

Developing Acne Care Online

Why did we do this research?

Acne is very common and is something experienced by many teenagers and young adults. Living with acne can be difficult and can have a negative impact on emotional wellbeing. Around one million acne-related GP appointments take place each year, but we know that many people living with acne never seek professional advice. This is sometimes because of misinformation and stigma surrounding acne.

There are many treatments available which are proven to work for acne, including those which are applied directly to the skin (also known as topical treatments) such as creams and gels. But many young people don't use these treatments in a way which could make a difference. For example, they often stop too soon because of side effects, or it may not be working as quickly as they had hoped. Instead, they might use over the counter skin products, or treatments recommended by social media, which often don't work as well, or even at all. We need better support for young people to help them understand where to get and how to use treatments which are proven to work, and to help set realistic expectations about how and when these will work.

What did we do?

This study collected lots of different evidence to help us design and create 'Acne Care Online', a website to help young people manage acne effectively. This involved:

- Speaking to 24 young people (aged 13-25) and some of their parents about their experiences of acne and how they try to manage it
- Speaking to 18 healthcare professionals (including GPs, nurses and pharmacists) about their experiences of treating acne
- Searching for scientific evidence from previous studies and summarising what they tell us about how young people manage their acne
- Working with a team of young people who have acne to give us feedback on our early ideas for the website and using their feedback to improve these
- Working with health professionals (including Dermatologists, GPs, Pharmacists and Psychologists) to provide expert knowledge about what advice should be included in Acne Care Online

We used this information to plan what Acne Care Online should include and how it should work. We made a test version of the website which we shared with 53 young people with acne. We used their feedback to make improvements based on their suggestions.

What did we find out?

By the end of the study, young people told us that they found Acne Care Online informative, trustworthy and relevant to their experiences of acne. Health professionals also felt it could be easily built into the ways that they provide care for acne already.

Through this process, we learned more about the challenges young people face when managing acne. These include avoiding visits to healthcare professionals because of beliefs that acne isn't a medical problem and misunderstandings about treatments and how they work. We also learned about the growing importance of 'body positivity' for many young people which was important for how Acne Care Online provided advice.

What's next?

Now that we have created Acne Care Online, we are running another study involving over 1000 young people to test whether using it can improve how young people feel about their acne. We will write up the findings of this study when it is complete (early 2027).

You can read the full paper here: [Planning and optimizing a digital self-management support intervention: Acne Care Online - Essery - 2025 - British Journal of Health Psychology - Wiley Online Library](#)