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Learning Together Mental Health: exploring the impact of a whole-school intervention on pupils' GCSE scores

Submission date
17/03/2026

Recruitment status
Recruiting

Registration date
18/03/2026

Overall study status
Ongoing

Last Edited
14/10/2026

Condition category
Mental and Behavioural Disorders

[_] 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
This evaluation assesses the efficacy of Learning Together Mental Health (LTMH), a whole-school, multicomponent intervention that aims to improve academic outcomes by fostering a better school climate. LTMH employs pupil-staff "action groups", restorative practices, and a menu of evidence-based interventions. As part of LTMH delivery, schools are provided with a pupil ‘needs assessment’ to inform what kind of support is needed in their setting. The programme builds on evidence from the promising INCLUSIVE programme, which provided the first robust evidence for the intervention. This new evaluation addresses the limitations of these previous studies, such as the prior insufficient power to have attainment as a primary outcome and issues relating to data matching.
The current evaluation involves:
1. An education impact evaluation: a cluster randomised trial that allows us to assess the impact of the programme on young people’s educational outcomes (Year 11 GCSE results) and the mechanisms through which these outcomes are achieved, including a complier average causal effect (CACE) analysis to establish whether there are differences in the impact of the programme at high and low levels of compliance.
2. A full implementation and process evaluation (IPE), to explore the implementation of the LTMH programme in participating schools
The impact evaluation and IPE are funded by the Education Endowment Fund and are delivered as a collaboration between Ipsos (IPE lead), Anna Freud (Education Impact Evaluation lead) and UCL (supporting the impact evaluation).
This project also provides a unified infrastructure for a second, complementary evaluation: a planned health evaluation by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM). The outcomes for the health evaluation, such as improved pupil wellbeing and mental health, are the same mechanisms hypothesised to drive the primary educational outcomes. Given this overlap, the education evaluation provides the infrastructure to administer the shared research instruments for both evaluations, which will minimise the burden on participating schools. The health evaluation will be registered as a separate trial, with different aims.

Who can participate?
State-funded, mainstream secondary schools in England can take part in the study. All young people in Year 7 in Spring 2026 in participating schools can participate in the impact evaluation. In addition, some staff at each participating school and the delivery teams will be invited to take part in the IPE.

What does the study involve?
The impact evaluation involves a cluster randomised control trial (RCT) to assess the impact of the LTMH programme on young people's educational outcomes and the mechanisms through which these outcomes are achieved. All pupils in Year 7 in 170 schools will be invited to take part in school in an online survey in Spring/Summer 2026. Schools will be randomly allocated to either the intervention or control group and notified of their allocation after baseline pupil measures are completed.
The online pupil survey will comprise a set of validated questionnaires, measuring feelings about school, friends, and self; mental health and wellbeing, bullying, eating habits, self-harm, substance use, and healthcare utilisation. Pupils will be invited to complete the same online survey in school again when they are in Year 10 (2029). Survey data will be linked to National Pupil Database (NPD) records, including Year 11 GCSE results (Attainment 8).
During the programme delivery period, the IPE will identify factors influencing successful implementation, explore impact mechanisms, and capture participants' experiences. The IPE will include annual usual practice surveys for completion by a nominated staff member in intervention and control schools; semi-structured interviews with a subset of school staff around usual practice; and an annual teacher survey in intervention schools to be completed by teachers involved in delivering the intervention; it will also draw on data routinely collected by the delivery team around attendance at training and implementation of actions groups (a key component of the intervention). In addition, the IPE will carry out case studies with 6 intervention schools. These case studies will include a strategic document review, training observations, post-training teacher focus groups, restorative practice trainer interviews, delivery partner interviews, Senior Leadership Team (SLT) interviews, action group observations, interviews with a small subset of pupils, focus groups with action group attendees, and a small number of classroom recordings.
A nested study is registered at https://www.isrctn.com/ISRCTN18103637

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?
Taking part in the evaluation is voluntary for all participants. The benefits of taking part in the study include making a contribution towards the educational evidence base and helping to improve understanding about the impact of Learning Together Mental Health on pupil outcomes, including academic attainment and pupil mental health and wellbeing. Participating schools will also get a financial incentive for taking part. While rare, for some individual participants there may be the risk of becoming upset about something while completing the surveys or interviews. Sources of support are shared with all participants to help them if this occurs.

Where is the study run from?
The education evaluation is being run by a team of researchers from Ipsos and Anna Freud, supported by UCL.

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?
March 2026 to December 2031

Who is funding the study?
Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) (UK)

Who is the main contact?
Prof. Jessica Deighton, Anna Freud and UCL

Contact information

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Principal investigator

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Study information

Scientific Title
Learning Together Mental Health: a randomised control trial to evaluate the impact of a whole-school intervention in secondary schools on educational attainment

Acronym
LTMH

Study objectives
This evaluation assesses the efficacy of Learning Together Mental Health (LTMH). The programme builds on evidence from the promising INCLUSIVE programme, which provided the first robust evidence for the intervention (Bonell et al., 2018; Wigelsworth et al., 2023). This new evaluation addresses the limitations of these previous studies, such as the prior insufficient power to have attainment as a primary outcome and issues relating to data matching.

The current evaluation involves:
1. An education impact evaluation: a cluster randomised trial that allows us to assess this impact of the programme on young people's educational outcomes (Year 11 GCSE results) and the mechanisms through which these outcomes are achieved, including a complier average causal effect (CACE) analysis to establish whether there are differences in the impact of the programme at high and low levels of compliance.
2. A full implementation and process evaluation (IPE), to explore the implementation of the LTMH programme in participating schools

Ethics approval required
Ethics approval required

Ethics approval(s)
Approved 12/12/2025, University College London Life and Medical Sciences Research Ethics Committee (Gower Street, London, WC1E 6BT, United Kingdom; +44 (0)20 7679 2000; ethics@ucl.ac.uk), ref: Project ID: 2018

Primary study design
Interventional

Allocation
Randomized controlled trial

Masking
Open (masking not used)

Control
Active

Assignment
Cluster

Purpose
Prevention

Study type(s)

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied
Educational attainment, mental health and wellbeing

Interventions
The impact evaluation involves a cluster randomised control trial (RCT) to assess the impact of the LTMH programme on young people's educational outcomes and the mechanisms through which these outcomes are achieved. All pupils in Year 7 in 170 schools will be invited to take part in school in an online survey in Spring/Summer 2026. Schools will be randomly allocated to either the intervention or control group and notified of their allocation after baseline pupil measures are completed.

Intervention:
Learning Together Mental Health (LTMH) is a whole-school, multicomponent intervention that aims to improve academic outcomes by fostering a better school climate. LTMH employs pupil-staff "action groups", restorative practices, and a menu of evidence-based interventions. As part of LTMH delivery, schools are provided with a pupil 'needs assessment' to inform what kind of support is needed in their setting. The programme is delivered over 3 years, with schools encouraged to continue implementation independently in a fourth year.

Control:
Business as usual

Intervention Type
Behavioural

Primary outcome(s)
1. Educational attainment (GCSE scores) in Year 11 measured using Attainment 8 (KS4_ATT8) sourced from the National Pupil Database (NPD) at Year 11 (endline)

Key secondary outcome(s)
1. GCSE Maths measured using GCSE Maths (KS4_APMAT) sourced from the National Pupil Database (NPD) at Year 11

2. GCSE English measured using GCSE English (KS4_APENG) sourced from the National Pupil Database (NPD) at Year 11

3. School attendance in Year 10 and Year 11 measured using school attendance in Year 10 and Year 11 (overallabsence_annual) sourced from the National Pupil Database (NPD) at Year 10 and Year 11

4. School exclusions in Year 10 and Year 11 measured using fixed term and permanent exclusions in Year 10 and Year 11 sourced from the National Pupil Database (NPD) at Year 10 and Year 11

Completion date
31/12/2031

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria
1. State funded, mainstream, secondary schools in England
2. Pupils in Year 7 in Spring 2026 will be eligible to take part in the impact evaluation

Healthy volunteers allowed
Yes

Age group
Mixed

Lower age limit
10 Years

Upper age limit
70 Years

Sex
All

Total final enrolment
0

Key exclusion criteria
1. Schools should not have taken part in the previous evaluation of LTMH
2. Schools not in England
3. Non-mainstream schools
4. Private schools

Date of first enrolment
02/03/2026

Date of final enrolment
31/10/2026

Locations

Countries of recruitment
United Kingdom

England

Study participating centre
To be confirmed
-
-
England
-

Sponsor information

Organisation
Education Endowment Foundation

ROR
https://ror.org/03bhd6288

Funder(s)

Funder type

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 and/or analysed during the current study will be stored in a publicly available repository. Approved researchers will be able to apply to use LTMH data, which will be held within the EEF archive hosted by the Secure Research Service (SRS) provided by the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

IPD sharing plan summary

Stored in publicly available repository

Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
Protocol file	version 1.0	02/06/2026	30/06/2026	No	No