Centre for Appearance Research

Interventions to Support People Living with Visible Differences: A workshop for the Appearance Collective, supported by the VTCT Foundation

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Workshop Content

- What is an intervention?
- Issues prompting a possible need for support.
- Interventions that are currently available.
- Research evidence.
- How and when psychological services might be warranted.

Definition of an intervention

 "Action taken to intentionally become involved in a difficult situation in order to improve it or prevent it from getting worse" (Cambridge Online Dictionary).

Evidence-based interventions

Before implementing an intervention, it is important to develop an evidence-based. There are a number of reasons for this, including:

- To be confident in what we are providing.
- To know what works best for who.
- To know what doesn't help.
- To inform decision-making.
- To avoid bias.
- To avoid causing harm.
- To assess cost–effectiveness.
- To share experience and learn from it.

What does a good intervention look like?

- Effective.
- Cost-effective.
- Accessible.
- Available.
- Acceptable.
- Feasible.
- Theory-based.

Steps for developing an evidence-based intervention

Things to consider:

- Do we need to develop one?
- What is the problem?
- Who is affected?
- What currently exists?
- Are current interventions effective?

Systematic reviews are used to assess the evidence of effectiveness of current interventions. Reviews in the field of visible difference have found:

- Specialist support is difficult to access.
- CBT and Social Interaction Skills Training dominate.
- There is limited evaluation of interventions.
  (Jenkinson et al., 2015; Bessell & Miss, 2007; Norman and Moss, 2005; Muftin and Thompson, 2013).
- There is "a pressing need to develop and evaluate interventions to improve outcomes".
  (Attoe & Pounds-Cornish, 2015)

The Centre for Appearance Research carried out a large-scale Gap Analysis (Stock et al., 2018), identifying studies that had evaluated the effectiveness of interventions for people with visible differences. They identified 151 studies, which included interventions that had been tested with people who had congenital conditions, skin conditions, cancers and other acquired conditions.

Interventions that have an evidence of effectiveness used:

- Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)
- Peer Support
- Psychoeducation

The following recommendations were made on the basis of this gap analysis:

- There is still a need to develop and evaluate cross-condition interventions for young people, minority groups and families at transition points.
- Consistent outcome measures should be used to evaluate these interventions.
- Interventions to prevent psychological distress and build resilience still need to be evaluated.

How do we develop a new intervention?

The Medical Research Council (MRC) framework should be used for developing and evaluating complex interventions (Craig et al., 2018). This involves:

I.   Developing
II.   Piloting and feasibility
III.   Evaluating (including intervention- and cost-effectiveness)
IV.   Reporting findings
V.   Implementing

https://mrc.ukri.org/documents/pdf/complex-interventions-guidance/

When developing an intervention, it is important to consider:

- What outcome are you trying to achieve?
- What intervention techniques could be used?
- What stakeholder involvement might you need (e.g. steering or advisory groups)?

This is an example of how an online intervention for young people, YP Face It, was developed using the MRC Framework.

Williamson, H., Griffiths, C., & Harcourt, D. (2015). Developing young person's Face IT: Online psychosocial support for adolescents struggling with conditions or injuries affecting their appearance. *Health Psychology Open, 2(2).*
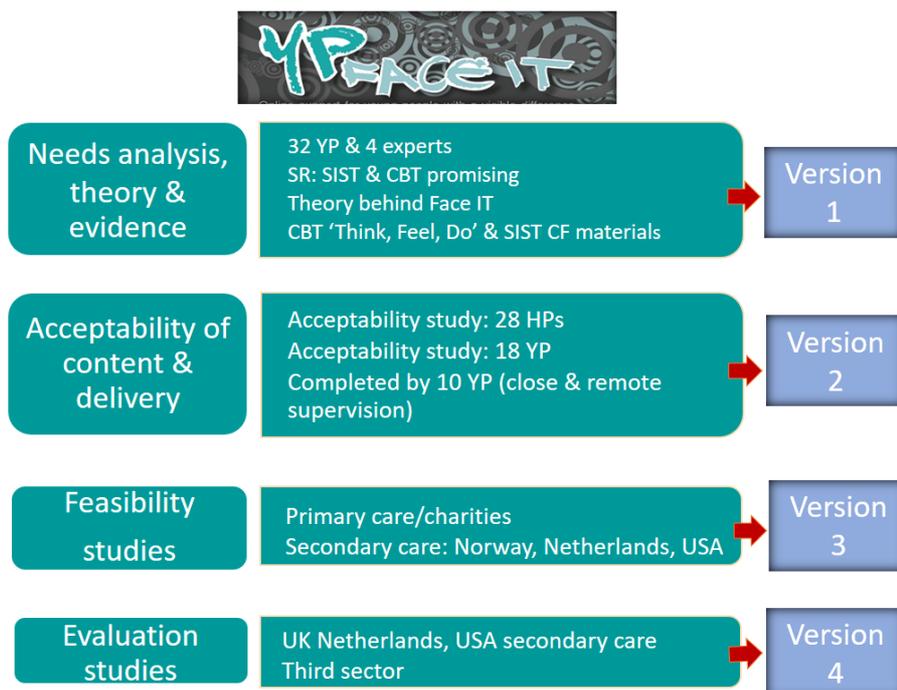
Challenges around intervention development and research

- Time.
- Cost.
- Accessibility.
- Recruitment.
- Sample sizes.
- Measurement.
- The choice of comparison/control groups.
- Misunderstandings around psychosocial support.
- Belief in biomedical versus psychosocial interventions.
- Translating research into practice (ie. implementing research findings).

A framework of appearance-related interventions: The CAR Triangle
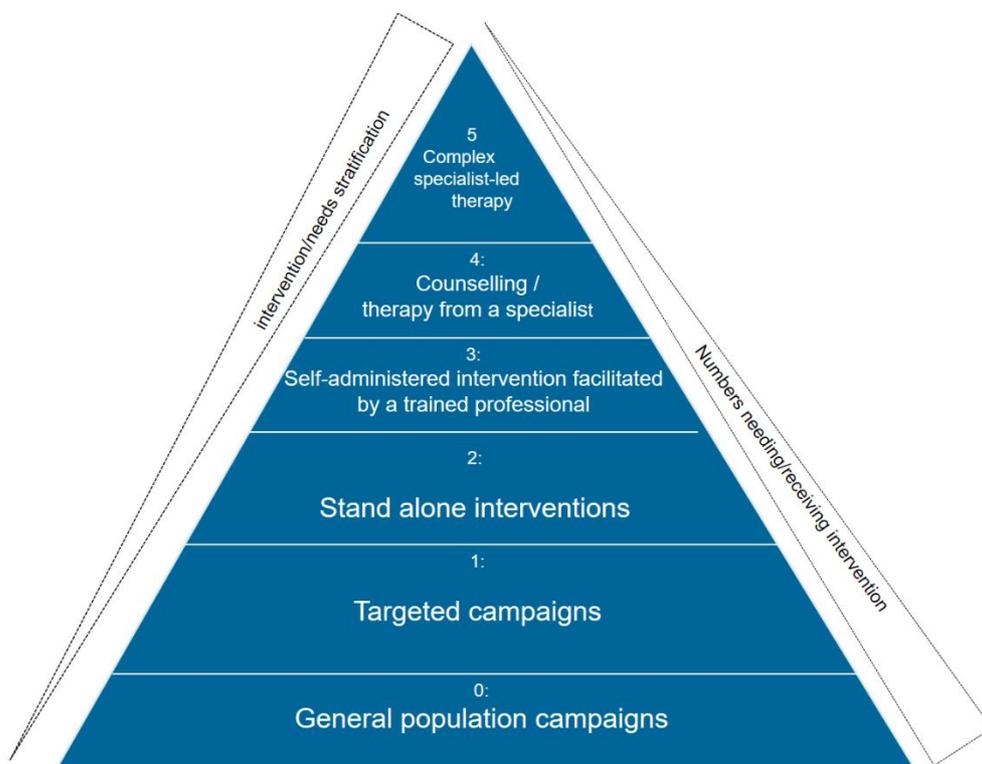
(see Rumsey, N. & Harcourt, D. (2012) *The Oxford Handbook of the Psychology of Appearance*, Oxford University Press).

The CAR Framework of Interventions (also known as the CAR Triangle) is a representation of a stepped model of care, demonstrating a range of interventions that vary in terms of intensity and mode of delivery. At the base of the triangle (level 0) are broad interventions aimed at promoting positive attitudes towards diversity of appearance across the general population as a whole. Moving up the triangle, interventions become more targeted and intense, and are likely to be needed by fewer people. Those at the top of the triangle (levels 4 and 5) are the most intense, for people with the most complex needs, and would typically be provided by an experienced psychosocial specialist such as a clinical psychologist.

Identifying support needs and knowing when to refer for specialist support

There are many forms of psychological support:
- Psychoeducation (e.g. political, general population or social campaigns, specific groups/schools, support groups, individuals).
- Structured/Targeted group and/or specific condition (e.g. health professionals training).
- Guided Self-help books, websites, videos, Podcasts, smart apps.
- Facilitated guided self-help (i.e. by a trained professional).
- Specialist facilitated group or 1:1 therapy.
- Specialist led, multi-disciplinary, complex therapeutic intervention.

When to refer for specialist support:
- If you perceive the individual to have complex issues.
- If you perceive there to be some risk for the individual.
- If the support needed involves facilitating change or individually tailored therapeutic work.

Additional literature or resources

- Bessell, A., & Moss, T. P. (2007). Evaluating the effectiveness of psychosocial interventions for individuals with visible differences: a systematic review of the empirical literature. *Body Image, 4* (3), 227-238.

- Jenkinson, E., Williamson, H., Byron-Daniel, J. and Moss, T. (2015) Systematic review: Psychosocial interventions for children and young people with visible differences resulting from appearance altering conditions, injury or treatment effects.*Journal of Pediatric Psychology*, 40 (10). pp. 1017-1033.

- Muftin, Z. & Thompson, A.R. (2013). A systematic review of self-help for disfigurement: Effectiveness, usability, and acceptability, *Body Image, 10, 4,* 442-450.

- Norman, A. and Moss, T. (2015) Psychosocial interventions for adults with visible with differences: a systematic review.*PeerJ*, 3 (e870). ISSN 2167-8359

www.supportingchildrenwithburns.org
www.ypfaceit.co.uk
www.faceitonline.org.uk