

TOGETHER study

Better care for young adults with diabetes using group clinics

One year project update September 2018

Young people living with diabetes usually have their medical care delivered in 1-to-1 appointments with health professionals. However, living with diabetes while making the transition to adulthood can be a challenging one, and people sharing this experience in groups may be able to learn from and support each other.



The **TOGETHER project** is testing a ‘group clinic’ model for young people (16-25 years) with diabetes (type 1 and 2) in NHS hospitals in ethnically-diverse and deprived areas in London. A key part of the project has been working closely with young adults themselves to co-design the group clinics care model, along with practitioners, youth workers and organisations such as Diabetes UK. Young adults are then invited to join the group clinics and their experiences are being studied closely to see if this care model might offer advantages. The protocol for the study was published in 2017 in *BMJ Open* – see below for full reference.

The Together study is a joint project involving Queen Mary University of London, Barts Health NHS Trust, AYPH, University College London and the University of Oxford. The study is funded by the National Institute for Health Research, and is led by Dr Sarah Finer and Dr Dougal Hargreaves.

Synthesising the existing evidence

As a first stage in the project we completed a systematic, realist review to synthesise qualitative and quantitative evidence on how and why group clinics may work for young adults with diabetes. The review identified that peer support, balanced with clinical input, is the main mechanism by which group clinics are deemed to provide benefits for patients. Our review also identified that group clinics require a significant amount of implementation, operational and emotional work for meaningful peer support to emerge, although it is less clear how this work should be carried out in a pressured NHS environment. The review has been submitted to an academic journal.

Designing and implementing the clinics

We used an experience-based co-design process to develop a locally-tailored model of care, together with young adults, health professionals, CCG commissioners, primary care and voluntary sector representatives. To date, nine group clinics have been successfully conducted, based at Newham University Hospital (part of Barts Health NHS Trust) and Central Middlesex Hospital. We are actively adapting and improving the format in response to ongoing co-design, feedback and formative evaluation. We are also collecting comparative data on the care of young adults with

diabetes receiving standard 1-to-1 care from other hospitals (Whittington Hospital, and two other Barts Health sites – Mile End and St Bartholemew’s hospitals).

Evaluating the process

The formative evaluation – being undertaken using an innovative ‘researcher in residence’ model - is running alongside the implementation, led by Dr Chrysanthi Papoutsi from the University of Oxford. This has identified numerous needs, opportunities, and challenges. Although there are established peer support models in healthcare, it remains challenging to embed these effectively and successfully in new models of group-based clinical care.

Next steps

More groups are planned throughout the autumn and 2019. Quantitative evaluation (including biological markers of diabetes control and complications) is underway, as is cost analysis. Interim dissemination to stakeholders is planned for November. The project is due to complete in 2019.

Outputs to date

Papoutsi C, Hargreaves D, Colligan G, et al. (2017) Group clinics for young adults with diabetes in an ethnically diverse, socioeconomically deprived setting (TOGETHER study): protocol for a realist review, co-design and mixed methods, participatory evaluation of a new care model. *BMJ Open* <https://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/bmjopen/7/6/e017363.full.pdf>

Hagell A and Sachs J (2018) *TOGETHER study: Co-designing group clinics for young adults with diabetes*. London: Association for Young People’s Health
<http://www.youngpeopleshealth.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/AYPH-co-production-report-Nov-2017.pdf>

To keep up to date with the project

Check our website <http://www.youngpeopleshealth.org.uk/together-group-clinics-study>
Follow Twitter @TogetherProjec2

For more information:

If you are attending a group (or thinking of doing so) and want to talk to someone about it, or if you would like more information about the project itself, contact [Grainne Colligan](mailto:g.colligan@qmul.ac.uk) (g.colligan@qmul.ac.uk).

