



Improving the mental health of farmers: what types of remote intervention and support are acceptable and feasible to best support improved outcomes?

Participant Information Sheet

Introduction

A research team led by the University of Stirling and the Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) is conducting a study to find out what type of intervention is more acceptable and helpful in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of farmers.

The type of intervention (support) this study plans to look into are:

1. An online-based psychological therapy that teaches practical strategies that can be used in everyday life. This therapy can be provided with or without telephone support.
2. A social and emotional support service that offers a helpline and staffed by mental health first aid trained staff and volunteers.
3. A combination of both interventions.

The results from this study will be used to identify a 'best-option' intervention for a future trial of its effectiveness.

What are we planning to do?

We want to invite people from the farming community in the North of Scotland, which includes all farm workers, unpaid workers and family members, who are currently experiencing a common mental health problem, such as anxiety or depression, to receive either an online-based psychological therapy or a social and emotional support service or a combination of both for up to 8 weeks.

Do I have to take part?

No, your participation is voluntary. We will explain the study and go through this information sheet with you. If you do decide to take part, we will then ask you to sign a consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time, without having to give any explanation.

What will happen to me if I take part?

If you decide to take part in the study, you will first be asked to complete some questionnaires about your mental health, this can be done over the telephone. You will also be asked whether you would be happy to be randomly allocated to any intervention.

If you are eligible to participate in the study, we will then record additional information (such as your age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, work status) and you will be randomly allocated to either receive the combined intervention or to receive the on-line intervention (with telephone support) or the social and emotional support intervention. The group you are allocated to is decided by chance, like a flip of a coin, using a computer program. However, if you have a strong preference for one of the single support options, you will be allowed to switch intervention.

Before you start the intervention, you will be asked to complete some further questionnaires about your mental health, your feelings and your quality of life. You will then be asked to complete these questionnaires again at 3 months and 6 months, with some additional questions on what you thought of the interventions you received.

You will have the option to complete these questionnaires in paper copies and post it back to us, to receive and return these by email, or to complete these over the telephone.

Are there any potential risks in taking part?

There are no foreseeable risks in taking part of this study. However, if during the study, your mental health becomes significantly worse, or we are worried that someone is hurting you or that you are going to hurt yourself or someone else, we will then contact your GP or other emergency services as appropriate. On the Consent Form, we ask you to provide the name and telephone number of your GP surgery. Additional crisis helplines will also be provided to you at every stage of the study.

Your participation will be confidential (except to the research team and those delivering the services as part of this study) and your data will be held in a way that all identifiable data is removed.

Are there any benefits in taking part?

Taking part in the study may improve your mental health and you will have access to the services we are testing. However, there are no guarantees of this, as we are looking at what types of intervention and support might help in supporting farmers' mental health.

There will be no payment for taking part in this research study.

What will we do with the results?

The information gathered from this study will help us to understand what type of intervention farmers would prefer in supporting their mental health. Your feedback on the intervention you received will also help us to identify whether any adaptations are needed (what you liked, what you did not).

We will share the overall findings with the wider networks of farming communities, livestock vets, and other agricultural support services. We may also publish our findings in a journal to

share these with others and will include the results in our report to the project funders. We also hope to go on to test the 'best option' intervention in a larger trial so that we have robust evidence for its effectiveness in improving the mental health of those in the farming community.

Data security and confidentiality

All information collected in this study will be used for research purposes only. Personal and confidential information will be stored anonymously using unique code numbers. Questionnaires data will be stored using code numbers with all references to actual names removed. Only members of the research team will have access to the collected data, which will be stored securely at the University of Stirling. The data will be kept for a period of 10 years as requested by University of Stirling Ethics requirements. The research team will have no access to your personal medical records.

Who is funding and organising this research study?

This research study is funded by the Chief Scientist Office of the Scottish Government and is led by Professor Margaret Maxwell from the University of Stirling.

For more information

If you have any questions about this study, please contact:

Name:	Prof Margaret Maxwell	OR	Name:	Dr Kate Stephen
Address:	NMAHP-RU, University of Stirling, Stirling, FK9 4LA		Address:	Scotland's Rural College, Inverness
Tel:	01786 467738		Tel:	01463 246080
Email:	margaret.maxwell@stir.ac.uk		Email:	kate.stephen@sruc.ac.uk

If you have concerns about the conduct of this study you can contact an independent advisor (not involved in the study team) who can respond to the issues you raise, please contact: Professor Helen Cheyne at h.i.cheyne@stir.ac.uk

Thank you for considering taking part in this study and taking time to read this information sheet.