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A randomised controlled trial of the Dallaglio RugbyWorks sports for development programme

Submission date
19/08/2024

Recruitment status
No longer recruiting

Registration date
04/09/2024

Overall study status
Ongoing

Last Edited
18/11/2025

Condition category
Other

[_] 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
This is a study of children and young people, aged 11-16 years old who are taking part in a programme called the Dallaglio RugbyWorks (DRW) sports for development programme. The DRW sports for development programme is a 38-week (full academic year) sports-based programme that utilizes rugby and multi-sport as a tool to cultivate a positive, prosocial identity in young people aged 11-16 at risk of offending and provides support in establishing and maintaining a relationship with a coach who guides them in setting future goals. The intervention involves four key sets of activities or support: Rugby-based learning, a Digital platform (which allows young people to assess their current skill set, identify and plan progression against a set of goals and access a range of relevant resources and support), Workshop-based learning, and mentoring. Dallaglio aims to work with each young person for at least 4 hours per week. The split over the year is 50% physical activity linked to skill development, 30% structured workshops and 20% engagement with employers.
The research will explore whether the programme is helping young people to make positive choices and whether it is helping them to reduce their involvement in crime. The primary research question of the study is: What is the impact of DRW sports for development programme (a sports-as-a-hook rugby programme focused on socio-emotional learning) on the behavioural difficulties of children and young people aged 11-16 who are at risk of or involved in youth violence, gang activity, and/or crime as a perpetrator or victim compared to business as usual?
The evaluation will be an efficacy trial run as a two-armed randomised controlled trial. Randomisation will occur at the level of the individual young person and allocation to intervention and control arms will be in the ratio of 1:1. The trial is defined as an efficacy trial as it is delivered directly by the developers rather than on a large scale by professionals not involved in the development of the approach. A two-arm design was chosen as it is an effective way to answer the primary research question.

Who can participate?
The target population for the intervention is young people aged 11-16 exhibiting a ‘secondary’ level of need (Children and Young People (CYP) at high risk of becoming involved in violent or

non-violent crime, based on the YEF eligibility triangle categorisation).
All CYP invited to take part in the trial will meet the criteria below:
• they will be permanently excluded from mainstream and/or have had three or more fixed term exclusions;
• they will have been identified by the provision as displaying challenging behaviour (this will usually be evidenced through the provision's behaviour management system);
• they will be at risk of offending due factors such as:
o be living in a neighbourhood with high levels of crime and socio-economic deprivation;
o have experience of trauma or higher number of adverse childhood experiences;
o have siblings, or be associated with peers, who are known to be involved with offending;
o have previously exhibited criminal behaviour or had involvement in youth justice services.

What does the study involve?
The study will involve CYP recruited from APs and PRUs to take part in the study. DRW coaches /mentors will talk CYP through the programme, the study design and support them with the assent process. All CYP who assent to take part in the study will complete a baseline questionnaire (SDQ and WEMWBS) and will subsequently be randomised into either the control group or the intervention group of the study. The DRW sports for development programme will then commence. Towards the end of the academic year CYP will be asked to complete a follow up questionnaire (SDQ and WEMWBS). CYP will also be invited to take part in interviews to feedback on their experiences of the intervention. Interviews with DRW coaches/mentors and school leads will also be conducted.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?
The aim of the RCT is to gather evidence on the effectiveness of DRW's sports for development intervention on outcomes for CYP and this is expected to have substantial social benefits for CYP, organisations such as youth offending services and children's social care services, and society more broadly. For CYP there are physiological and mental health benefits of taking part in a physical activity intervention which can also provide alternative choices to young people through raising aspirations; and, increasing young people's practical skills and self-control.
Our initial assessment is that the trial is low risk, where the level of risk is comparable to the risk of standard care (as evidenced by the fact that sport's interventions is one of the options utilized by pupil referral units). As such we do not propose employing formal stopping criteria, though potential risks and issues will be monitored on an ongoing basis.

Where is the study run from?
The intervention is delivered by DRW in Pupil Referral Units (PRUs), Alternative Provisions (APs) and mainstream schools where schools manage exclusion internally (EiM).

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?
June 2024 to April 2027.

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

Who is the main contact?
Dr Matt Barnard, Matt.Barnard@icf.com

Contact information

Type(s)

Scientific, Principal investigator

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Public

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Study information

Scientific Title
Dallaglio RugbyWorks (DRW) sports for development programme to reduce behavioural difficulties: a two-armed randomised controlled trial

Acronym
DRW RCT

Study objectives
The primary research question addressed by the efficacy trial will be: What is the impact of DRW sports for development programme (a sports-as-a-hook rugby programme focused on socio-emotional learning) on the behavioural difficulties of children and young people aged 11-16 years who are at risk of or involved in youth violence, gang activity, and/or crime as a perpetrator or victim compared to business as usual?

Ethics approval required
Ethics approval required

Ethics approval(s)

Approved 19/08/2024, ICF's Independent Research Ethics Committee (62 Threadneedle Street, London, EC2R 8HP, United Kingdom; +44 20 3096 4800; ethics.committee@icf.com), ref: 30303275

Primary study design
Interventional

Study design
Two-armed randomized controlled trial with random allocation at the individual level

Study type(s)
Efficacy

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied
Children and Young People aged 11 to 16 years old who have been permanently excluded from mainstream school and/or have had three or more fixed term exclusions and are at risk of being involved in youth violence, gang activity, and/or crime as a perpetrator or victim

Interventions
DRW is a 38-week (full academic year) sports-based programme that utilizes rugby and multi-sport as a tool to cultivate a positive, prosocial identity in young people aged 11 - 16 years at risk of offending and provides support in establishing and maintaining a relationship with a coach who guides them in setting future goals. The intervention involves four key sets of activities or support: Rugby-based learning, a Digital platform (which allows young people to assess their current skill set, identify and plan progression against a set of goals and access a range of relevant resources and support), Workshop-based learning, and mentoring.
Dallaglio aims to work with each young person for at least 4 hours per week. The split over the year is 50% physical activity linked to skill development, 30% structured workshops and 20% engagement with employers. The intervention is structured over the academic year with a different focus each half term.
The evaluation will be an efficacy trial run as a two-armed randomised controlled trial. Randomisation will occur at the level of the individual young person and allocation to intervention and control arms will be in the ratio of 1:1. The trial is defined as an efficacy trial as it is delivered directly by the developers rather than on a large scale by professionals not involved in the development of the approach. A two-arm design was chosen as it is an effective way to answer the primary research question and multi-arm trials require larger sample sizes, which was not felt to be feasible for the delivery organisation.

Recruitment and enrolment into the study will be undertaken by a DRW practitioner. Randomisation will take place at the start of the academic year, with the DRW practitioner meeting eligible young people within the provisions in groups, providing information about the trial, confirming eligibility, gaining consent to take part in the trial and supporting the young person to complete the baseline data collection via an online digital portal. The list of recruited young people will be shared with the ICF. The randomisation process will consist of the following steps:
1. At the start of the trial, the trial statistician will create a random order, stratified by provision and with varied block length (this will prevent manipulation of the randomisation mechanism). This random ordering will be used throughout the trial for randomisation. At the point of generating this random ordering, the trial statistician is blind to the identity of the young people (as this will take place prior to recruitment).

2. DRW practitioner will facilitate young people to complete the baseline data collection point. (having been trained on the data collection processes by ICF prior to the start of the trial).
3. The completed surveys will be returned to ICF who will then randomise the control and participating group. They will be randomised to the intervention or control group based on the chronological order in which their baseline data collection is complete, within their provision strata.
4. An ICF researcher will use the random ordering to identify the allocation of the young person and this will be shared with the practitioner.
5. The practitioner will then meet with the young person to inform them of the randomisation, confirming the result in an email or text message that also provides the £10 voucher, which is given as thanks to the young people in the trial.
6. The practitioner will explain again to the young people in the control group the process for maintaining contact and ensuring correct contact details are up-to-date and for young people in the intervention group, will provide information on the process for beginning the intervention.

Intervention Type
Behavioural

Primary outcome(s)
Behavioural difficulties as measured by the SDQ externalising score at baseline and 9 months

Key secondary outcome(s)
Measured at baseline and 9 months:
1. Wellbeing as measured by WEMWBS
2. Pro-social behaviour (as measured by the pro-social scale on the SDQ)
3. Emotional difficulties as measured by the SDQ internalising score
4. Fixed-term exclusions (based on school management information)
5. Attendance (based on school management information)

Completion date
30/04/2027

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria
The target population for the intervention is young people aged 11 - 16 years exhibiting a 'secondary' level of need (CYP at high risk of becoming involved in violent or non-violent crime, based on the YEF eligibility triangle categorisation).
In terms of eligibility, any young person who is attending a PRU will have been excluded from school and is therefore considered to be at high risk of becoming involved in violent or non-violent crime and is eligible to take part in the intervention. The nature of the structure of PRUs means that young people won't be 'referred' to the intervention, instead the whole cohort will be invited to take part in the trial.

In addition to recruiting from PRUs, CYP excluded in mainstream (EiM) will be recruited. These are CYP who are managed out with of the normal mainstream school experience in the following ways:
• in a separate building on the mainstream school site;
• in a suit of classrooms within the mainstream school;
• in the same classrooms pupils in "normal mainstream education" use but on separate timetables

Wherever they are based, all CYP invited to take part in the trial will meet the criteria below:
• they will be permanently excluded from mainstream and/or have had three or more fixed term exclusions;
• they will have been identified by the provision as displaying challenging behaviour (this will usually be evidenced through the provision's behaviour management system);
• they will be at risk of offending due factors such as:
o be living in a neighbourhood with high levels of crime and socio-economic deprivation;
o have experience of trauma or higher number of adverse childhood experiences;
o have siblings, or be associated with peers, who are known to be involved with offending;
o have previously exhibited criminal behaviour or had involvement in youth justice services.

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
945

Key exclusion criteria
The intervention has no specific exclusion criteria however the SDQ requires a minimum level of literacy and comprehension. DRW wll aim to support any young people with learning difficulties to complete the quesitonaire however if it becomes apparent that they are unable to complete the questionnaire this may lead to them being excluded. The SDQ is available in a range of languages, but based on DRW's experience, it is not anticipated than any CYP will require a version not in English.

Date of first enrolment
02/09/2024

Date of final enrolment
14/11/2025

Locations

Countries of recruitment
United Kingdom

England

Study participating centre
Dallaglio RugbyWorks
House of Sport
Marathon House
190 Great Dover Street
London
England
SE1 4YB

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 analysed during the current study will be stored in the Office of National Statistics data archive (https://www.data-archive.ac.uk/about/)

IPD sharing plan summary

Stored in publicly available repository

Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
Protocol (other)			18/02/2025	Yes	No