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Improving socio-emotional health and school performance for pupils in early secondary education with Pyramid: a school-based, early intervention model.

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# Improving socio-emotional health and school performance for pupils in early secondary education with Pyramid: a school-based, early intervention model

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# Today's talk

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- Brief background: context for the research
- What is Pyramid?
- Evaluating Pyramid
- Research findings: a snapshot
- Implications, challenges and future directions
- Questions



# Background: CYP's mental health

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*“Mental health problems have important implications for every aspect of young people’s lives”  
(Chief Medical Officer, DH, 2013, p.78)*

- Psychological distress among CYP is growing and many do not access timely and appropriate support (Thorley, 2016)
- Mental health problems in childhood & adolescence are associated with multiple poor outcomes (e.g. Gibb et al., 2010; Mychailyszyn et al., 2010)
- Foundations for good mental health and SEWB are laid during childhood and adolescence and impact across the life course (Carta et al., 2015)
- A public health priority? (DH, 2015; HCHC, 2014)

# Mental well-being: the role of schools

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A common access point for mental health services?

- Better placed to address school-related stressors
- Can ease the pressure on specialist CAMHS
- Facilitates a wider culture within schools that values mental health and wellbeing

But..

- Competing school priorities; schools can be 'overwhelmed' (NCB & NHS Confederation, 2013; Taggart et al., 2014)
- Evidence-based models of good practice (e.g. Pyramid)



# What is Pyramid?

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Pyramid is a manualised, school-based intervention that supports quiet, withdrawn, socially isolated children and young people (aged 7- 14-years) to develop socio-emotional competences and enhance their well-being

Primary school, transition group, and secondary school Pyramid clubs



# A strengths-based approach

Resilience: *“the perfect target for preventative strategies focused on children’s mental health”*  
(FitzHerbert, 1997, p31)



Building friendships, developing confidence

<http://www.uwl.ac.uk/pyramid/welcome>

# Aims of the Pyramid evaluation

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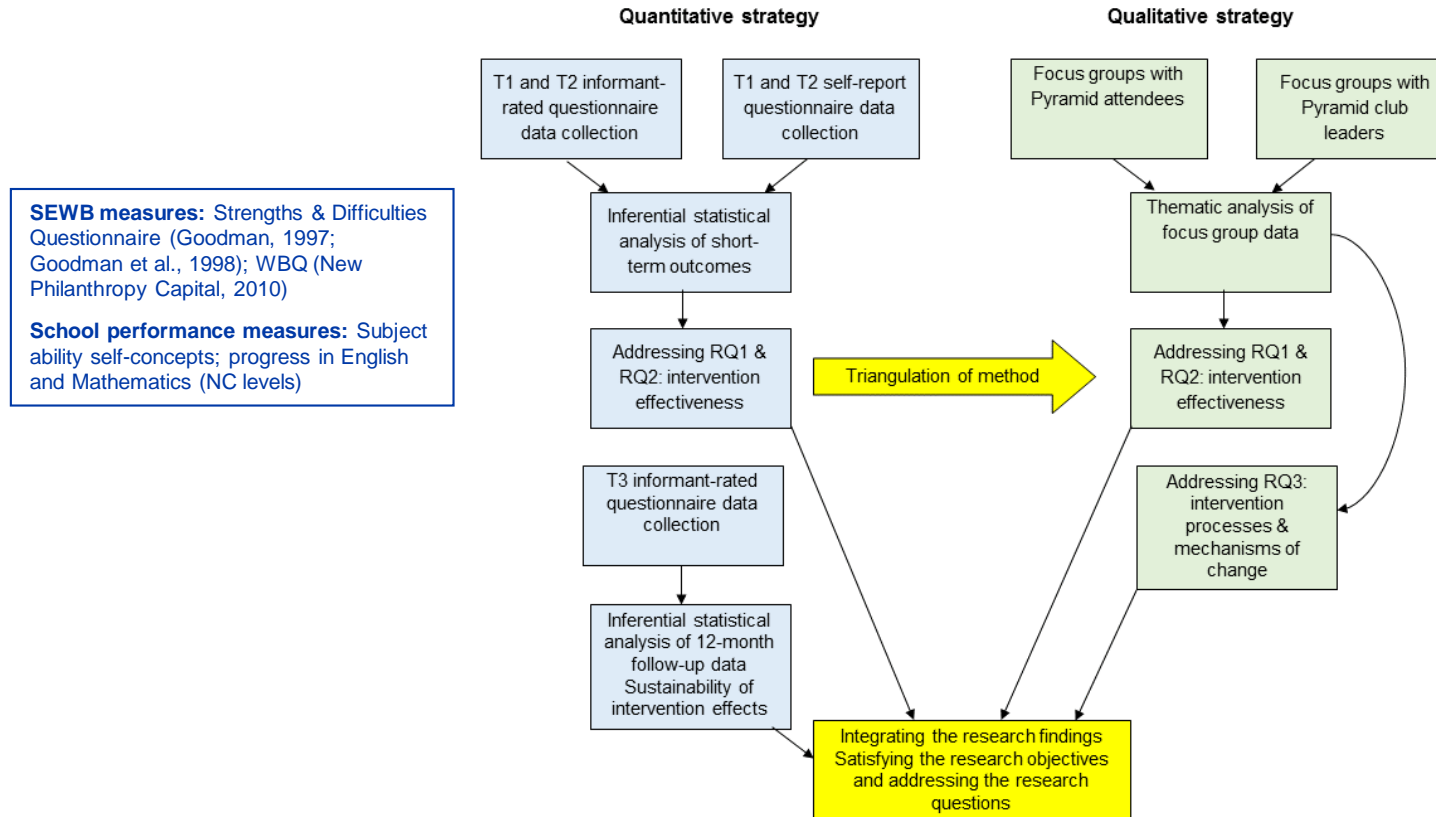
- Addressing gaps in the extant evidence base
- Does Pyramid impact on the emotional health of pupils in early secondary education?
- Does Pyramid impact on pupils' school performance?
- What are the 'active ingredients' involved in Pyramid that bring about change?





# Study design

*“Understanding how and why programs work, not simply whether they work, is crucial” (Dixon-Woods et al., 2011)*



# Quantitative results: a snapshot

- Objective and subjective measures of SEWB demonstrated significant improvements in socio-emotional well-being for the Pyramid group at short-term and longer-term follow-up with large effects.

**Table 1. Participants' Total Difficulties scores (SDQ: Goodman, 1997) at T1, T2 and T3**

	UK SDQ norms: (age11-15) Mean (SD)	Baseline (T1) Mean (SD)	Post-test (T2) Mean (SD)	12-month follow-up (T3) Mean (SD)
Pyramid group	6.30 (6.1)	14.40 (4.94)	9.24 (5.43)***	9.11 (5.42)***
Comparison group		5.43 (5.09)	5.20 (5.40)	5.61 (5.50)

\*\*\* $p < .001$

# Quantitative results: a snapshot

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- Impact was not moderated by gender, ethnicity or SES
- Comparison group of non-intervention peers showed minimal fluctuations across the same time period
- Significant cross-over interaction for pupils' subject ability self-concept: Pyramid had a 'buffer effect' on typical 'dip' phenomenon characteristic of this developmental period

# Qualitative results: a snapshot

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- Thematic analysis of **service user** and **club leader** data provided evidence to support Pyramid's effectiveness (SEWB and school performance outcomes)

*"It helped me with my confidence, for making new friends and stuff like that"* (Jessica, Sc4)

*"They both ask questions and are so much more interactive in class"* (Club leader 5, Sc5)

- Behaviour change drivers identified

**BCPs:** setting; delivery; and content of Pyramid

**BCTs:** demonstration and practice; social reward; social support; and goal setting

- Legacy and development of the Pyramid model

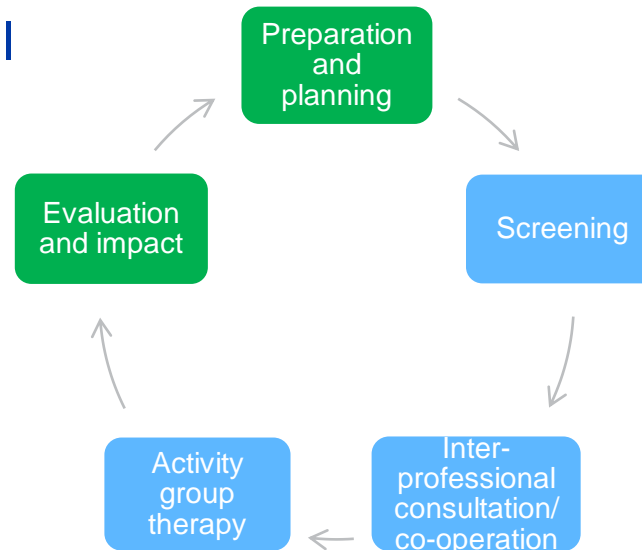
*"I think it's about how it's affected them in the long-term...it's opened doors for them really"* (Club leader 2, Sc5)

*"If another club ran you could talk to them about what it's like 'cos you've already done it"* (Perseus, Sc6)



# Implications, challenges, future directions...

- Pyramid five-part model



- Developing partnerships and networks
- Fluctuations in funding and other macro level changes
- Enabling emotionally healthy children and young people achieve their potential

*"I used to get bullied and stuff which basically put me inside of a shell but Pyramid helped to break that shell."  
(Year 7 Pyramid club member, 2015)*

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