Reviewer’s report

Title: A randomised controlled trial of a community-based group-guided self-help intervention for low mood and stress: Study protocol.

Version: 1 Date: 2 May 2013

Reviewer: kate cavanagh

Reviewer’s report:

Thank-you for inviting me to comment on this manuscript which describes a study protocol for a community-based group-guided self-help intervention for low mood and stress. This study is clinically interesting, and the design presents a reasonable test of the interventions essential efficacy in comparison to a waiting list control condition.

Major Compulsory Revisions

It would be helpful if the authors could provide a bit more information about the intervention. For example, in the keywords I see the term ‘bibliotherapy’, and I am wondering if there is a workbook or similar that accompanies the LLTTF classes? Are the sessions didactic or interactive? Are there activities to complete between sessions?

Within the methods section, there should be a section that describes each of the measures used in the study. This should be followed by a section that describes the study procedure.

The statistical analysis section refers only to the PHQ-9 outcomes, it would be helpful if you could brief describe the planned analysis for the other measures used.

I’m a bit concerned that the study sample size isn’t chosen to answer the primary research question. I think this needs to be clarified or reconsidered.

Minor Essential Revisions

The described focus of the intervention is inconsistent across the paper. In the title, it appears that the focus is low mood and stress, but the primary DVs are measures of depression and anxiety. Neither low mood nor stress are included as keywords. The LLTTF course is described as CBT for depression. Etc, please clarify.

Under the heading ‘Cognitive behavioural therapy’ – the authors state that NICE recommend CBT for ‘moderately low mood’ – it would be more accurate to say ‘NICE recommend CBT for mild to moderate depression’.

We have recently reported the successful implementation of a LI CBT
intervention in the voluntary sector is described in this paper, and it would seem useful to refer to this highly relevant study:


The participants section mentions an ‘interview’ – its not clear what this refers to. I wondered if there are any exclusion criteria regarding comorbidity, severity or risk?

Its not clear what the MINI is used for in this study, as confirmed diagnosis isnt necessary for inclusion, nor is clinically significant change (e.g. moving from meeting diagnostic criteria to not) mentioned as an outcome metric – please clarify.

It is not clear how the information about a drop in PHQ-9 scores found in the pilot RCT relates to the calculation of sample size needed to detect a between group effect?

It would be helpful to clarify how adherence to the LLTTF class manual will be measured (e.g. what level of adherence is considered ‘acceptable’?), and how will this information be used in this study?

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.