

**Evaluating an intensive recovery programme for adolescents
who have been bullied: A mixed methods study**

Nicky Holly Knights

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Abstract

Bullying is a serious problem for many adolescents, and one that can have detrimental effects on normal developmental processes, as chronic and severe bullying can obstruct the fulfilment of essential psychological needs. However, there are currently few targeted interventions available for chronic and severe bullying cases. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of the Red Balloon Learner Centres (RBLC) which are a full time personal and academic recovery programme for bullied adolescents. A mixed-methodology was utilised, and quantitative outcome measures included: depression, anxiety and trauma symptoms, self-esteem and academic engagement and self-concept. The study was non equivalent groups design (NEGD) and incorporated a comparison group of bullied adolescents from Hertfordshire local authority (LA). The aim was to compare the recovery process between groups over time by taking an initial baseline measure, and conducting follow-up assessments every three months. Both groups demonstrated significant improvements in outcome variables over time, but there were no significant differences between groups at six month follow-up on any outcome variable. Both groups reported similar recovery themes that related to need fulfilment in the areas of safety and security, control, belonging and self-esteem. Recovery is not just the absence of internalising symptomology, but constructive fulfilment of needs. Social needs were felt to be most affected by chronic and severe bullying and most difficult to fulfil constructively. It is recommended that interventions for chronically and severely bullied adolescents should enable constructive need fulfilment, which may involve changes to the ethos and culture of schools, collaborative therapeutic intervention and targeted skill building.

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