



## Research Article

# Public engagement to refine a whole-school intervention to promote adolescent mental health

Chris Bonell,<sup>1\*</sup> Steven Hope,<sup>2</sup> Neisha Sundaram,<sup>1</sup> Oliver Lloyd-Houldey,<sup>2</sup> Semina Michalopoulou,<sup>2</sup> Stephen Scott,<sup>3</sup> Dasha Nicholls<sup>4</sup> and Russell Viner<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, Department of Public Health, Environments and Society, London, UK

<sup>2</sup>Population Policy and Practice Research and Teaching Department, UCL Great Ormond Street Institute of Child Health, London, UK

<sup>3</sup>Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology and Neuroscience, King's College London, London, UK

<sup>4</sup>Division of Psychiatry, Imperial College London, London, UK

\*Corresponding author [chris.bonell@lshtm.ac.uk](mailto:chris.bonell@lshtm.ac.uk)

Published December 2024

DOI: 10.3310/JWGT4863

## Plain language summary

Public engagement to refine a whole-school intervention to promote adolescent mental health

Public Health Research 2026; Vol. 14: No. 1

DOI: 10.3310/JWGT4863

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

## Plain language summary

Many teenagers in the UK suffer from mental health problems. Schools can help in responding to and preventing these problems. Schools can prevent these problems by implementing multiple activities that all aim to change how the school runs and relationships within the school. We previously evaluated an intervention called Learning Together, which used this approach to prevent bullying in English secondary schools. It asked students about their needs. It involved students and staff in decision-making. It trained teachers so they could address bullying and conflict by focusing on repairing relationships and not just punishing perpetrators. It taught students social and emotional skills. As well as being effective in preventing bullying, it also improved students' mental health. In the present study, we adapted Learning Together to increase its focus on mental health, calling the new intervention Learning Together for Mental Health. To refine the components of Learning Together for Learning Together for Mental Health we did several things. We reviewed existing research to identify the best ways to promote mental health. We also worked with the staff and students from one secondary school, senior leaders from various schools, and members from a group for children and young people in England. We did this to inform how we developed Learning Together for Mental Health so that it would be possible to implement in schools and acceptable to staff and students. Advice from teachers, students, children and young people helped make the intervention more practical, acceptable, and inclusive, but not all suggestions could be taken on board. We look forward next to trying out this intervention in schools to check whether it is feasible and see how it can be further improved.