

Evaluating the school-based 'Becoming a Man' (BAM) program in supporting the social and emotional development of adolescent boys in London secondary schools

Submission date 02/09/2026	Recruitment status Recruiting	☐ Prospectively registered ☒ Protocol
Registration date 16/09/2026	Overall study status Ongoing	☐ Statistical analysis plan ☐ Results
Last Edited 10/09/2026	Condition category Mental and Behavioural Disorders	☐ Individual participant data ☒ Record updated in last year

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims

Violent and aggressive behaviours among young people present a significant challenge in our communities. These behaviours are often rooted in difficult life circumstances like poverty, trauma, or discrimination, where children develop 'automatic' defensive reactions as basic survival instincts. This study evaluates a program called 'Becoming a Man' (BAM) to support young men navigating these high-stress environments. BAM is a school-based program that helps boys develop self-control, emotional expression, and responsible decision-making. The aim of this study is to see if a one-year adapted version of the BAM program can effectively reduce behavioral difficulties and prevent boys from getting into trouble or being arrested.

Who can participate?

Participants are adolescent boys in Academic Years 8 to 10 (typically aged 12 to 15 years) attending participating mainstream secondary schools across Greater London. The program actively recruits a balanced mix of needs (15% thriving, 70% facing some challenges, and 15% in or approaching crisis) based on their risk of being involved in youth violence. Boys cannot participate if they are already in intensive counselling, plan to move away, have severe developmental delays, or have extreme absenteeism.

What does the study involve?

Referred boys who provide parent and personal consent are randomly assigned (by chance, like flipping a coin) into one of two groups. The treatment group receives the 'Becoming a Man' program. This consists of: weekly hour-long group sessions called 'BAM Circles' (27 total) held during school time; 6 after-school activities; brief informal check-ins; and one-to-one counselling support for those with higher needs. The control group receives normal school provision (known as 'Business as Usual'), which usually includes standard health and resilience classes (PSHE) and existing school services. All participating boys complete personal surveys at the start of the program, at the end of the school year, and 4 months later. The surveys measure things like self-esteem, self-control, emotional regulation, and behaviors. We also link study data to school

records (to check attendance and exclusions) and local police records (to track arrests) for up to 1.5 to 2 years.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?

Participants in the BAM program may benefit from improved self-control, empathy, self-esteem, and social skills, which can lead to better school bonding and lower risks of exclusion. There are no major risks to participating. Some survey questions ask about sensitive topics (such as behavior or experiences of discrimination), which might make some boys feel uncomfortable. All surveys are private, completed with support from trained researchers, and boys can take breaks or skip questions whenever they want.

Where is the study run from?

The trial is run from the Ending Youth Violence Lab (the evaluator) in partnership with the London Borough of Islington (Young Islington Service, the delivery partner) and mainstream secondary schools in Greater London.

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

The study starts with a preparation phase in March 2026. Recruitment and delivery begin in mainstream schools in September 2026. The full evaluation (including long-term data collection from school and police records) will run until November 2030.

Who is funding the study?

The study is funded by the Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) in the United Kingdom.

Who is the main contact?

For more information about the study, please contact Lilli Wagstaff from the research team at lilli.wagstaff@bi.team

Contact information

Type(s)

Principal investigator

Contact name

Mr Tom McBride

ORCID ID

<https://orcid.org/0009-0003-0660-5035>

Contact details

Behavioural Insights Team, 58 Victoria Embankment, Temple
London
United Kingdom
EC4Y 0DS
+44 7745116083
tom.mcbride@bi.team

Type(s)

Public, Scientific

Contact name

Ms Lilli Wagstaff

ORCID ID

<https://orcid.org/0009-0005-9194-5118>

Contact details

Behavioural Insights Team, 58 Victoria Embankment, Temple
London
United Kingdom
EC4Y 0DS
+44 7745116083
lilli.wagstaff@bi.team

Additional identifiers

Study information

Scientific Title

A school-based, two-armed individual-level randomised controlled trial evaluating the efficacy of the one-year adapted 'Becoming a Man' (BAM) cognitive-behavioural group intervention compared to business as usual school provision in reducing behavioural difficulties among adolescent boys aged 12 to 15 in mainstream secondary schools across London

Acronym

BAM UK

Study objectives

1. To evaluate if a one-year adapted school-based social and emotional learning program (BAM) reduces behavioral difficulties at post-intervention (T1) relative to BAU
2. To determine if the intervention reduces police arrests and offending behavior within 18 months following randomisation (T3)
3. To explore the mechanisms of change (self-regulation, emotional control, self-esteem) and their flow into medium-term school attendance and exclusion gains
4. To assess program feasibility, deliverability, and stakeholder acceptability during an internal pilot phase

Ethics approval required

Ethics approval required

Ethics approval(s)

1. Approved 26/08/2026, Ending Youth Violence Lab Independent Ethics Board (58 Victoria Embankment, Temple, London, EC4Y 0DS, United Kingdom; +44 7745116083; tom.mcbride@bi.team), ref: 5
2. Submitted 02/09/2026, London Borough Islington Engagement & Research (222 Upper Street, London, N1 1XR, United Kingdom; +44 20 7527 4498; engagement@islington.gov.uk), ref: none

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**

Adolescent male social-emotional support needs, emotional dysregulation, behavioral difficulties (specifically conduct issues and hyperactivity), risk of school exclusion, and vulnerability to criminal justice involvement or youth violence.

Interventions

Active Intervention Arm: Becoming a Man (BAM) 1-Year Adapted Curriculum

Intervention & Curriculum: A selective, group-based social and emotional learning (SEL) intervention centering on six core values: Integrity, Accountability, Self-Determination, Positive Anger Expression, Respect for Womanhood, and Visionary Goal Setting. The traditionally two-year Chicago curriculum is condensed into a one-year model based on the 25-lesson London 'BAMual' manual.

Delivery & Administration: Delivered in mainstream secondary schools by full-time, embedded, relatable male BAM Counsellors holding QCF-6 level qualifications. Delivery involves six primary activities:

1. BAM Circles: Structured weekly school-day group sessions of 8–12 participants
2. After-School Activities: Monthly sessions reinforcing each core value
3. Special Activities: Extra-curricular outings (e.g. affirmation trips, university visits, football league)
4. Brief Encounters: Informal, ad-hoc individual check-ins (<15 minutes) in hallways or playgrounds
5. 1-to-1 Support: Formally scheduled 30-minute counselling sessions for higher-need participants
6. Other Proactive Activities: In-school re-engagement and crisis support following suspensions or behavioral incidents

Dosage: Delivered over one school year, including 27 one-hour BAM Circle sessions during the school day, 6 after-school value-consolidation sessions, and brief encounters targeted at once per month per participant

Materials: The 25-lesson "BAMual" curriculum manual, boxing mitts, balls for group exercises, video education (such as Jordan to the Max), and emoji cards for reflection

Control Comparator Arm: Business as Usual (BAU)

Comparison: Control group participants receive standard school services to serve as a comparator

How it is administered: Delivered by regular school staff or existing school partners

Content: Support is typically based on the statutory Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education curriculum. It is delivered through discrete lessons, assemblies, and external partnerships with support organizations (such as Football Beyond Borders, Kooth, or Place2Be) designed to equip students with resilience and modern life skills.

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 either the BAM intervention group or the BAU control group. Participants are randomised at the individual student level, stratified by school and baseline Holistic Student Assessment (HSA) tiers to guarantee balanced group dynamics and facilitate mixed-tier delivery. Randomisation and allocation to groups is programmatically executed by the independent research team at the Ending Youth Violence Lab using a random number generator in Stata, linked to each young person's Unique Pupil Number (UPN).

Data collection approach:

All participants (active and control arms) are tracked across several key data collection points:

1. Surveys: Validated self-report survey measures are completed by participants in groups in person at baseline (prior to randomisation), post-programme (approximately 9 to 10 months post-randomisation), and at a 4-month follow-up (approximately 13 months post-randomisation).
2. Local Police Records: Administrative local police arrest data is securely linked and analyzed to track offending outcomes at 18 months post-randomisation.
3. School Records: School-level administrative data is extracted to assess percentage attendance and a combined binary indicator of exclusions, suspensions, and school transfers at 21 months post-randomisation.

Intervention Type

Behavioural

Primary outcome(s)

1. Behavioural Difficulties (High-risk Subgroup - boys assessed at baseline as having upper-secondary or tertiary levels of need) measured using Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) - Self-Report Total Score (0–40, calculated by summing the conduct, hyperactivity, emotional, and peer subscales) at T1 (Post-programme, approximately 9–10 months post-randomisation - main analysis point)

Key secondary outcome(s)

1. Offending / Arrests (High-risk Subgroup - boys assessed at baseline as having upper-secondary or tertiary levels of need) measured using administrative local police record linkage tracking a binary indicator of arrest (no arrests = 0, one or more arrests = 1), arrest counts, offence dates, offence types, and police-recorded outcomes at T3 (18 months post-randomisation - main analysis point).

2. Behavioural Difficulties (Full Cohort) measured using Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) - Self-Report Total Score (0–40, excluding the prosocial scale) at T1 (Post-programme - main analysis point)
3. Social Skills (Full Cohort) measured using Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) Prosocial subscale score (ranging from 0 to 10) at T1 (Post-programme - main analysis point)
4. Externalising Behaviours (Full Cohort): measured using Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) Externalising Problems scale (a combined score of the conduct and hyperactivity subscales, ranging from 0 to 20) at T1 (Post-programme - main analysis point)
5. Self-Esteem (Full Cohort) measured using Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) - Self-report total score (ranging from 0 to 30, with higher scores indicating higher self-esteem) at T1 (Post-programme - main analysis point)
6. Self-Control and Emotional Regulation (Full Cohort) measured using Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS) - Self-report total score (ranging from 36 to 180, where higher scores indicate greater emotional regulation difficulties) at T1 (Post-programme - main analysis point)
7. School Attendance (Full Cohort) measured using School-level administrative attendance records to calculate percentage attendance at T4 (21 months post-randomisation - main analysis point)
8. School Exclusions, Suspensions, and Transfers (Full Cohort) measured using School-level administrative records compiled into a combined binary indicator capturing whether a participant faced any exclusion, suspension, or school transfer (faced any event = 1, 0 otherwise) at T4 (21 months post-randomisation - main analysis point)
9. Offending (Full Cohort) measured using Administrative local police record linkage tracking a binary indicator of arrest (no arrests = 0, one or more arrests = 1) at T3 (18 months post-randomisation - main analysis point).
10. Perceptions of Gender Norms and Stereotypes (Full Cohort) measured using Global Early Adolescent Study Gender Stereotypical Traits Scale self-report total score at T1 (Post-programme - main analysis point)

Completion date

31/12/2030

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria

1. Gender & Academic Year: Biological male in academic years 8 to 10 (aged 12 to 15 years)
2. Consent: Explicit written parental consent and young person assent for both intervention and evaluation (including data linkage and archiving)
3. School Setting: Attending participating mainstream secondary schools in Greater London.
4. Level of Need (at least one of the following tiers):
 - Lower Secondary Need: Flagged by staff as needing behavioral or wellbeing support, infrequent disruptive behavior, or temporary emotional academic dip
 - Upper Secondary Need: History of 1+ fixed-term exclusions, serious peer/behavioral conflicts, gang vulnerability/affiliation, substance misuse, criminal exploitation risk, or close family CJS

involvement

- Tertiary Need: Previous arrest with warning/caution, diversion/out-of-court disposal, or receiving Youth Offending Team (YOT) support

Healthy volunteers allowed

No

Age group

Child

Lower age limit

12 Years

Upper age limit

15 Years

Sex

Male

Total final enrolment

0

Key exclusion criteria

1. Current Therapy: Already participating in intensive individual counselling, psychotherapy, or intense socio-emotional training outside the school setting
2. Planned Relocation: Planning to relocate outside of the local delivery area within the school year
3. Cognitive/Developmental Delay: Severe developmental delay which prevents active participation or ability to engage in abstract thinking
4. Absenteeism: Severe baseline chronic absenteeism in the previous school year (such that school attendance is practically non-existent)
5. Safety Risks: Actively homicidal
6. Clinical Crises: Actively suicidal or experiencing active psychosis

Date of first enrolment

03/09/2026

Date of final enrolment

20/10/2028

Locations

Countries of recruitment

United Kingdom

England

Study participating centre

London Borough of Islington

Young Islington Service, Children's Services
222 Upper Street
London
England
N1 1XR

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

Available on request, Stored in non-publicly available repository

Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
Protocol file	version 4		03/09/2026	No	No