Author’s response to reviews

Title: The key therapeutic factors needed to deliver behavioural change interventions to decrease risky substance use (drug and alcohol) for looked after children and care leavers: a qualitative exploration with young people, carers and front line workers

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Dear Editor,

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to these helpful reviewers comments. The responses and changes to the text are listed sequentially to each comment below.

Reviewer 1

1) To simplify the title and include a description of the methodology, i.e. "qualitative study".

Thank you for this comment the title has been rewritten. This now reads: The key therapeutic factors needed to deliver behavioural change interventions to decrease risky substance use (drug and alcohol) for looked after children and care leavers: a qualitative exploration with young people, carers and front line workers
2) Clarify if participants involved in step 5 are the same or different from those involved in step 3. I understand that they are different groups of participants.

Line 398-400: Clarifies participant’s previous involvement in the study.

Reviewer 2

1) Providing more information about sample recruitment.

Table 1 and table 2 provide additional demographic details of study participants.

Line 155-164: Provides additional information regarding the recruitment of participants.

2) Providing more details about the analysis of data, and their integration.

Line 199-213 and lines 443-452 provide additional information regarding the analysis process.

3) Elaborating on the strategies and providing more examples would also strengthen in key places.

Line 262-271- provide clarity regarding working gradually and safe disclosures.

4) Weaknesses have to do with the singular focus given to targeting individual-levels of change rather than to acknowledge or even target the contextual components of care that produce and maintain high levels of mistrust, stigma, lack of control, and imbalances in power between professionals and care leavers. To me, this means that the interventions will likely be partially effective at addressing holistic needs.

Lines 461-470 provide additional information to acknowledge the awareness of contextual components of care and provide signposting to a linked paper.
Line 492-498: Additionally highlights details of how SBNT tries to harness the wider social network and future trial-based evaluation aims to establish if this has more effect than 1:1 MET which is entirely psychologically 1:1 focused.

5) Unintended consequences that could come to care leavers when yet another trusting relationship ends and adds to pile.

Lines 492-498: Discusses the principle that SBNT was trying to create a therapeutic encounter that would help to identify a wider social network to support LAC which would continue beyond the intervention period and not rely on the input of the drug and alcohol workers per se.

Changes and additional data is highlighted yellow within the manuscript.

Yours Faithfully

Hayley Alderson on behalf of the SOLID research team.