



## Synopsis

# Learning together to promote mental health and well-being in English secondary schools: LTMH study refinement and feasibility evaluation, a comprehensive synopsis

Oliver Lloyd-Houldey,<sup>1</sup> Neisha Sundaram,<sup>2</sup> Semina Michalopoulou,<sup>1</sup>  
Joanna Sturgess,<sup>3</sup> Rosa Legood,<sup>4</sup> Oliver Carlile,<sup>4</sup> Elizabeth Allen,<sup>3</sup>  
Stephen Scott,<sup>5</sup> Dasha Nicholls,<sup>6</sup> Steven Hope,<sup>1</sup> Lee Hudson,<sup>1</sup>  
Deborah Christie,<sup>7</sup> Andrew Briggs,<sup>4</sup> Russell Viner<sup>1</sup> and Chris Bonell<sup>2\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Population Policy and Practice Research and Teaching Department, UCL Great Ormond Street Institute of Child Health, London, UK

<sup>2</sup>Department of Public Health, Environments and Society, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, London, UK

<sup>3</sup>Department of Medical Statistics, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, London, UK

<sup>4</sup>Department of Health Services Research and Policy, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, London, UK

<sup>5</sup>Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology and Neuroscience, King's College London, London, UK

<sup>6</sup>Division of Psychiatry, Imperial College London, London, UK

<sup>7</sup>Department of Behavioural Science and Health Institute of Epidemiology and Health Care, University College London, London, UK

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

Published January 2026  
DOI: 10.3310/PFHR4141

## Plain language summary

Learning together to promote mental health and well-being in English secondary schools: LTMH study refinement and feasibility evaluation, a comprehensive synopsis

Public Health Research 2026; Vol. 14: No. 1  
DOI: 10.3310/PFHR4141

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

## Plain language summary

Mental health disorders are common among young people, but there are few effective interventions provided in schools to address this that go beyond teaching about mental health in lessons. Some that do are called 'whole-school' interventions. They offer a practical and sustainable way of promoting mental health. We previously evaluated an intervention called 'Learning Together'. Learning Together provided a report for schools on bullying and school experiences of students. Also, it enabled schools to form 'action groups', comprising students and staff who worked together to review this report and plan how the school should respond. Teachers were trained to use restorative practice to address bullying, misbehaviour or conflict. Restorative practice responds to incidents by staff facilitating meetings between those affected, identifying harms, ensuring perpetrators take responsibility and improving the relationship of those involved. Moreover, schools delivered lessons aiming to promote students' social and emotional skills. We found that Learning Together reduced bullying and improved students' mental health. In the present study, we adapted Learning Together to develop Learning Together Mental Health. This new intervention included a 'menu' of evidence-based actions for action groups to choose from to address student mental health needs. It also featured an improved social and emotional learning curriculum. This paper reports on whether the intervention and evaluation methods proved feasible and acceptable in a small study involving four secondary schools in southern England. The intervention was successfully adapted from the previous intervention. Staff training was well delivered. We had good response rates when we surveyed students before and after the intervention. Schools delivered the intervention well enough to meet the targets we set ourselves. Students and staff who were involved in intervention activities thought that it was a good way to promote mental health. With some refinements, Learning Together for Mental Health is ready to be evaluated in a larger study to assess its effectiveness.

# Public Health Research

ISSN 2050-439X (Online)

A list of Journals Library editors can be found on the [NIHR Journals Library website](#)

*Public Health Research* (PHR) was launched in 2013 and is indexed by Europe PMC, NCBI Bookshelf, DOAJ, INAHTA, Ulrichsweb™ (ProQuest LLC, Ann Arbor, MI, USA) and MEDLINE.

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).

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

Manuscripts 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 and Care 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 article

The research reported in this issue of the journal was funded by the PHR programme as award number NIHR131594. The contractual start date was in November 2021. The draft manuscript began editorial review in August 2024 and was accepted for publication in March 2025. 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' manuscript and would like to thank the reviewers for their constructive comments on the draft document. However, they do not accept liability for damages or losses arising from material published in this article.

This article presents independent research funded by the National Institute for Health and Care 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, 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, the PHR programme or the Department of Health and Social Care.

This article was published based on current knowledge at the time and date of publication. NIHR is committed to being inclusive and will continually monitor best practice and guidance in relation to terminology and language to ensure that we remain relevant to our stakeholders.

Copyright © 2026 Lloyd-Houldey *et al.* This work was produced by Lloyd-Houldey *et al.* under the terms of a commissioning contract issued by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care. This is an Open Access publication distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution CC BY 4.0 licence, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, reproduction and adaptation in any medium and for any purpose provided that it is properly attributed. See: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>. For attribution the title, original author(s), the publication source – NIHR Journals Library, and the DOI of the publication must be cited.

Published by the NIHR Journals Library ([www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk](http://www.journalslibrary.nihr.ac.uk)), produced by Newgen Digitalworks Pvt Ltd, Chennai, India ([www.newgen.co](http://www.newgen.co)).