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Future men's boys development programme. A randomised controlled trial efficacy study

Submission date
02/07/2024

Recruitment status
No longer recruiting

Registration date
26/07/2024

Overall study status
Completed

Last Edited
16/07/2024

Condition category
Mental and Behavioural Disorders

[ ] Prospectively registered
[X] Protocol
[ ] Statistical analysis plan
[ ] Results
[ ] Individual participant data
[ ] Record updated in last year

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims
The boys development programme (BDP) was developed in response to evidence showing that low school engagement, exclusion from school, and association with deviant peers increase the risk of youth violence and crime. Additionally, it is known that school exclusion and disengagement disproportionately affect young people from ethnic minority backgrounds, particularly black Caribbean and dual heritage Caribbean backgrounds, as well as those from low-income households. Research also suggests that targeted, social-emotional approaches can enhance educational outcomes for these young people. This randomly allocated and controlled study aims to expand the limited evidence base by examining how targeted, social-emotional programmes for boys at risk of disengagement and exclusion affect their school engagement.

Who can participate?
Boys in UK schools years 7-11 (aged 11 to 16 years old) in areas of high need/deprivation who are identified as being at high risk of disengagement from school which may lead to exclusion.

What does the programme involve?
The BDP involves twelve, 50- to 60-minute, weekly 1:1 sessions that take place over 12 weeks. Sessions are tailored to boys' needs, but topics can include:
• Masculinity/boys' Development
• Rules and boundaries
• Emotions
• Communication (including social media)
• Conflict (including peer interactions and pressure)
• Goals and aspirations

The sessions focus on developing protective factors which strengthen young people's personal characteristics and mitigate against any potential negative peer group influence. These sessions aim to give boys a positive relationship with a trusted adult with whom they can identify and model positive behaviour. This is the key mechanism of change.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?
The sessions delivered as part of the BDP seek to strengthen protective factors and mitigate

known risk factors for school disengagement and exclusion through developing improved communication, conflict resolution and emotional management skills.

The long-term benefits of participating in the BDP include:
• Improved educational engagement
• Reduced exclusions
• Experience a reduction in opportunities for engagement in anti-social behaviour/crime
• Thrive and progress through school & beyond
• Improved future opportunities and life chances

Risks of participating in the study include:
1. Boys could be triggered or upset by topics in questionnaires. Mitigations against this include (a) BDP practitioners receive training in how to support boys who may be affected in this way and direct them to further safeguarding or other appropriate support services (e.g. Mental Health Services) and (b) BDP practitioners are experienced youth support workers who have extensive experience of conducting studies with vulnerable young people, and they receive additional training from the experienced research team before tools are rolled out.
2. Young people in the control group might not receive the support needed which could lead to adverse consequences. The mitigation is they will be safeguarded and signposted to "business as usual" services.

Where is the study run from?
Cordis Bright. The study will take place across six schools in Wandsworth, Southwark and Lambeth.

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?
March 2023 to June 2026

Who is funding the study?
The Youth Endowment Fund (YEF)

Who is the main contact?
Dr Stephen Boxford (Principal Investigator, Project Director and Director at Cordis Bright), stephenboxford@cordisbright.co.uk

Contact information

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Principal investigator

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Study information

Scientific Title
Efficacy study randomised control trial evaluation of future men's boys' development programme for boys at risk of disengagement and exclusion which aims to improve school engagement

Acronym
Future Men's BDP

Study objectives
This randomised controlled trial examines the extent to which targeted, social-emotional programmes for boys at risk of disengagement and exclusion improve school engagement.

Ethics approval required
Ethics approval required

Ethics approval(s)
Approved 01/08/2023, Royal Holloway Research Ethics Committee (Egham Hill, Egham, TW20 0EX, United Kingdom; +44 (0)1784 434455; ethics@rhul.ac.uk), ref: 3756

Primary study design
Interventional

Study design
Two-arm parallel-group-assignment randomized controlled trial

Study type(s)
Efficacy

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied
Developing the social and emotional capacity and skills of boys in Years 7-11 who are at risk of exclusion and disengagement from schools, to improve school engagement and reduce the likelihood of exclusion.

Interventions
This efficacy study will be a two-arm, parallel-group-assignment randomised control trial (RCT). Randomisation will be done at the individual level with stratification at the school level. Randomisation is conducted using an online computer programme Sealed Envelope (https://www.sealedenvelope.com/simple-randomiser/v1/).

All young people who are referred to the programme, meet the eligibility criteria, consent to be part of the evaluation and complete a baseline questionnaire will be allocated at random to the treatment or control group on a 1:1 basis. Randomisation will be done using 24 blocks of 20 pupils (i.e. one block of 20 per school per term), followed by block sizes of four.

Those in the treatment group will receive the BDP (around 12 one-to-one support sessions from a BDP practitioner focussed on developing social-emotional skills and competencies).

Those in the control group will be signposted to key school staff by the BDP evaluation research assistant/project coordinator. Key school leads could include school safeguarding leads, SENCos and/or pastoral leads. Boys in the control group will receive appropriate support/provision that the school would provide under business as usual, i.e., that they would have likely received anyway without the BDP being present.

Intervention Type
Behavioural

Primary outcome(s)
School engagement measured using the School Connectedness Questionnaire at baseline and 12 and 24 weeks

Key secondary outcome(s)
The following secondary outcome measures are assessed at baseline and 12 and 24 weeks, unless otherwise stated:
1. Relationships with peers measured using the Strengths and Difficulties peer-relationship problems subscale
2. Emotional symptoms measured using the Strengths and Difficulties emotional symptoms subscale
3. Behavioural difficulties measured using the Strengths and Difficulties externalising behaviours score
4. Relationships with teachers measured using the School Connectedness Teacher Bonding and Attachment subscale
5. Relationship between project co-ordinator and young person measured using the Social Support and Rejection Scale at 12 and 24 weeks

Completion date
30/06/2026

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria
1. Boys aged 11-16 years old
2. Boys at risk of exclusion (due to poor behaviour records and/or significant behaviour incidents). This is assessed by incidents of poor behaviour in individual behaviour logs, for

example, incidents in the classroom, around the school and/or situations involving teachers and /or other pupils
3. Boys at risk of disengagement (achieving below potential and/or poor attendance). This is assessed by school attendance which is recorded accurately each day for pupils.
4. Boys at risk of poor outcomes due to known adversity outside school (child-poverty, previous or ongoing child-protection concerns). This is assessed by socio-economic information collected by schools such as being eligible for Free School Meals, care status, or having English as an additional language.

Participant type(s)
Learner/student

Healthy volunteers allowed
No

Age group
Child

Lower age limit
11 Years

Upper age limit
16 Years

Sex
Male

Key exclusion criteria
1. Boys' behaviour and circumstances indicate that clinical support would be more appropriate. (For example, where there is evidence of significant trauma for which no prior support has been received.)
2. There is evidence that the school intends to exclude the boy and is using the programme to demonstrate that support was offered.
3. The boy has a more advanced learning or communication need which would make a speaking and listening intervention hard to access. However, young people with SEND or an EHCP are not automatically excluded from the programme.

Date of first enrolment
01/09/2023

Date of final enrolment
01/04/2025

Locations

Countries of recruitment
United Kingdom

England

Study participating centre
Six secondary schools in Wandsworth, Lambeth and Southwark.
Wandsworth
London
United Kingdom
SW15 3DG

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 datasets generated during and/or analysed during the current study will be archived after the study in the YEF data archive and will be available to researchers on request.

Two datasets will be transferred to the YEF archive. The first dataset will contain identifying data and a unique project-specific reference number for each participant. This will be transferred to the Department for Education, which will pseudonymise the data (replacing all identifying

information with a unique project-specific number) before transferring it to the Office of National Statistics (ONS) for storage in the YEF archive. The second dataset will contain all the evaluation data and the project-specific reference numbers. This will be anonymised and is submitted directly to the ONS where it's stored in the YEF archive.
The archiving process is likely to take place around June 2026. YEF has not set a specific time limit on how long they will store data for but will carry out a review every five years to see whether there is a continued benefit to storing the data and its potential use in future research.
YEF will only allow information in the archive to be accessed and used for research following the ONS's 'Five Safes' framework and via the ONS-SRS. The 'Five Safes' framework makes sure that:
1. Only researchers with the skills and expertise to analyse the data can access it.
2. Only approved projects that are being conducted for the benefit of society and have been approved by ethics committees can go ahead.
3. Technology will make sure that the data is kept safe, by tracking and monitoring researchers' activity will be tracked and monitored.
4. All the data will be checked to make sure no one can be identified from the data.
5. Only data that uses references (and does not contain identifying information) can be analysed.

Participants and their parents/carers have the right to ask the research team during the evaluation, and the YEF after data has been transferred for archiving for access to the personal information held about them and to correct any personal information held about them which is incorrect, incomplete or inaccurate.

In certain circumstances, they also have the right to ask for their personal information to be erased where there is no good reason for continuing to hold it; object to their personal information being used for public task purposes; and, ask for the use of their personal information to be restricted or suspended.

All young people and their parents/carers will be given a privacy notice and information sheets about the use of their personal data, the archiving process, and their data protection rights before consenting to be involved in the study. They have the right to withdraw from the study (and not have their information sent to the YEF archive) at any time before the study comes to an end in June 2026. Once information goes into the YEF archive after June 2026 it can no longer be deleted because that would affect the quality of the archived data for use in future research. They will however have the right to apply to the YEF who will review applications for deletion on an individual basis.

IPD sharing plan summary

Available on request

Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
Participant information sheet	Participant information sheet	11/11/2025	11/11/2025	No	Yes
Protocol file		01/10/2023	03/07/2024	No	No
Study website	Study website	11/11/2025	11/11/2025	No	Yes