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Moves Different: Boxing to reduce youth offending

Submission date
12/02/2026

Recruitment status
Recruiting

Registration date
13/02/2026

Overall study status
Ongoing

Last Edited
13/02/2026

Condition category
Other

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

Plain English summary of protocol
Background and study aims:
Some young people face difficulties that increase their chances of becoming involved in crime or violence. These difficulties might include problems at school, difficult experiences at home, or spending time in unsafe environments. Across England and Wales, community sports programmes are often used to support young people by providing structure, physical activity, and positive adult role models. Boxing clubs are one example of this kind of support.
There is limited strong evidence about whether they actually reduce involvement in crime or improve young people's wellbeing. This study aims to find out how well a six-month boxing programme works, compared with access to a gym membership, in supporting young people who are at risk of involvement in crime or violence.
The study will first run a smaller pilot phase to check that the programme and research processes work well. It will then move into a larger phase to look more carefully at outcomes.

Who can participate?
Young people aged 13 to 18 years can take part in the study.
Participants are boys and girls who are considered by professionals (such as schools, youth workers or other services) to be at risk of involvement in crime or violence. This might include young people who have experienced school exclusion, challenging behaviour, difficult family circumstances, or other situations that increase risk.
Participation is voluntary. Young people, and parents or carers where required, must agree for the young person to take part in the study.

What does the study involve?
Young people who agree to take part are placed at random (by chance) into one of two groups. This means neither the young person nor the researchers choose which group they join. The first group is the boxing programme, where young people take part in a six-month boxing programme run by local community boxing clubs. The programme usually involves around two coached boxing sessions each week. Sessions are run in groups by trained coaches and focus on physical training, discipline, routine, respect, and positive role modelling. The second group is the gym membership group, where young people receive a time-limited gym membership during the study period. This allows them to use gym facilities for exercise.
All participants complete short questionnaires at the start of the study and again at the end of

the six-month programme. These ask about wellbeing, behaviour, emotions and relationships with others.
With permission, the research team will also use existing police records to look at arrests after the programme has finished.

Where is the study run from?
The boxing programme is delivered by community boxing clubs across England and Wales. These clubs are recruited and supported by England Boxing and Welsh Boxing, who act as umbrella organisations for programme delivery and recruitment.
The research is designed and managed by the Ending Youth Violence Lab at the Behavioural Insights Team, working in partnership with the Centre for Evidence and Implementation and ClearView Research.

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?
The study is expected to begin recruitment in 2026. Each young person takes part for six months. Information about arrests is collected for a period after the programme ends. Overall, as there will be multiple cycles of delivery, the study is expected to conclude in October 2028.

Who is funding the study?
The study is funded by the Youth Endowment Fund, an independent organisation that supports research into preventing violence among children and young people.

Who is the main contact?
For more information about the study, please contact Jack Martin from the research team at jack.martin@bi.team

Contact information

Type(s)
Public, Scientific

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Study information

Scientific Title
Moves Different: A randomised controlled trial (with internal pilot) of a six-month boxing programme compared with gym membership for young people aged 13–18 years at risk of involvement in crime and violence, assessing arrests and self-reported behavioural, emotional and social outcomes

Study objectives

Ethics approval required
Ethics approval required

Ethics approval(s)
Approved 14/10/2025, Ending Youth Violence Lab Independent Ethics Board (58 Victoria Embankment, Temple, London, EC4Y 0DS, United Kingdom; +44 7745116083; tom.mcbride@bi.team), ref: 3

Primary study design
Interventional

Allocation
Randomized controlled trial

Masking
Open (masking not used)

Control
Active

Assignment
Parallel

Purpose
Prevention, Treatment

Study type(s)

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied

Involvement in youth violence and crime (youth offending risk). The study targets adolescents who have one or more recognised risk factors for involvement in violence, offending, or related antisocial behaviour, and evaluates whether a structured boxing programme reduces offending and improves socio-emotional and behavioural outcomes.

Interventions

Randomisation approach: This is a two-arm, parallel-group randomised controlled trial comprising an internal pilot followed by an efficacy phase. Eligible participants are individually randomised (1:1) to one of two study arms. Participants are randomised at the individual level, stratified by site, by the independent research team.

Intervention arm: Participants receive a six-month boxing programme, delivered by participating boxing clubs. The programme typically includes two structured boxing sessions per week and incorporates coached physical training, discipline, routine, positive role modelling and informal mentoring. Sessions are delivered in group settings by trained coaches following a standardised curriculum.

Control arm: Participants receive time-limited gym memberships over the trial period, providing unfacilitated access to fitness facilities without structured coaching, mentoring or group-based programme elements.

Data collection approach: The primary outcome is assessed using administrative police data on arrests (six-months after programme completion, twelve-months after randomisation). For secondary outcomes, participants will complete validated self-report surveys at baseline and immediately post-intervention (six-months after randomisation).

Intervention Type

Behavioural

Primary outcome(s)

1. Offending measured using Local police data - A binary indicator of whether a child or young person has been arrested for an offence in the 12 months following randomisation. at 6 months after programme completion, 12 months after randomisation

Key secondary outcome(s)

1. Offending (self-reported) measured using Self-report survey - the Self-reported Delinquency Scale (SRDS) at Post-programme, 6 months after randomisation

2. Behavioural difficulties measured using Self-report survey - the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) at Post-programme, 6 months after randomisation

3. Self-esteem measured using Self-report survey - the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) at Post-programme, 6 months after randomisation

4. Self-control and emotional regulation measured using Self-report survey - the Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS) at Post-programme, 6 months after randomisation

5. Community connectedness measured using Self-report survey - the Sense of Community Index (SCI-2) at Post-programme, 6 months after randomisation

Completion date
31/10/2028

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria
1. Young people are eligible to participate in the study (and to receive the boxing intervention, should they be randomised to it) if they are in, or would be eligible to be in, academic years 9-13 at the point of referral.
2. Young people are eligible to participate in the study if one or more of the following characteristics apply:
2.1. CYPs have been excluded from school (two or more fixed term exclusions in the last 3 years or ever permanently excluded).
2.2. CYPs have been referred to alternative education provision (PRUs, other relevant educational settings)
2.3. CYP is identified as engaging in violent/challenging/antisocial behaviours at home, school, or in community.
2.4. CYP is known to associate with criminal peer groups/gangs.
2.5. CYP is known to engage in substance misuse.
2.6. CYP is known to have been exposed to domestic abuse in the home.
2.7. CYP is believed to be at risk of or currently experiencing criminal exploitation.
2.8. CYP has a sibling or close family member who has entered into the criminal justice system.
2.9. Referrer can produce a compelling justification (on other grounds) that they are at risk of involvement in crime, violence or antisocial behaviour. We will consider these on a case-by-case basis.

Healthy volunteers allowed
No

Age group
Mixed

Lower age limit
13 Years

Upper age limit
18 Years

Sex
All

Total final enrolment
0

Key exclusion criteria
1. They are planning to move out of the local area within the delivery timeframe (otherwise they' re likely to drop-out).
2. They are known to have participated in criminal/problematic sexual behaviour (because other services may be more appropriate).
3. They are assessed to be at immediate risk of harm to themselves or others, or are

experiencing active psychosis (because they would be unable to engage meaningfully and would be more appropriately supported by specialist services).
4. They have participated in structured boxing training or classes for an extended period of time (more than 8 sessions) in the past (because if participants aren't 'new learners', this will diminish our ability to demonstrate impact).
5. They are known to have active conflicts or rivalries with other boxers at their local club or other study participants (because this could pose a danger to them, other club members and to staff). This will be assessed as far as possible on a case-by-case basis, and if it is possible to deliver to such participants at nearby, separate clubs, then this rather than exclusion will be considered.

Date of first enrolment
02/02/2026

Date of final enrolment
01/08/2027

Locations

Countries of recruitment
United Kingdom

England

Wales

Study participating centre
England Boxing - Lead recruitment and co-ordinating centre for England
England Boxing
EIS Sheffield
Coleridge Road
Sheffield
England
S9 5DA

Study participating centre
Welsh Boxing - Lead recruitment and co-ordinating centre for Wales
Welsh Amateur Boxing Association
Sport Wales National Centre
Sophia Gardens
Cardiff
Wales
CF11 9SW

Sponsor information

Organisation
The Behavioural Insights Team

ROR
https://ror.org/03mk5b468

Funder(s)

Funder type

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
De-identified individual participant-level data generated and analysed during this study will be securely stored and archived in the Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) data archive, in line with ethical approvals, UK data protection legislation, and YEF data governance requirements.

The YEF archive is hosted within the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Secure Research Service (SRS). Identifying information is removed or pseudonymised prior to archiving, and data are stored in separate datasets to prevent direct identification of participants.

Access to data held in the YEF archive will be available only to approved researchers via the ONS Secure Research Service, following review and approval through the YEF's data access processes. Researchers must be ONS-accredited and demonstrate that proposed analyses are scientifically appropriate, ethically approved, and in the public interest. All outputs are subject to disclosure control checks prior to release.

Data will become available following publication of the main study findings and will be retained in the YEF archive for long-term research and archiving purposes, in accordance with YEF retention policies and periodic review.

IPD sharing plan summary

Stored in non-publicly available repository

Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
Protocol file	version 1.3	23/01/2026	13/02/2026	No	No