Evaluation of the Reach Programme. A randomised control trial of a mentoring intervention aimed at young people in secondary schools aged 11-16 years

Submission date 17/09/2025	**Recruitment status** No longer recruiting	[_] Prospectively registered [X] Protocol
Registration date 17/09/2025	**Overall study status** Completed	[X] Statistical analysis plan [_] Results
Last Edited 17/09/2025	**Condition category** Other	[_] Individual participant data [X] Record updated in last year

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims

This study is looking at how well a school-based mentoring programme called Reach helps prevent young people from getting involved in violence. It's funded by the Youth Endowment Fund, which supports projects that aim to keep children and teenagers safe. The Reach Programme is being tested in schools across Leicester and Leicestershire, especially in areas with high crime, school exclusions, and other challenges. Researchers want to find out if this kind of support makes a real difference for young people who are vulnerable and at risk.

Who can participate?

Young people aged 11 to 16 years (school years 7 to 11) who are at risk of being suspended from school and have at least three signs of vulnerability (such as being in care, living with domestic violence, or substance misuse at home) were invited to take part.

What does the study involve?

Participants were randomly chosen to either receive the Reach Programme or continue with the usual support their school provides. Those in the Reach group were matched with a youth worker who helped them create a personal plan. They met regularly in school, at home, or in the community for one-to-one mentoring, fun activities, and support with social skills and behaviour. Researchers also asked young people and teachers to fill out questionnaires and collected school records to see how things changed over time.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?

The Reach Programme offers tailored support to help young people stay out of trouble and feel more confident. Youth workers and school staff also get a chance to reflect on their work and training. For those not receiving the programme, there may have been some disappointment, but schools were fully informed about how the study works. All young people were told they

could choose not to take part, skip any questions they didn't want to answer, and leave the study at any time. If anyone had a negative experience, they could speak to researchers and were offered extra support if needed.

Where is the study run from?
The study is taking place in secondary schools across Leicester and Leicestershire (UK).

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?
October 2023 to September 2025

Who is funding the study?
Youth Endowment Fund (UK)

Who is the main contact?
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Contact information

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Scientific, Principal investigator

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Additional identifiers

Clinical Trials Information System (CTIS)
Nil known

ClinicalTrials.gov (NCT)
Nil known

Protocol serial number
Nil known

Study information

Scientific Title
Evaluation of the Reach Programme. A randomised control trial of a mentoring intervention aimed at young people in secondary schools aged 11-16 years

Study objectives
RQ1 What is the difference in behavioural difficulties measured using the externalising score from the teacher report Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) between the intervention group, when compared to a 'business as usual' control?
RQ2 What is the difference in emotional regulation measured using the internalising score of the teacher report SDQ between the intervention group, when compared to a 'business as usual' control?
RQ3 What is the difference in behavioural difficulties measured using the externalising score from the self-report Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) between the intervention group, when compared to a 'business as usual' control?
RQ4 What is the difference in emotional regulation measured using the internalising score of the self-report SDQ between the intervention group, when compared to a 'business as usual' control?
RQ5 What is the difference in offending behaviours measured using "variety of delinquency score" from the self-report delinquency scale (SRDS) between the intervention group, when compared to a 'business as usual' control?
RQ6 What is the difference in offending behaviours measured using "volume of delinquency score" from the self-report delinquency scale (SRDS) between the intervention group, when compared to a 'business as usual' control?
RQ7 What is the difference in attendance at school measured using administrative data between the intervention group, when compared to a 'business as usual' control?
RQ8 What is the difference in number of suspensions measured using administrative data between the intervention group, when compared to a 'business as usual' control?
RQ9 What is the difference in offending behaviours measured using administrative data between the intervention group, when compared to a 'business as usual' control?
RQ10 Are any differences in the primary outcome (externalising score teacher report SDQ) observed with regards to the ethnicity of the YP?
RQ11 Are any differences in the primary outcome (externalising score teacher report SDQ) observed with regards to the sex of the YP?
RQ12 Are any differences in the primary outcome (externalising score teacher report SDQ) observed with regards to the age of the YP?

Ethics approval required
Ethics approval required

Ethics approval(s)

approved 18/12/2023, Sheffield Hallam University Research Ethics Committee (Sheffield Hallam University, Howard Street, Sheffield, S1 1WB, United Kingdom; +44 114 225 5555; ethicssupport@shu.ac.uk), ref: ER61328257

Study design

Interventional cluster randomized controlled trial

Primary study design

Interventional

Study type(s)

Efficacy

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied

Young people at risk of suspension or who are persistently absent from school, and where there are concerns about future involvement in anti-social behaviour and crime as both a victim or perpetrator.

Interventions

The Reach Programme is targeted intervention aimed at YP aged 11-16 in secondary schools (years 7-11) who are at risk of suspension (i.e. they have carried out behaviour in their school that would normally qualify for a suspension), have 3 indicators of vulnerability (e.g. looked after, domestic violence or substance misuse in the home) and where there are concerns about future involvement in anti-social behaviour and crime as both a victim or perpetrator. It is a six-month, evidence-informed intervention) - a context which has the potential to be a 'teachable moment'. The 'teachable' moments interventions, often called 'Navigators' programmes, make use of points in people's lives where they may be more inclined to seek help and support as a result of hitting a low point, or significant event in their lives. Navigators style programmes provide three key activities, 'reach-in' at the teachable moment, mentoring, and signposting, all of which are largely reflected within the Reach programme. It incorporates intensive and flexible mentoring, offers opportunities for prosocial activity, and addresses individual, relationship and community risk factors through structured learning components such as social skills training. The Reach programme provides an opportunity to explore the 'teachable moment' component in a school context.

The design for the trial is a blocked Randomised Controlled Trial (RCT) design, where within each block (i.e. school), referred YP will be randomised to receive the Reach programme or BAU control (i.e. two arms). The allocation is 50:50 and fixed within each school with the aim of achieving equal numbers of YP allocated to intervention and control within each school. The control condition is "business as usual" support within schools.

Within each school the evaluation team will randomise half of referred YP to the Reach programme and the other half will form the business as usual control group. Once numbers of referrals within schools have been set, randomisation will be fixed within each school using a random number generator in Excel to determine group allocation. Two specified members of the evaluation team will undertake randomisation, this will be blind to participants and providers, and take place following the collection of baseline data. Outcome data would then be collected once the participant has completed the programme. Given the rolling nature of referrals, randomisation is conducted on a rolling basis.

Intervention Type
Behavioural

Primary outcome(s)
Collected on a rolling basis given the rolling nature of the intervention:
Teacher report SDQ externalising score

Key secondary outcome(s))
The baseline and outcome measures are collected on a rolling basis given the rolling nature of the intervention:
1. Emotional regulation (Teacher report SDQ) measured using teacher report SDQ internalising score
2. Behavioural difficulties (Self report SDQ) measured using self-report SDQ externalising score
3. Emotional regulation (Self report SDQ) self-report SDQ internalising score
4. Variety of delinquency measured using variety of delinquency (SRDS)
5. Volume of delinquency measured using volume of delinquency (SRDS)
6. Number of suspensions measured using administrative data provided by the local councils
7. Attendance at school (%) measured using administrative data provided by the schools
8. Level of offending measured using data provided by Leicester violence reduction unit (VRU)

Completion date
04/09/2025

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria
1. Young person aged 11-16 years in secondary schools (years 7-11)
2. At risk of suspension (i.e. they have carried out behaviour in their school that would normally qualify for a suspension)
3. Have 3 indicators of vulnerability (e.g. looked after, domestic violence or substance misuse in the home)

Participant type(s)
Learner/student

Healthy volunteers allowed
No

Age group
Child

Lower age limit
11 years

Upper age limit
16 years

Sex
All

Total final enrolment

595

Key exclusion criteria

Does not meet the inclusion criteria

Date of first enrolment

01/01/2024

Date of final enrolment

01/01/2025

Locations

Countries of recruitment

United Kingdom

England

Study participating centre
Leicestershire County Council

County Hall
Leicester Road
Glenfield
Leicester
United Kingdom
LE3 8RA

Study participating centre
Leicester City Council

City Hall
115 Charles Street
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Sponsor information

Organisation

Youth Endowment Fund

Funder(s)

Funder type
Charity

Funder Name
Youth Endowment Fund

Alternative Name(s)
YouthEndowFund, YEF

Funding Body Type
Private sector organisation

Funding Body Subtype
Trusts, charities, foundations (both public and private)

Location
United Kingdom

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan
The data sets generated during and/or analysed during the current study will be available upon request from: https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/evaluation-data-archive/

IPD sharing plan summary
Stored in publicly available repository

Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
Protocol file			17/09/2025	No	No
Statistical Analysis Plan	version 1.0	09/05/2024	17/09/2025	No	No
Study website	Study website	11/11/2025	11/11/2025	No	Yes