ISRCTN16027244 https://doi.org/10.1186/ISRCTN16027244

Grassroots Efficacy Trial: Evaluation of an anti-conflict intervention by cluster randomised controlled trial

Submission date	Recruitment status	[ ] Prospectively registered
24/10/2023	No longer recruiting	[ ] Protocol
Registration date	**Overall study status**	[ ] Statistical analysis plan
26/10/2023	Ongoing	[ ] Results
Last Edited	**Condition category**	[ ] Individual participant data
26/10/2023	Other	[ ] Record updated in last year

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims
Pupil attendance in schools is a matter of great concern in England and Wales. While the reasons for school absence are complex, bullying, lack of safety at school, and school conflict are among them. The Grassroots programme aims to improve school attendance by reducing conflict and bullying behaviours in schools.

Who can participate?
Young people in school years 7-9 attending mainstream state-funded secondary schools in the recruitment areas.

What does the study involve?
Pupils in the treatment group will complete a survey in which they identify pupils they have chosen to spend time with. The best-connected pupils in each school will be invited to join a Change Makers group and attend 10 fortnightly intervention sessions with a facilitator to develop anti-conflict interventions tailored to their school. This will include handing out wristbands for engaging in friendly or anti-conflict behaviour, displaying posters with anti-conflict messages, sharing anti-conflict messages online, modelling pro-social behaviours and talking with peers about how to reduce conflict.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?
It is hoped that being part of a Change Makers group will be enjoyable and may improve pupils' experiences of school. Being part of a Change Makers group will mean missing a small number of lessons (10).

Where is the study run from?
The Grassroots programme is being run by a team from Behavioural Insights Limited (UK). Regional facilitators will lead Change Makers sessions in schools.

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?
January 2023 to January 2027

Who is funding the study?
1. Youth Endowment Fund (UK)
2. Education Endowment Foundation (UK)

Who is the main contact?
1. Dr Becky Taylor (UCL) is the main contact for the evaluation (becky.taylor@ucl.ac.uk)
2. Dr Kathryn Atherton (Behavioural Insights Ltd) is the main contact for the Grassroots programme

Contact information

Type(s)
Public, Principal investigator

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Additional identifiers

Protocol serial number
TBC

Study information

Scientific Title
Grassroots Efficacy Trial: Evaluation of an anti-conflict intervention by cluster randomised controlled trial

Acronym
Grassroots

Study objectives
The Grassroots intervention reduces conflict and bullying behaviours among pupils and so reduces pupil absence from school.

Ethics approval required
Ethics approval required

Ethics approval(s)
Approved 24/03/2023, IOE Research Ethics Committee (UCL) (20 Bedford Way, London, WC1H 0AL, United Kingdom; +44 (0)20 7679 2000 (switchboard); ioe.researchethics@ucl.ac.uk), ref: REC1773

Primary study design
Interventional

Study design
Interventional cluster randomized trial, non-blinded, with randomisation stratified by recruitment region

Study type(s)
Efficacy

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied
Improving school attendance through reduction of conflict and bullying behaviours in 11-14-year-old adolescents in secondary schools in England and Wales

Interventions
The Grassroots programme (adapted from ROOTS, Paluck et al., 2016) will be implemented in schools and randomised on a 1:1 basis. The randomisation procedure placed half of participating schools in each region (North West, Midlands, London, West England and South Wales) in the intervention arm and half in the control. A seed in R was used to generate random numbers for each school (listed alphabetically) and schools with the lowest random numbers in each of the five regions were allocated to the intervention arm.

Pupils in the treatment group will complete a survey in which they identify pupils they have chosen to spend time with. The best-connected pupils in each school will be invited to join a Change Makers group and attend 10 fortnightly intervention sessions with a facilitator to develop anti-conflict interventions tailored to their school. This will include handing out wristbands for engaging in friendly or anti-conflict behaviour, displaying posters with anti-conflict messages, sharing anti-conflict messages online, modelling pro-social behaviours and talking with peers about how to reduce conflict.

The control group is business as usual.

Intervention Type
Behavioural

Primary outcome(s)
School attendance is measured as the percentage of school sessions attended in a term from the National Pupil Database (England) and SAIL databank (Wales) at baseline (Autumn term 2023), post-intervention (Summer term 2023), and 1 year (Autumn term 2025)

Key secondary outcome(s)
1. Bullying victimisation, cyberbullying victimisation, bullying perpetration and cyberbullying perpetration are measured using the four subscales of the Bullying and Cyberbullying Scale (for adolescents) at baseline and post-intervention
2. Aggressive behaviour is measured using the Peer Conflict Survey at baseline and post-intervention
3. Emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity, peer relationship problems and prosocial behaviour are measured using the five subscales of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire at baseline and post-intervention
4. Peer-to-peer incidents are measured by counting teachers' disciplinary reports over a term at baseline (Autumn term 2023) and post-intervention (Summer term 2024)
5. Peer-to-peer conflict is measured using the descriptive and prescriptive norms survey at baseline and post-intervention
6. Feeling safe in school is measured using two survey questions at baseline and post-intervention

Completion date
31/01/2027

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria
1. Young people aged 11-14 years
2. Educated in participating mainstream state-funded secondary school within traveling distance of the designated recruitment regions (Greater London, South Wales, West Midlands, North-West England)

Participant type(s)
Learner/student

Healthy volunteers allowed
No

Age group
Child

Lower age limit
11 Years

Upper age limit

14 Years

Sex
All

Key exclusion criteria
1. Pupils attending schools outside the recruitment area
2. Pupils in year 6 or below
3. Pupils in year 10 or above

Date of first enrolment
01/06/2023

Date of final enrolment
06/10/2023

Locations

Countries of recruitment
United Kingdom

England

Wales

Study participating centre
UCL
20 Bedford Way
London
United Kingdom
WC1H 0AL

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

Funder Name
Education Endowment Foundation

Alternative Name(s)
EducEndowFoundn, The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), Education Endowment Foundation | London, EEF

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 the current study will be archived in the Youth Endowment Fund's data archive, available in the Office for National Statistics Secure Data Service (https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/evaluation-data-archive/).
The type of data stored: Participant evaluation reference number; trial group; pretest and post-test dates; delivery start and end dates; SDQ type, subscale and total scores at pre and post-test; cluster membership; school URN and LAESTAB; school postcode; practitioner type; number of sessions completed and offered; sex, FSM eligibility, ethnicity; SEND, SEED group membership, year group, region; Outcomes: baseline and post-intervention attendance, 1-year attendance, bullying and cyberbullying survey baseline and post-intervention scores, peer conflict survey baseline and post-intervention score, baseline and post-intervention disciplinary count, baseline and post-intervention norms scores, baseline and post-intervention feeling safe in school and non-attendance due to safety score.
The process for requesting access (if non-publicly available): Data will be available to accredited

researchers from the Office for National Statistics Secure Research Service by application to Youth Endowment Fund (https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/evaluation-data-archive/faqs-the-youth-endowment-fund-data-archive/).
Dates of availability: Data for the short-term follow-up will be archived in January 2025. Data for the long-term follow-up will be archived in August 2026.
Whether consent from participants was required and obtained: Data was collected under Article 6 Public Task and Article 9 Statistical Purposes of GDPR. Consent was therefore not obtained. The YEF data archive privacy notice was shared with participants and can be found here: https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/evaluation-data-archive/faqs-the-youth-endowment-fund-data-archive/
Comments on data anonymization: Data will be anonymised according to YEF instructions for preparing data for archiving: https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/YEF-Data-Guidance-Submitting-data-Dec-2022.pdf
Any ethical or legal restrictions: See details of YEF data archive above.

IPD sharing plan summary

Stored in non-publicly available repository

Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
Study website	Study website	11/11/2025	11/11/2025	No	Yes