

YOUR CHOICE

Introduction to Your Choice

Your Choice is a London-wide £10 million, 3-year programme¹ 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 children² affected by extra-familial violence and related harms. It is funded through the Mayor of London's Violence Reduction Unit.

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 which practitioners can employ to help the child to keep themselves safe.

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 been working 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 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 are adapted to incorporate approaches to speech, language and communication needs (SLCN), autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and learning disabilities (LD).

¹ Year 1 will be funded by the VRU using Home Office funding and Years 2 & 3 from the Youth Endowment Fund

² 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.

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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 as oppositional to 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.

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

Any child aged between 11-17 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 team³ 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 receive a target of 36⁴ Your Choice sessions over three months⁵: three sessions lasting 45-60 minutes per week of one-to-one contact of which at least two will be face to face. The programme encourages creative relevant use of one of the three contacts such as for family contact (with or without the child) and working towards goals, associated with their Your Choice programme.

The sessions will be delivered at a time and place as agreed by the child and practitioner. 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 and to take better care of themselves by equipping 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)

³ Examples include Youth Offending; Adolescent Safeguarding; Edge of Care or Targeted Youth Support.

⁴ Minimum 30

⁵ Maximum 8 weeks

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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 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.

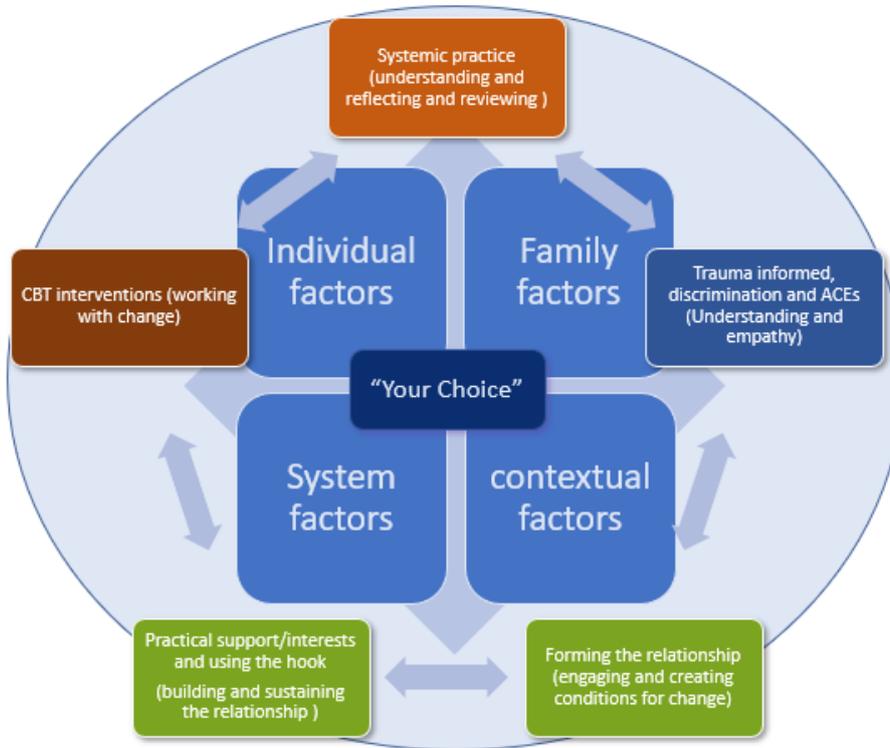
If Your Choice is reaching the right cohort then a large proportion of the programme participants will be black and mixed heritage children. Your Choice is being built on evidence (such as the Power the Fight report *Therapeutic Interventions for Peace*⁶) about the cultural competency of therapeutic professionals and how this can be addressed to better support black and mixed heritage children. The ALDCS Leadership in Colour reference group (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic children's professionals from across London) has been asked to act as a critical friend in the programme design and Power the Fight are represented on the programme steering group to ensure programme development reflects cultural competency.

⁶ <https://www.powerthefight.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/TIP-final-report.pdf>

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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

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.

Your Choice Local Authority Single Point of Contact (SPOC): The SPOC will be the person who we will send information to for dissemination to colleagues; the person who will be responsible for identifying key colleagues such as data leads and also the person who is accountable for ensuring monitoring and outcomes are reported to us.

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

Your Choice LA Trainer: To deliver training to your authority’s Your Choice practitioners according to the Training Programme. In many LAs the clinical lead and trainer will be the same person.

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Your Choice LA Practitioner: 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 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 will 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 that are notoriously hard to engage and therefore often underrepresented in rigorous evaluation, a randomised control trial will be undertaken.

The control group will be 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.

Given the programme’s scale across 32 different local authorities, we will run the programme in two phases: pilot phase (where key elements of the randomisation will be tested) and roll out phase. The pilot phase itself will have two phases: Pilot (i) and Pilot (ii)⁷.

Pilot Phase (i) - (Practitioner cohort 1)

In the pilot phase five local authorities have volunteered to identify at least two potential Your Choice teams for inclusion into the pilot randomisation trial, to form their first cohort of trained practitioners and a control group of practitioners who are part of a team but have not been trained in Your Choice.

All other authorities have identified the team that they wish to put forward as the first cohort of trained practitioners.

The pilot phase (i) is expected to take place December 1 2021 – March 31st 2022.

As this phase draws to a close, LAs will identify further teams for the second stage of the pilot. These teams will be selected by the Evaluators either as a Your Choice delivery team or as part of the Control group.

Pilot phase (ii) - (Practitioner cohort 2)

In this phase, all authorities will continue to deliver Your Choice through their first cohort of practitioners but will also train a second cohort that has been identified by the Evaluators from the teams provided above. This means that each authority will be delivering Your Choice via two teams and will have provided a Control group to the evaluators.

Pilot phase (ii) is expected to take place April 1st 2022 until October 31st 2022 although the end date may vary in line with Evaluators’ advice.

⁷ Pilot (i) will be funded through the Home Office Funding and Pilot (ii) by the Youth Endowment Fund.

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Programme rollout (Cohorts 3 & 4)

Programme roll out will take place from the end of the two pilot phases until the end of the programme, 30 June 2024.

Randomisation will be achieved by the evaluators selecting the subsequent target teams to be trained from a list provided by LAs of those groups of practitioners they wish to see trained to deliver the programme. All practitioners the LA identifies will be trained in the course of the programme but the order in which they are trained will be randomly determined.

Examples of this approach are suggested below:

Services where Your Choice could be deployed (not an exhaustive list):

- Youth Offending
- Adolescent Safeguarding
- Edge of Care
- Targeted Youth Support
- Child in Need / Child Protection Teams
- Gangs and exploitation

Within these services Your Choice can be used with specific teams such as those geographically based or dealing with particular cohorts (e.g. pre or post court in the YOS).

Please note, that as the programme encourages local authorities to embed the 'Your Choice Tools and Techniques' into existing pathways, these may include incorporation into a Team around the Child model.

The task in each LA will be to determine where, in the lifetime of the programme, Your Choice will be used and identify the services / teams / sub-teams who will be selected to be part of two further cohorts to be trained in the next two years. The order of selection for training and deployment of Your Choice will be determined by the evaluators.

The number of practitioners trained in each cohort (through a train-the-trainer delivery model) in each LA will be determined by the LA - between a minimum of two and a maximum of eight per cohort.

Tier 1⁸ LAs are expected to reach a minimum of 100 children each over the life course of the project (20 by 31/03/22, 40 by 31/03/2023 and 40 by 31/03/2024) and Tier 2 LAs are expected to reach a minimum of 50 children each (10 by 31/03/22, 20 by 31/03/2023 and 20 by 31/03/2024).

Training

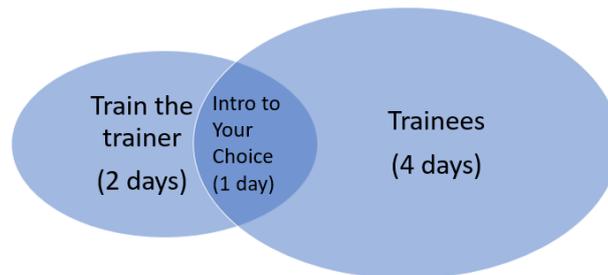
The training will be delivered via a Train the Trainer model, at local authority level. The trainers will have two days of introductory training, led by the pan-London Your Choice Programme Practice Lead which will include:

⁸ Please see Appendix 1

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- 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 pan-London Your Choice Programme Practice Lead will then run a joint training session for the trainers and the trainees (youth practitioners) as a programme launch to ensure all participants are receiving common messages about the programme. This day will also be a requirement for any clinical leads who are not also the LA trainers.

The Your Choice LA Trainers will then be equipped to deliver the final four days of training to the youth practitioners in cohorts of between two and eight. 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
 - The Five Factors CBT model
 - Three levels of cognition
 - Therapeutic processes
- Assessment & Socialisation to CBT model
 - Gathering information creatively
 - Formulating with young people
- CBT informed tools and techniques
 - Goal setting
 - Automatic thoughts
 - Values and Behavioural activation
 - Coping strategies

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Monitoring and reporting

At present it is anticipated that the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire will be used alongside outcome rating scales to assess distanced travelled in the course of the intervention. Work is ongoing with the evaluators to identify how practitioner and parent / carer views can also be captured. As ever this will be a balance of wanting to understand impact without making the programme onerous to administer for practitioner / LA or evaluators. It is likely, given the characteristics of this cohort, there will be continued engagement with local authority services after the Your Choice intervention and this may be from the same practitioner.

The SPOC will be asked to provide a simple [monthly monitoring returns](#) which focuses on outputs and at *quarterly* intervals reporting which will additionally include [financial returns and programme reflections](#). It is anticipated this will be managed electronically via the MS Forms links.

Programme consistency and quality will be monitored by the Programme Practice Lead through session observations, dip-sampling methods in compliance with information governance, review of distance travelled tools and engagement through the communities of practice.

Work is ongoing with the evaluators in relation to what data they will require to support the evaluation.

Shared review of the programme pilot phase

September and October has seen detailed work to design the evaluation in a way which supports the innovative and ambitious programme delivery. The first ten months of delivery (the two pilot phases and evaluator review) will be an opportunity to test the programme design and the data capture requirements which will be needed for the evaluation. This period is an opportunity to test and learn; nonetheless, during this phase the programme will need to demonstrate the key elements are being delivered as planned in order give confidence that a full-scale evaluation will be effective. This period will also provide assurance to funders that the programme can be delivered as specified.

Provisional Timetable

Milestone	Date
Funding Award	15-Jul-21
Programme Framework agreed	15-Oct-21
SPOC & lead professionals identified	15-Oct-21
Programme Lead in post	22-Oct-21
SPOC meeting	02-Nov 21

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Data Governance Arrangements	30-Nov-21
Introduction to Your Choice & Training the Trainer commences	06-12-21
Practitioner Training earliest (internal to LA)	13-Dec-21
First referral and delivery	January 22
Home Office funding ends	31-Mar-22
YEF funding commences	1-Apr-22
End of pilot phase (i)	31-Mar-22
End of pilot phase (ii) (Date tbc)	31-Oct-2022
Anticipated end date of pilot phase	31-Oct-2022
Project Close	30-June-24

Appendix 1

Local authority Tier Allocation 2021-2022

Tier 1	Tier 2
Brent	Barking and Dagenham
Croydon	Barnet
Ealing	Bexley
Enfield	Bromley
Greenwich	Camden
Hackney	Hammersmith and Fulham
Haringey	Harrow
Islington	Havering
Lambeth	Hillingdon
Lewisham	Hounslow
Newham	Kensington and Chelsea
Southwark	Kingston
Tower Hamlets	Merton
Waltham Forest	Redbridge
Westminster	Richmond
	Sutton
	Wandsworth

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