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Background

Consultations within social care settings have been shown to increase staff knowledge, confidence and understanding (Dimaro et al., 2014), and considering a young person's presentation in the context of their experiences has been shown to increase empathy and understanding in staff teams (Harrison et al., 2018; McKeown et al., 2020; Summers, 2016; Wilkinson et al., 2017).

A trauma-informed consultation approach was adopted by a mental health service integrated into children's social care. This project aimed to evaluate whether the approach impacted on social worker's understanding of the young person's needs.

Methodology

The evaluation consisted of two stages.

1. A pre and post consultation scaling question (0-10) was used to measure social workers confidence in their understanding of the young person's needs (not at all confident – completely confident).
2. Post-consultation, social workers were asked to complete an anonymous evaluation rating 5 questions on a 10-point Likert scale (not at all true – completely true): *The consultation (i) was beneficial, (ii) increased my confidence in working with the case, (iii) increased my psychological understanding of the case, (iv) led to improvements in the care plan or approach, (v) reduced my anxiety about working with the case.*

The project received relevant approvals from CNTW NHS Foundation Trust and Northumberland County Council.

Results

40 Consultations were held between 1 March 22 and 30 June 22.

There was a significant increase in social worker's (N=40) rating of their understanding of the young person's needs post-consultation ($Z = -5.107, p < .001$) (Figure 1).

38 post-consultation evaluations were received. Using scores of ≥ 7 :

- 100% of social workers found that consultation was beneficial, increased confidence and psychological understanding.
- 92% felt that consultation led to improvements in the care plan
- 81% felt that consultation reduced anxiety around working with the case.

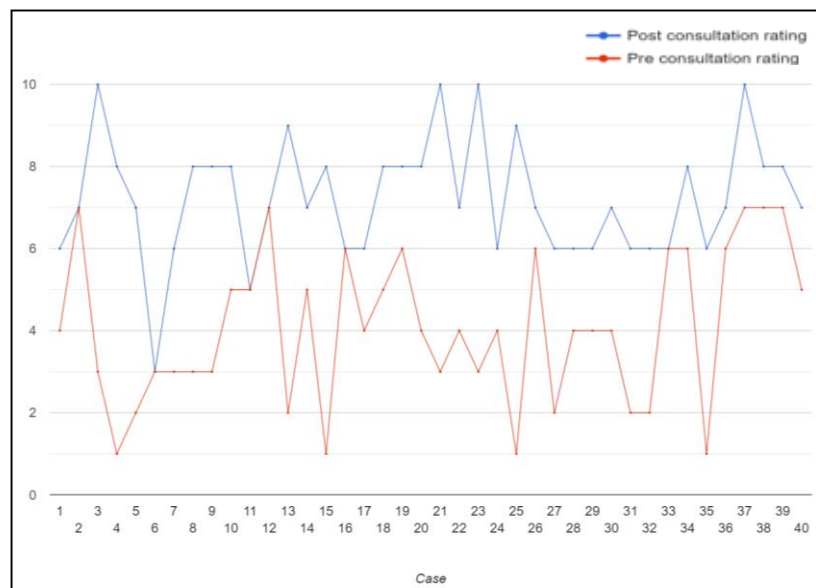


Figure 1. Social workers rating of understanding of child pre and post consultation

Discussion and implications

Trauma-informed consultations had a positive impact on social worker's understanding of young people's needs and were positively received. Findings were in keeping with previous research into these approaches and recommendations have been made for the consultation provision to continue. Further qualitative evaluation would provide an opportunity to explore processes leading to these positive changes. Limitations of this pilot include a small sample size and use of a non-validated self-rating scale.

References

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