

Engagement of young people with the psychotherapy department

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Rationale and Aims: Young people's engagement with mental health services faces many challenges, including difficulties in timely access, lack of awareness of services and stress associated with help-seeking behaviours (1). In this context, the project aimed to analyse the current rates of engagement of young people (aged 18-25) with psychotherapy assessment and treatment in the Ealing Psychotherapy department and compare these against the West London NHS Trust standard (<15% nonattendance), with a view to identifying potential future improvements.

Methods: Retrospective data collection of all patients aged 18-25 years old referred to the psychotherapy department in 2017. Following patient identification and data collection, information was anonymised and stored in Trust computers. Descriptive analyses were carried out of age, gender, first appointment engagement, assessment outcome for young people and those aged 25 and older. Therapy engagement among young people was examined in more detail from the point of referral until 19th December 2019.

Results: Of the 206 people referred to the department in 2017, 56 (27.1%) were 18-25 years old. The majority of young people were female (47/56, 83.9%). Twenty-one young adults (21/56, 37.5%) were discharged following poor engagement (lack of contact following referral or not attending the scheduled appointments) (Fig 1). Of the 35 young people offered intervention in the department, twelve young people engaged in psychotherapy consultation and were discharged afterwards (two of which engaged in extended consultations).

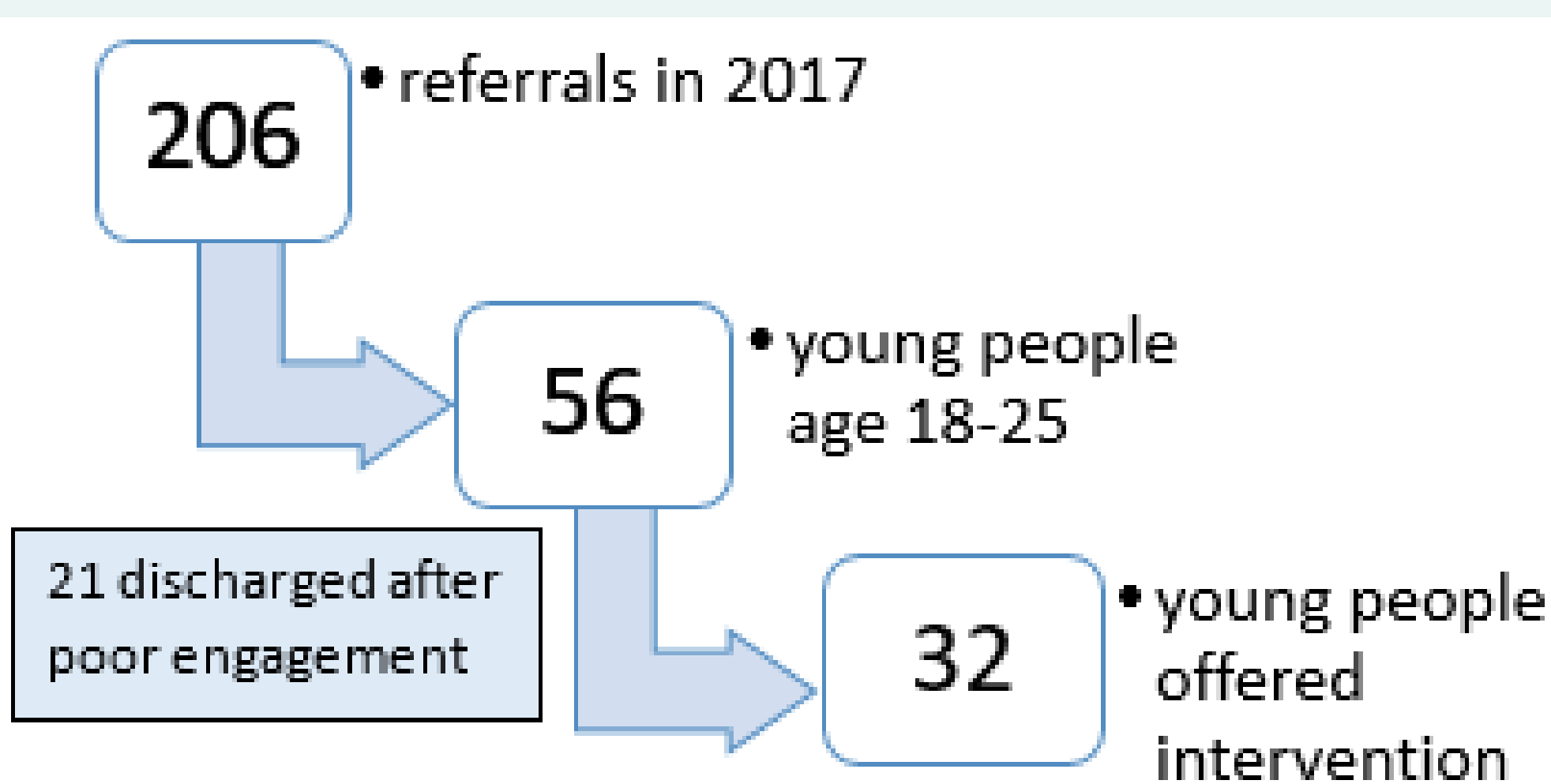


Fig 1. Descriptive breakdown of referrals in 2017.

Of the 23 young people who were offered further intervention following psychotherapy consultation, the psycho-education group was offered to 7 young people, group therapy to 12 and individual therapy to 4. In the department, the psycho-education is a 10-week programme, which can be followed by mentalization-based therapy (MBT) or group therapy; furthermore, young people can join age-specific groups (18-25 years old) in group therapy (Fig 2).

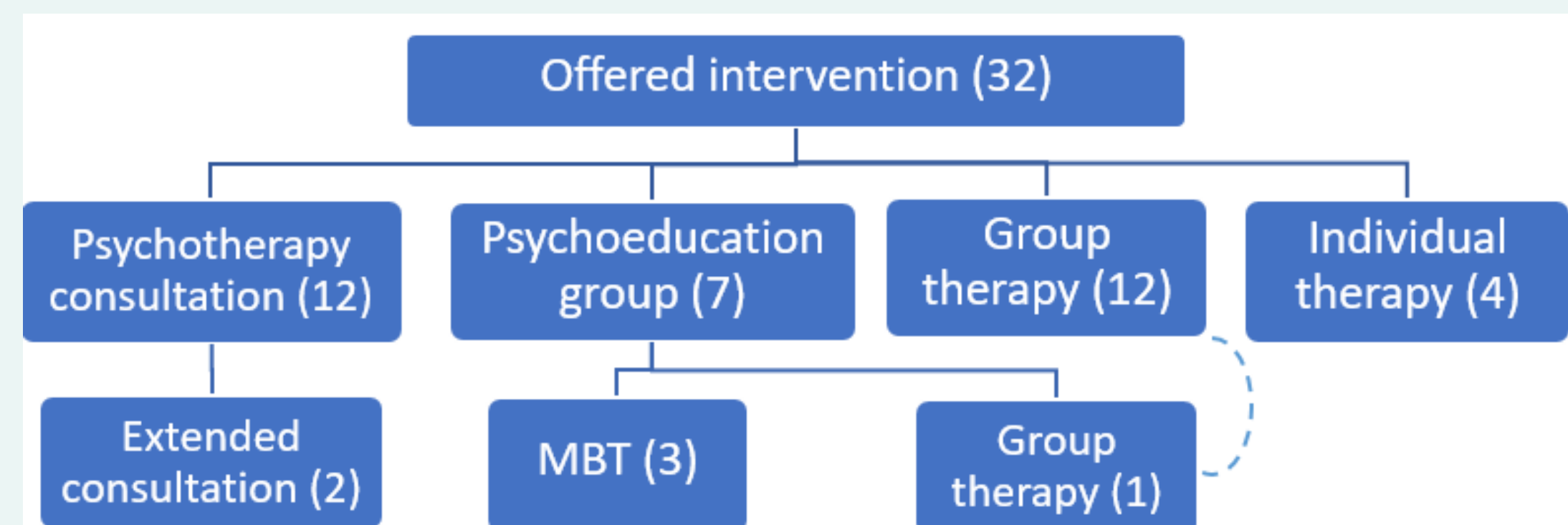


Fig 2. Young people's engagement with interventions.

Results (cont.) In terms of engagement with the interventions offered, all patients offered the psycho-education group and individual therapy engaged with these; five of 12 patients offered group therapy engaged in treatment (5/12, 41.6%). Following psycho-education, three patients went on to MBT and one to group therapy. (Fig 2).

As for attendance, the highest attendance rate was for individual psychotherapy (3/4, 75% <15% nonattendance rate), followed by group therapy (3/6, 50%) and psycho-education (2/7, 28.5%). Across these three interventions, nonattendance was <15% in 8 of 17 cases (47.0%). None of the three patients who joined the MBT programme met the Trust's standard <15% nonattendance (0/3, 0%) (Fig 3).

Engagement			
Psychoeducation 7/7 (100%)	Group therapy 5/12 (41.6%)	Individual therapy 4/4 (100%)	
Attendance <15% DNA's			
MBT 0/3 (0%)	Psychoeducation 2/7 (28.5%)	Group 3/6 (50%)	Individual 3/4 (75%)

Fig 3. Engagement and attendance as per the Trust's standard. DNA: did not attend (appointment missed without previous contact).

Conclusions: Young people from the 2017 cohort had high rates of non-engagement with both psychotherapy assessment and treatment, which is in keeping with the literature regarding difficulty in accessing mental health services (1). Individual therapy had the overall lowest rates of non-engagement and non-attendance. Limitations include a small sample size, poor generalisability and potential bias associated with different interventions. Multidisciplinary discussions and patients' feedback will help exploring reasons for poor engagement and informing changes.

(1) Anderson, JK & Howarth, Emma & Vainre, Maris & Jones, Peter & Humphrey, A. (2017). A scoping literature review of service-level barriers for access and engagement with mental health services for children and young people. 10.17863/CAM.12619.