

Page 1 ICATS i2i

Welcome

iCATS-i2i stands for 'Identifying Child Anxiety Through Schools- identification to intervention'.

The iCATS-i2i programme aims to increase access to targeted support for primary school aged children with anxiety-related difficulties.

iCATS-i2i is an evidence-based programme with two components:

1. Identification: Short parent questionnaires

All parents are invited to complete a two-item questionnaire to help spot children with anxiety difficulties.

2. Intervention: Online Support and Intervention (OSI) + therapist support

Where questionnaire responses suggest a child may be experiencing anxiety-related difficulties, parents receive a follow-up call and are offered an online and telephone support programme.

Where questionnaire responses suggest a child is unlikely to be experiencing anxiety-related difficulties, parents can request a follow-up call with the MHST.

We tested iCATS-i2i in a large research trial and found it reduced the number of children with anxiety difficulties – this is good news! Here is our results video:

[Embedded video about the results of the iCATS-i2i trial]

We are now researching exactly how iCATS-i2i could be delivered outside of a research trial by Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs) working with primary schools.

You can find out more about how the programme was developed on our 'Background and Publications' page.

Page 2 About Us

The iCATS-i2i programme was developed by experts in child anxiety difficulties at the University of Oxford and other institutions, with funding from the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR).

To help develop and refine the programme, researchers worked with children, parents, school staff and MHST staff from across England.

Page 3 Background & Publications

Background

Fears, worries and anxiety are a normal part of childhood, but for some children anxiety has a negative impact on their day-to-day lives. These children may benefit from support or intervention to help them manage and overcome their difficulties with anxiety.

Psychological treatments work well for children with anxiety difficulties, but very few children access these treatments. Families can struggle to identify anxiety-related difficulties in their children, they may be unsure if and where to seek support, and they often face long waiting times for treatment. iCATS aims to reduce these barriers and help ensure more children with anxiety problems receive effective support when they need it.

Researchers, parents, children, school staff and mental health practitioners have all come together to develop and test iCATS-i2i. Each of the stages involved in this process are outlined below. The publications associated with each stage are included in a separate section at the bottom of this page.

1. Development of a short child anxiety questionnaire

This study involved 19 schools across England. Children in Years 4-6, their parents, and teachers completed questionnaires about the child's fear and worries, and families also took part in interviews.

Using this information, we developed a two-question parent-report measure to help identify children who may be experiencing anxiety. This measure is now used in iCATS-i2i.

2. Co-design of iCATS-i2i procedures

As part of this stage, we worked with parents, children, school staff and other key stakeholders to develop the iCATS-i2i procedure – a new way of identifying and supporting children with anxiety problems through schools.

3. Feasibility study

This study involved working with 6 schools to try out the co-designed procedures that were developed in Study 2. We wanted to check that the procedures worked well for all involved, and identify any changes that were needed before proceeding to Study 5.

4. Economic impact of elevated child anxiety

Alongside testing the iCATS-i2i procedures, our team conducted a literature review to investigate the longer-term impacts and economic costs of child anxiety problems.

5. Cluster randomised controlled trial

The iCATS-i2i programme was evaluated in a large trial involving Year 4 classes across 84 primary schools across England.

More than 4500 children and 1500 parents/carers took part in our study!

The trial showed that delivering iCATS-i2i reduced child anxiety problems compared to usual school provision. There were also benefits for children with anxiety problems across wider parent- and teacher-reported outcomes, up to 2 years later.

Embedded video about the results of the iCATS-i2i trial.

6. Adapting for delivery in routine practice

Beyond the research trial, we aimed to identify what changes we could make to help ensure the programme works well in practice – when delivered by Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs) working with schools.

To do this we spoke to MHST staff, primary school staff, and parents/carers during research interviews, follow-up discussions and additional consultations.

7. Improving access for families living on low incomes

To make sure iCATS-i2i is as accessible as possible, we are planning a follow-up project to tailor strategies to increase participation among families living on low incomes. This is because the main research trial found that participation in screening and OSI was lower in schools with high compared to lower levels of deprivation. This study will involve us speaking to families living on low incomes and practitioners who support these families.

8. Implementation study

We are planning to work with a small number of MHSTs to test the routine delivery of iCATS-i2i in schools.

Publications

Please see below for the research papers published by the iCATS team:

1. Development of a short child anxiety questionnaire

- Study protocol: <https://osf.io/ntkga/>
- Research paper: <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcv2.12265>

2. Co-design iCATS-i2i procedures

- Protocol: <https://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/bmjopen/11/4/e044852.full.pdf>

- Qualitative study with parents: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13632752.2022.2122285>
- Qualitative study with mental health practitioners: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13632752.2022.2110704>
- Co-design research paper: <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2021-058089>

3. Feasibility Study

- Protocol: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40814-022-01140-x>
- Research paper: <https://doi.org/10.1111/camh.12612>

4. Economic impact of elevated child anxiety

- Protocol: https://www.crd.york.ac.uk/prospero/display_record.php?RecordID=202440
- Research paper: <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcv2.12149>

5. Cluster Randomised Controlled Trial

- Protocol: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13063-022-06773-0>
- Statistical Analysis Plan: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13063-023-07898-6>
- Research paper: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366\(26\)00064-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366(26)00064-7)

6. Adapting for delivery in routine practice

- Qualitative study – publication forthcoming
- Adaptations paper – publication forthcoming

Page 4 Current project – Improving families’ access to child anxiety support

In our previous series of iCATS projects, we worked with families and school staff to develop an ‘identification-to-intervention’ (i2i) pathway that can be delivered through schools to identify and support children with anxiety problems. We tested this in a large study and found it reduced the number of children with anxiety problems. This is good news!

However, we also found that the number of families that took part varied across schools. In schools where lots of families were living on low incomes, only a small number of parents took part. This shows that we did not get it quite right for these families. It may be that families living on low incomes need different or extra support to make sure they have the opportunity to take part.

In the current study, we want to find out what may help families living on low incomes to access child anxiety support. To do this, we want to talk to families living on low incomes and individuals in roles that involve supporting these families (e.g. primary school staff, mental health practitioners, frontline support roles in voluntary and community organisations).

We will use findings from this study to:

- Develop new resources for schools to use in the future
- Provide recommendations on ways to support families on low incomes to access mental health support.

We are hoping schools and community organisations can help us connect with families who may be interested in taking part. If you are interested in taking part as an individual who supports families living on low incomes, please get in touch:

icatsinpractice@psych.ox.ac.uk.

You can find out more about what is involved for schools, organisations, parents, and other participants below.

Information (for schools/organisations, parents, and other participants)

You can download our information leaflets from this page. This has further information about the research and what will be involved for schools, organisations, parents/carers, and those in roles that involve supporting families on low incomes.

Download button for information for schools and organisations.

Download button for information for parents.

Download button for information for other participants.

Meet the team

Tessa Readon – Principal Investigator. Rosie Underhill – Research Assistant.

Contact Us

Please contact the iCATS-i2i in Practice team if you would like to discuss the project or express an interest in taking part: icatsinpractice@psych.ox.ac.uk.

This project is funded by the Prudence Trust.

Page 5 Resources for schools

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Page 6 Online Support & Intervention

Online Support and Intervention (or “OSI”) is the brief, online, practitioner-supported intervention that is offered to families as part of iCATS-i2i.

For more information about OSI, see the flyer and short video (<2.5 minutes) below:

Download button for OSI flyer.

Embedded video about OSI.

Parent/Carer Testimony

In our previous research, we interviewed parents/carers who used OSI to find out about their experiences of the intervention. You can watch these videos to find out what parents/carers told us.

A video about using OSI.

A video about OSI in daily life.

A video about working with the wellbeing practitioner.

A video about how helpful OSI has been.

A video about further comments.

Page 6a OSI Resources

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Page 7 Resources for families

Books & Guides – For understanding more about anxiety

Freely available in many local libraries

Willetts, L., & Waite, P. (2014). *Can I tell you about Anxiety?: A guide for friends, family and professionals*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers

Creswell, C., & Willetts, L. (2018). *Helping your child with fears and worries: A self-help guide for parents*. London: LittleBrown.

Support Organisations

In an emergency, you can call 999 or go to A&E. These services are not just reserved for physical health emergencies as they can assist with emergencies relating to emotional difficulties, such as severe anxiety or low mood.

[NHS](#)

The NHS website has lots of information about what anxiety is and how to know if anxiety in children or adults is problematic. It also has information on how to support children and adults with anxiety and how to know when to seek help. It also has real stories and audio guides on various issues that may affect people with anxiety.

[Every Mind Matters](#)

The Every Mind Matters website also has lots of information, tips and resources on supporting children with common mental health problems.

[Young Minds](#)

If you are a young person struggling to cope, text YM to 85258 for free, 24/7 support.

Young Minds is a charity who provide support for those worried about a young person's behaviour or mental health and provides information leaflets. On their website you can find:

- Information about different mental health difficulties that affect young people and about specific symptoms
- Support and information about what to do in an emergency
- How you can talk to and support your child
- How young people's NHS mental health services work

[Mind](#)

Helpline: 0300 123 3393 (Mon-Fri 9am –6pm)

Mind provides information on mental health problems and treatments. On their website you can find:

- How to support a young person with mental health difficulties as a parent.
- How you can look after yourself whilst doing so.

- How to find different kinds of support (e.g., face-to-face, phone, or things that you can do yourself)

[The Child Mind Institute](#)

The Child Mind Institute website contains lots of articles which provide information on anxiety problems in children (both for specific and general difficulties), as well as useful tips on how to support anxious children. It also has an “Ask an expert” section with FAQs and several guides to help families with other difficulties faced in childhood.

The Child Mind Institute has published a useful article on [“What to do \(and not do\) when children are anxious”](#) with 10 useful tips.

Page 8 Resources for MHSTs

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Page 9 Materials from the research trial

Parent/Carer Information Leaflet

You can download our research information leaflet from this page. This leaflet was used to inform parents/carers about the research trial and what would be involved.

Download button for parent information leaflet.

School Information Leaflet

This leaflet was used to inform schools about the research trial and what would be involved.

Download button for school information leaflet.

Page 9a Newsletters Phase 1

Family Newsletter Summer 2024 [image of newsletter].

Family Newsletter July 2023 [image of newsletter].

Family Newsletter January 2023 [image of newsletter].

Page 9b Newsletters Phase 2

Family Newsletter March 2025 [image of newsletter].

Family Newsletter July 2023 [image of newsletter].

Family Newsletter January 2023 [image of newsletter].

Page 10 Design-a-Sticker

Gallery of children's sticker designs

We asked children involved in the research trial to draw a brand new sticker design that we could use on the next set of stickers that we printed and gave out to participating children.

We were not prepared for the number of AMAZING designs we received!

Sadly, we have been unable to upload all of them onto our website as we had previously hoped we could. We're really sorry about this!

We are proud to display below the following designs. These designs were presented anonymously to the [TOPIC research group](#), and stickers with the highest number of votes were chosen.

[image of sticker designs]

Page 11 Accessibility

To help with the accessibility of the iCATS website, we have kept our text format and colouring simple, as well as trying to keep paragraphs short and easy to read. We have also endeavoured to add Alt-Text to all of our images.

For those using a screen reader or anyone with Irlens, we have provided a downloadable text only version of the website below.

Download button for text-only website as PDF document.

Page 12 Contact Us

If you have any queries or questions about the iCATS-i2 programme, you can contact the research team via icatsinpractice@psych.ox.ac.uk.