

# A school-based, peer-led programme to increase physical activity among 13- to 14-year-old adolescents: the GoActive cluster RCT

Kirsten L Corder,<sup>1</sup> Helen E Brown,<sup>1</sup>  
Caroline HD Croxson,<sup>2</sup> Stephanie T Jong,<sup>1</sup>  
Stephen J Sharp,<sup>1</sup> Anna Vignoles,<sup>3</sup>  
Paul O Wilkinson,<sup>4,5</sup> Edward CF Wilson<sup>6,7</sup>  
and Esther MF van Sluijs<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Centre for Diet and Activity Research and MRC Epidemiology Unit, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK

<sup>2</sup>Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK

<sup>3</sup>Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK

<sup>4</sup>Department of Psychiatry, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK

<sup>5</sup>Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust, Cambridge, UK

<sup>6</sup>Cambridge Centre for Health Services Research, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK

<sup>7</sup>Health Economics Group, Norwich Medical School, University of East Anglia, Norwich, UK

\*Corresponding author [esther.vansluijs@mrc-epid.cam.ac.uk](mailto:esther.vansluijs@mrc-epid.cam.ac.uk)

**Declared competing interests of authors:** Anna Vignoles reports funding from the Medical Research Council (London, UK) during the conduct of the study.

Published April 2021

DOI: 10.3310/phr09060

## Plain English summary

### GoActive cluster RCT

Public Health Research 2021; Vol. 9: No. 6

DOI: 10.3310/phr09060

NIHR Journals Library [www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk](http://www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk)

## Plain English summary

**F**ew teenagers do enough physical activity, with physical activity levels dropping during teenage years. Low physical activity levels are linked to poorer physical and mental health.

The Get Others Active (GoActive) programme was created with input from teachers and students. It was designed so that older teenagers (mentors) could run the activities, instead of needing teacher time. Sixteen secondary state schools (a total of 2862 13- to 14-year-old students in Year 9) across Cambridgeshire and Essex, UK, took part. Eight schools ran the GoActive programme (intervention schools) and eight schools continued with their usual school activities (controls). All teenagers were asked to wear an activity monitor at the start and end of the programme. They also completed questionnaires about their height, weight and well-being, and reported on their experiences in questionnaires and during interviews.

Overall, 84.1% of Year 9 students in the participating schools agreed to take part. Classes chose two activities each week from a selection provided. Older teenagers and in-class peer leaders encouraged students to try new activities. Students gained points for trying new activities and these points were entered into the GoActive website to win small prizes. Most students completed the questionnaires and provided information about their height and weight, and 65% of students wore the activity monitor at our final measurement.

The teenagers who participated in the GoActive programme were as physically active as those who followed the normal school curriculum. There was some indication that teenagers from disadvantaged backgrounds may have benefited more. The average cost of running GoActive was £13.06 per Year 9 pupil, which was not cost-effective. As schools did not run the programme in the same way as planned, we cannot be certain that the GoActive programme does not increase physical activity if run as intended. Researchers should work closely with schools and pupils to help them to develop and test their own ideas to increase activity.

# Public Health Research

ISSN 2050-4381 (Print)

ISSN 2050-439X (Online)

This journal is a member of and subscribes to the principles of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) ([www.publicationethics.org/](http://www.publicationethics.org/)).

Editorial contact: [journals.library@nihr.ac.uk](mailto:journals.library@nihr.ac.uk)

The full PHR archive is freely available to view online at [www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk/phr](http://www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk/phr). Print-on-demand copies can be purchased from the report pages of the NIHR Journals Library website: [www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk](http://www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk)

## Criteria for inclusion in the *Public Health Research* journal

Reports are published in *Public Health Research* (PHR) if (1) they have resulted from work for the PHR programme, and (2) they are of a sufficiently high scientific quality as assessed by the reviewers and editors.

Reviews in *Public Health Research* are termed 'systematic' when the account of the search appraisal and synthesis methods (to minimise biases and random errors) would, in theory, permit the replication of the review by others.

## PHR programme

The Public Health Research (PHR) programme, part of the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR), is the leading UK funder of public health research, evaluating public health interventions, providing new knowledge on the benefits, costs, acceptability and wider impacts of non-NHS interventions intended to improve the health of the public and reduce inequalities in health. The scope of the programme is multi-disciplinary and broad, covering a range of interventions that improve public health.

For more information about the PHR programme please visit the website: <https://www.nihr.ac.uk/explore-nihr/funding-programmes/public-health-research.htm>

## This report

The research reported in this issue of the journal was funded by the PHR programme as project number 13/90/18. The contractual start date was in September 2015. The final report began editorial review in March 2020 and was accepted for publication in November 2020. The authors have been wholly responsible for all data collection, analysis and interpretation, and for writing up their work. The PHR editors and production house have tried to ensure the accuracy of the authors' report and would like to thank the reviewers for their constructive comments on the final report document. However, they do not accept liability for damages or losses arising from material published in this report.

This report presents independent research funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). The views and opinions expressed by authors in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the NHS, the NIHR, NETSCC, the PHR programme or the Department of Health and Social Care. If there are verbatim quotations included in this publication the views and opinions expressed by the interviewees are those of the interviewees and do not necessarily reflect those of the authors, those of the NHS, the NIHR, NETSCC, the PHR programme or the Department of Health and Social Care.

© Queen's Printer and Controller of HMSO 2021. This work was produced by Corder *et al.* under the terms of a commissioning contract issued by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care. This issue may be freely reproduced for the purposes of private research and study and extracts (or indeed, the full report) may be included in professional journals provided that suitable acknowledgement is made and the reproduction is not associated with any form of advertising. Applications for commercial reproduction should be addressed to: NIHR Journals Library, National Institute for Health Research, Evaluation, Trials and Studies Coordinating Centre, Alpha House, University of Southampton Science Park, Southampton SO16 7NS, UK.

Published by the NIHR Journals Library ([www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk](http://www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk)), produced by Prepress Projects Ltd, Perth, Scotland ([www.prepress-projects.co.uk](http://www.prepress-projects.co.uk)).

## NIHR Journals Library Editor-in-Chief

---

**Professor Ken Stein** Professor of Public Health, University of Exeter Medical School, UK

## NIHR Journals Library Editors

---

**Professor John Powell** Chair of HTA and EME Editorial Board and Editor-in-Chief of HTA and EME journals. Consultant Clinical Adviser, National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), UK, and Professor of Digital Health Care, Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences, University of Oxford, UK

**Professor Andrée Le May** Chair of NIHR Journals Library Editorial Group (HS&DR, PGfAR, PHR journals) and Editor-in-Chief of HS&DR, PGfAR, PHR journals

**Professor Matthias Beck** Professor of Management, Cork University Business School, Department of Management and Marketing, University College Cork, Ireland

**Dr Tessa Crilly** Director, Crystal Blue Consulting Ltd, UK

**Dr Eugenia Cronin** Senior Scientific Advisor, Wessex Institute, UK

**Dr Peter Davidson** Consultant Advisor, Wessex Institute, University of Southampton, UK

**Ms Tara Lamont** Senior Scientific Adviser (Evidence Use), Wessex Institute, University of Southampton, UK

**Dr Catriona McDaid** Senior Research Fellow, York Trials Unit, Department of Health Sciences, University of York, UK

**Professor William McGuire** Professor of Child Health, Hull York Medical School, University of York, UK

**Professor Geoffrey Meads** Emeritus Professor of Wellbeing Research, University of Winchester, UK

**Professor James Raftery** Professor of Health Technology Assessment, Wessex Institute, Faculty of Medicine, University of Southampton, UK

**Dr Rob Riemsma** Reviews Manager, Kleijnen Systematic Reviews Ltd, UK

**Professor Helen Roberts** Professor of Child Health Research, UCL Great Ormond Street Institute of Child Health, UK

**Professor Jonathan Ross** Professor of Sexual Health and HIV, University Hospital Birmingham, UK

**Professor Helen Snooks** Professor of Health Services Research, Institute of Life Science, College of Medicine, Swansea University, UK

**Professor Ken Stein** Professor of Public Health, University of Exeter Medical School, UK

**Professor Jim Thornton** Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, University of Nottingham, UK

Please visit the website for a list of editors: [www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk/about/editors](http://www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk/about/editors)

**Editorial contact:** [journals.library@nihr.ac.uk](mailto:journals.library@nihr.ac.uk)