

YOUR CHOICE

Your Choice Explained

Introduction

Your Choice is a London-wide £12.5 million, 3-year programme that at its core seeks to reinterpret the use of CBT principles within current best practice in violence-reduction and related partnership approaches to effectively supporting children¹ affected by extra-familial violence and related harms.

Your Choice seeks to fill a practice gap by moving beyond understanding why a child may behave in a certain way to providing tools and techniques to support their psychological health.

If successful, this ambitious programme will influence national and international practice and the programme therefore requires a robust evaluation mechanism to measure impact and outcomes of the approach. We have worked intensively with our evaluators (the Anna Freud Centre and the Institute for Fiscal Studies) to devise a proportionate randomised control trial of the programme, which does not distort practice or deny access to existing services.

This document provides a brief overview of the programme, with sections on target cohort, access to the programme for children and practitioners, training, monitoring and reporting requirements as well as proposals for the randomised control trial.

What is the programme?

Your Choice builds on the existing therapeutic resources in multi-disciplinary adolescent services offered by each LA across London. Your Choice provides bespoke, cohort-relevant training in CBT techniques so that London LA's youth practitioners can enhance their practice with practical CBT tools, whilst working within each local authority's practice framework. These tools and techniques can be adapted to incorporate approaches to speech, language and communication needs (SLCN), autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and learning disabilities (LD).

CBT is recognised as an effective intervention for a range of emotional and behavioural conditions associated with the use of violence. The programme is testing whether making CBT techniques available to children most affected by violence, through enhancing the skills of practitioners who build therapeutic relationships with them, can lead to increased safety for these children.

Whilst traditional CBT has sometimes been seen by some to negate systemic, relational and trauma-based approaches, this programme seeks to work with these wider understandings of the child's personal / familial history and context and the systems of which they are a part.

¹ Programme materials that are aimed at adults will refer to the participants as 'children'. This is to act as a reminder that all those starting the programme will be under-18 and are children, who are entitled to the legal safeguards of childhood. Too often children affected by violence are given the status and responsibilities of adults, when they require the protections which should come with childhood. Materials aimed at programme participants will use the term 'young people', rather than 'children', as this is how older children typically prefer to be described.

Who is the Your Choice programme for and how is it accessed?

Any child aged between 11-18 years old who is assessed as medium or high risk of harm / vulnerability as a result of extra-familial harm and has been considered by a multi-agency panel (typically MACE / Pre-MACE).

Once a child who meets the above criteria has been considered by the multi-agency panel and is allocated (or continues to work with) an LA adolescent team² they will be considered to be part of the cohort for programme evaluation. Normal referral and allocation processes should be followed irrespective of which team(s) are delivering Your Choice. Those in the cohort allocated to a Your Choice trained practitioner will be considered as part of the treatment group. Those allocated elsewhere in the LA's adolescent services will form the control group.

Where members of the destination team have been trained in London 'Your Choice' CBT tools and techniques, the child will work intensively with their Your Choice coach over a period of between 12-18 weeks. Coaches are encouraged to activate a young person's network to enable the young person to engage in positive, pro social activity directly relating to their Your Choice goals at least 3 times per week.

The sessions will be delivered at a time, pace and place as agreed by the child and practitioner. It is important that young people are able to meet at a place where they feel safe. Therefore, this may be in a 'non-traditional' setting' such as in a youth centre, cafe or leisure centre.

What is the programme trying to achieve?

It is intended that these sessions will help the child to better understand themselves, what motivates and challenges them and to equip them with tried and tested coping strategies.

CBT is goal oriented, with a focus on problem solving and modifications to cognitive processes, behaviour and emotional reactions to enable young people to achieve their goals. Young people will be supported to explore their personal values (during a critical stage in the formation of their identity) and consider how they can influence and guide behaviour. It is hoped that these sessions will empower the child and disrupt patterns of behaviour that may otherwise impact on their future goals.

The Your Choice CBT tools and techniques are not intended to be a standalone to 'fix' the child or to make them solely responsible for their circumstances and responses to them. These are specific techniques aimed at helping the child understand and manage their responses to their internal triggers and external stressors. This does not negate the importance of work with and understanding of the child's history, family context, peers, neighbourhood, educational experience or wider structural factors which impinge upon behaviour, experience and outcomes. In this way Your Choice is one part of a wider response, which will reflect the LA's existing practice framework, to better support the child and enable positive change for and with them.

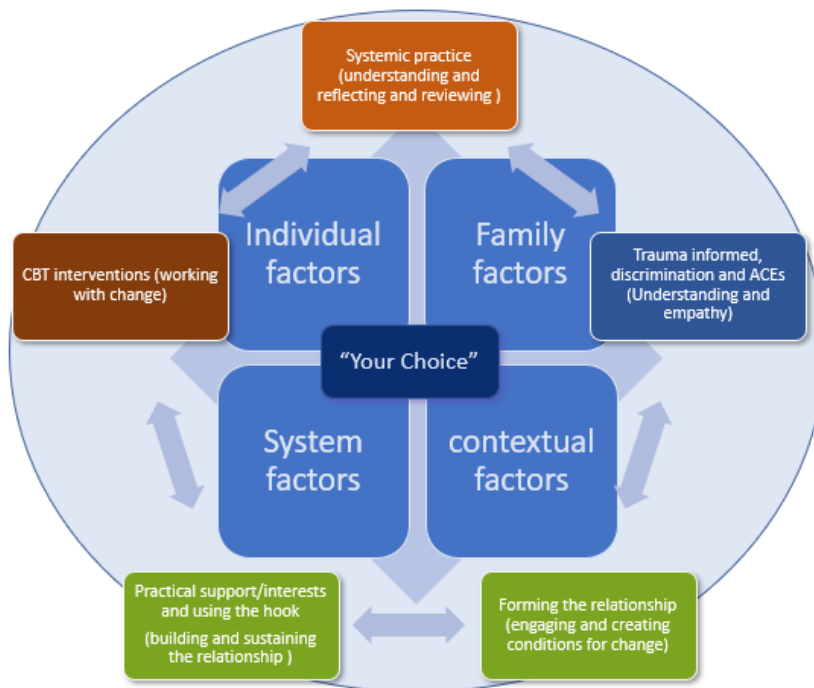
Your Choice seeks to fill the gap which practitioners report around their face-to-face interventions. Beyond building a relationship (which is of course critical) there is often an absence of practical tools

² Examples include Youth Offending; Adolescent Safeguarding; Edge of Care or Targeted Youth Support.

and techniques available to support practitioners in their work. The skills imparted through Your Choice training, supervision and participating in the community of practice aim to equip practitioners to feel and to be more effective.

If Your Choice is reaching the right cohort then a large proportion of the programme participants will be black and mixed heritage children. Your Choice is being built on evidence (such as the Power the Fight report *Therapeutic Interventions for Peace*³) about the importance of cultural competency of therapeutic professionals and how this can be addressed to better support black and mixed heritage children. Power the Fight are represented on the programme steering group to ensure programme development reflects cultural competency. Furthermore, Clinical supervisors are encouraged to consider cultural influences as part of their formulation and approach to intervention.

Figure 1 Your Choice will provide CBT additionality but work within the rich tapestry of existing therapeutic delivery



How is the programme going to be delivered and supported?

There are a number of significant roles which will support implementation, delivery and ongoing development of the programme. Currently the programme is being evaluated through a cluster randomised control trial methodology which brings with it additional local resourcing requirements.

Pan-London Your Choice Programme Practice Lead: responsible for programme development training, quality assurance and programme adherence. The Practice Lead is part of the LIIA team who provide central coordination of the programme and provide monitoring report to the VRU.

³ <https://www.powerthefight.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/TIP-final-report.pdf>

Your Choice Local Authority Single Point of Contact (SPOC): The SPOC is responsible for the local delivery of the programme and ensuring any evaluation requirements are met.

Your Choice Local Authority Clinical Lead: The clinical lead is responsible for the quality of the programme's clinical provision in the local authority's adolescent services. They are responsible for conducting supervision and observation.

Your Choice LA Trainer: The trainer is responsible for the delivery of training to your authority's Your Choice practitioners according to the Training Programme and Resources. In many LAs the clinical lead and trainer will be the same person.

Your Choice LA Practitioner (Your Choice coach): The youth practitioner who has been trained in Your Choice CBT Tools and Techniques who will support the young person during the programme intervention. The youth practitioner will be supported by monthly (minimum) clinical supervision by the clinical lead.

The Evaluators: The evaluation is led by a team from the Institute of Fiscal Studies (IFS) who will focus on the quantitative element with qualitative research undertaken by the Anna Freud Centre (AFS)

How does the randomised control trial work?

In order to test the effectiveness of the Your Choice CBT approach and contribute to a limited evidence base about "what works" to improve the life chances of young people who are notoriously hard to engage and therefore often underrepresented in rigorous evaluation, a randomised control trial is being undertaken.

The control group are those young people who meet the referral criteria for Your Choice (medium or high risk of harm / vulnerability) but receive an intervention from an LA adolescent team where practitioners have not been trained to deliver Your Choice, or 'Business as Usual'.

Training

The training will be delivered via a Train the Trainer model, at local authority level. The trainers will have two days of introductory training, led by the pan-London Your Choice Programme Practice Lead which will include:

- Overview course content & learning objectives
- Being creative with assessment, formulation and goal setting
- Making interventions accessible & responsive
 - Adapting interventions to support engagement
 - Adapting interventions in response to individual needs (ASD, ADHD, cultural sensitivity)

The Your Choice LA Trainers will then be equipped to deliver the four day training programme to the youth practitioners The Your Choice programme is not manualised but materials are provided with practical tools and techniques to support the intervention. Core elements of the practitioner training sessions will include:

- Introducing the Your Choice Programme

- Understanding CBT
- CBT informed tools and techniques
 - Goal setting
 - Values and Behavioural activation
 - Cognitive and emotional coping strategies

Programme status

