Reviewer’s report

Title: Interpersonal Art Psychotherapy for the treatment of aggression in people with learning disabilities in secure care: A protocol for a randomised controlled feasibility study

Version: 0 Date: 19 Jun 2017

Reviewer: A Lovell

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Secure provision for people with learning disabilities are currently in transition - this is a contextual factor but raises certain issues - perhaps the role of art psychotherapy for those with an offending background, particularly around aggression, but currently cared for in community settings, might be worth considering as part of the study. If not, then better justification of the sample selection, and non-inclusion of those in non-NHS settings, or on Community Treatment Orders or subject to Guardianship, is probably necessary.

The literature review could demonstrate better understanding of art psychotherapy, particularly to justify the selected approach, since the effectiveness of this treatment might be most effectively determined through qualitative or mixed research methods. Some discussion, for example, of art psychotherapists’ criteria for success would be useful and might differ from the information provided by other methods. Not the clearest read but an interesting proposed study.

I’m not sure why the authors use the title of Interpersonal Art Psychotherapy when all AT is by definition interpersonal i.e., between client/s and therapist.

I also feel there needs to be a clearer explanation of the Manualised Art Psychotherapy the study is going to be considering - perhaps even examples to illustrate - as far as I’m aware, this is not a common practice or approach.

I did wonder on p7 whether the battery of validated measures would negatively impact or undermine the effectiveness or benefits of the AT sessions (which need time to unconsciously or non-consciously be processed).

Some of the referencing appears incomplete (nos 4 and 5) but this may be pedantic…

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