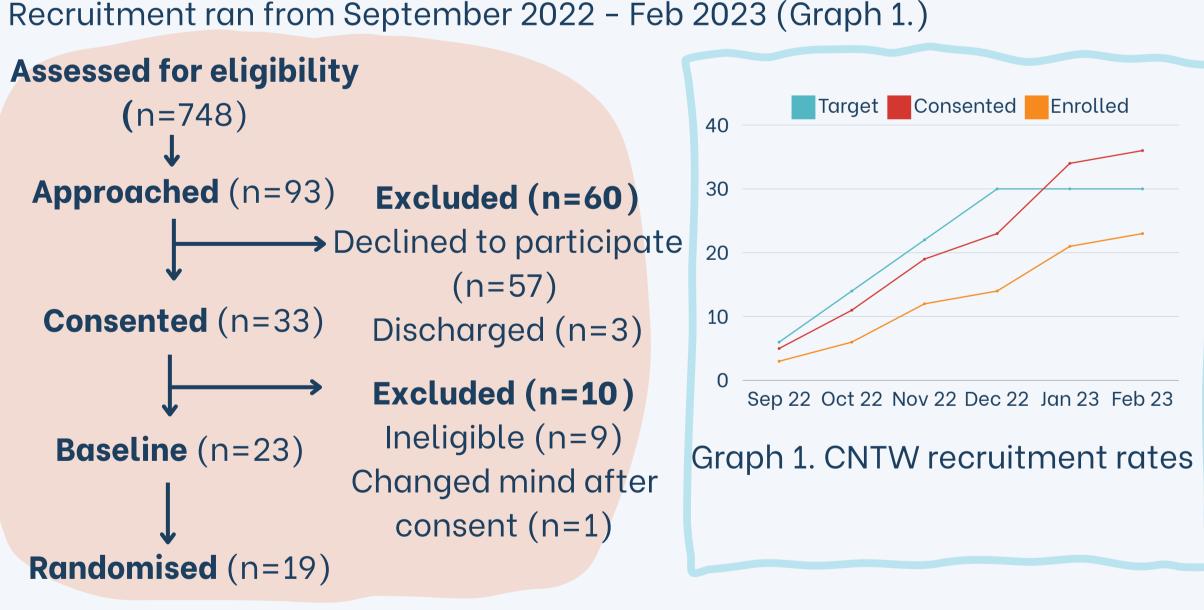
- High weighted prevalence (167.0 per 1,000 population) of mental health conditions
- Low rates of recruitment into mental health research (8.9 per per 100,000 prevalence)
- One of only a few NHS Trusts in the North of England with representation across each of the arts therapies.

Impact of Additional Funding

- Supported the ERA Study to reach target recruitment • Allowed the study to run in a site outside of London
- and the South of England Recruitment of a dedicated ERA Researcher in CNTW -
- this was essential for the success of the study in a site far from the main research team in East London
- Enabled set up of therapy groups and for therapists to be supported
- Additional travel funds for participants to attend inperson follow up meetings where this additional support was needed

CNTW Recruitment

Recruitment ran from September 2022 - Feb 2023 (Graph 1.)



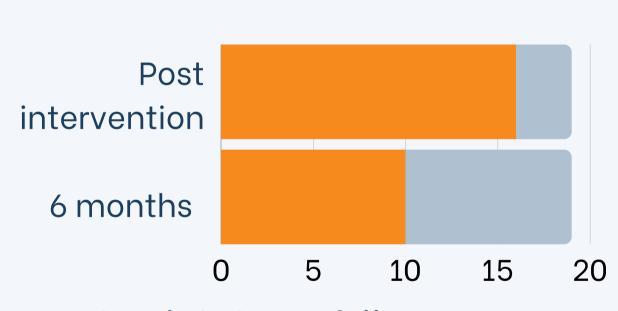
- The study design made it challenging to allocate first choices of arts therapy groups when only a few had selected it.
- To address this, at the end of recruitment, participants were asked to indicate a second choice of arts modality should their first not be available.
- Where the first or second choice wasn't available, participants either withdrew (n=2) or participated as top-up participants in one of the groups without being randomised (n=2)

Follow Ups

81%

Post intervention

- Post intervention and 6 month follow ups are complete (Graph 2.)
- 12 month follow ups are currently ongoing



Graph 2. CNTW follow up rates

- Participants have been harder to reach at the 6 month follow up time point. This may be due to:
 - being unable to reach participants
 - participants declining due to illness or being busy
- Some participants have since returned to complete their 12 month follow up

"Being part of the ERA trial has

enabled me to watch communities develop throughout all of the groups. It was lovely to see individuals come out of their shell over time and their confidence develop creating a safe environment in which individuals

felt comfortable enough to confide

in their peers." CNTW Researcher

Conclusion

- Largest ever trial of group arts therapies in mental health services
- Strong support from clinical services across the NHS trusts
- Addition of CNTW enabled us to expand recruitment and gain experiences of running the trial in the North of England.
- Wide range of clinically relevant outputs
- Information videos (arts therapies and training)
- Bridge gap between research and practice (training at 6 different NHS trusts)
- Improving practice and accessibility
- Results due early 2025

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References

1. doi: 10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2019.3750. 2. doi:10.1136/bmjopen-2021-051173 https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aip.2020.101747 https://doi.org/10.1186/s13063-023-07232-0 This study is funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Health Technology Assesment Programme (Grant reference 17/29/01). The views expressed are those of the author(s) and not necessarily those of the NIHR or the Department of Health and Social Care.



