



What is the 'READY Trial'?

May 2023

YOUNG
healthwatch
Central Bedfordshire

Content...



Introduction P3

What did the study involve? P4

Our involvement P5

Outcome P6

Next steps P7

Feedback from the Young Healthwatch volunteers P8

It Starts With You P10

About Young Healthwatch P11

Introduction

The READY Trial¹ was a study carried out in the Southeast of England by the University of Hertfordshire covering areas across Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, and Norfolk. Its purpose was to investigate the correlation between acute-medium depression, or low mood, and physical activity in young people (aged between 13 years old and 17 years old). This is because, whilst there are countless studies into the effects of physical activity on adults with depression, there are very few that investigate the same in young people.

Depression is defined as, 'a mood disorder where you feel very down all the time. It is one of the most common types of mental illness'²

The study was funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Health Technology Assessment.



Young Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire volunteers all set for the start of the 'Ready Trial'

¹ Ready Trial – The Ready Trial Study

² For Young People – Ready Trial, 'What is Depression?'

What did the study involve?

The study was conducted in three phases over 56 months, as detailed below:

1. In the first feasibility phase (18 months), the aim was to speak to 81 young people from Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, and Norfolk to test methods of recruitment, attendance and exercise achieved.
2. The pilot phase followed over the next eight months with the aim of speaking to 150 young people. This phase tested intervention and the study design.
3. The main Trial followed over the final 30 months with the aim of reaching 130 young people in each area. This tested effectiveness and cost effectiveness.

In the recruitment process for Trial participants, parents, and doctors, having sight of the advertising, signed their children/ patients up to the Trial. After each child was assessed according to the required criteria, the Trial began.

First each child was randomly assigned to one of three groups, as follows:

1. High intensity activity such as football or running.
2. Low intensity activity such as walking or yoga.
3. A control group which would take part in social activities such as board games or arts and crafts.

All were offered two 60-minute exercise sessions per week for 12 weeks.

Information was collected in week one, at 14 weeks and 26 weeks. Each young person then completed an individual survey, which tracked mood, and any improvement in their symptoms. These surveys were then used to work out if physical activity really had an effect on low mood and depression, or whether it is simply the social activity that causes improvements.



Young Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire volunteers receiving their certificate of attendance

Our Involvement

Over the course of the last four years, Young Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire volunteers (YHW) were given the opportunity to be involved in a Young People's Advisory Group (YPAG)³ as part of the Ready Trial; an opportunity which many of our young people took advantage of.

The purpose of the YPAG is to involve young people and their families throughout the research process, to ensure that the research being undertaken is relevant to, and informed by, young people.

Meetings began in November 2019 and the young people were asked to create logos and advertising ideas for the project, to encourage young people to take part in the Trial. Regular meetings were subsequently held with the YPAG to continually improve the Trial running alongside the feasibility, pilot and main Trial.

Number of meetings attended

Over the course of the READY Trial, 46 young people attended at least one of the YPAG meetings, with many attending multiple meetings over the four-year period. Additionally, 10 youth leaders and 12 READY Trial team members have also attended the meetings. Over the past four years, 12 YPAG meetings were held in total, either in-person, online, or hybrid.

What took place in the meetings?

All the READY Trial meetings consisted of an agenda and strict timetable which was regularly adhered to. YPAG members were able to get to know not only the members of their own group better, it also gave them the opportunity to meet with people outside of their typical scope.



Young Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire volunteers listening to a READY Trial lead researcher update the group

³ Young People's Advisory Group (YPAG) – Ready Trial



Outcome

Due to low numbers of participants in the Trial, a decision was taken to hold a final READY Trial YPAG meeting, which took place in March 2023. However, although this was earlier than anticipated, many valuable lessons have been learnt and will be used in any future studies.

The Trial ended prematurely as not enough participants were involved to yield the results needed to continue. The Trial recruited 14 young people in total; the target was set at 81. Although all three groups within the Trial took place ('High Intensity', 'Low Intensity' and 'Social Control'), the size of the groups were not as predicted (e.g., only one person was in the High Intensity group due to the randomisation of the group allocation).

Reasons for the low number of participants was due in part to the ongoing pandemic at the time the Trial began, which affected young people's attitude to venturing outside or getting physically involved with other people. Other reasons were related to the young people who were nominated for participation, who either did not fit the criteria, could not make it to the chosen venue, or did not like the group they were placed in.

In addition, the Trial also encountered challenges relating to the mental health checks that needed to be made at the start of the session. Some of the venues did not have anywhere private for the checks to be properly carried out within the capacity the Trial needed.



Young Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire volunteers join other young volunteers as part of the YPAG group



Next Steps

The READY Trial team is now preparing their report which will illustrate the results from the Trial, and these will be shared with the participants, researchers, and others who supported the Trial.

The research team are also planning to continue with other projects involving young people and their mental health. For example, developing a project looking into young people and Internet addictions, and other projects researching concerns younger people currently face. They also hope to involve the YPAG once again to gain their insights and advice on future projects.



Feedback from the Young Healthwatch volunteers

Some of the Young Healthwatch volunteers have shared their thoughts on being involved in the YPAG group, as follows:

"Being part of the YPAG has enabled me to feel heard when I voice my opinion. I never felt stupid for asking a question or making a point that might not be correct and because of this my confidence has skyrocketed. It was nice to be in a position in which my voice was not only heard but acted upon. The YPAG leaders did not receive our feedback and do whatever they wanted regardless; they built their project around what we had suggested to them. The time I spend volunteering is also useful as it looks good on a CV or personal statement."

Izzy

"Whilst it is a shame that the READY Trial is ending, as a member of the YPAG I believe I have gained many skills and learnt many lessons along the way. Not only has it been great meeting new volunteers from around the country, but it has also been incredible talking and listening to many of the mental health experts, as well as my peers. I have learnt so much about the process of advertising, organising and carrying out an investigation, in addition to learning more about myself and a possible future career path. I am so grateful and proud to have been a part of the READY Trial YPAG."

Liam

"By being in the YPAG, I learned more about young people's mental health and contributing factors that go into how a young person might develop low mood or depression. I also learnt more about how to deal with those problems when they arise. It drove me to become more social within Young Healthwatch by getting me to talk to others about a shared topic with both people within, and out of, Healthwatch, which helped me to gain more confidence to talk to others."

Mars

Group discussion

- How to 'reach' and involve young people from underrepresented communities in the READY Trial?
- What are the challenges and how might we overcome them?

What do you think?



Do health and care services know what you really want?

By sharing your ideas and experiences you can help services hear what works, what doesn't, and how care could be better in the future for Young People and the current challenges they face.



it starts with
YOU

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**YOUNG
healthwatch
Central Bedfordshire**



Young Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire exists to make health and social care services work for the people that use them, especially young people.

Our role is to ensure that local decision makers and health and care services put the experiences of young people at the heart of their work.

We believe no one should be afraid to speak up because our opinion is as good as anyone else's.

Our volunteers have received appropriate 'Enter & View' training and are keen to put their learning into practice by visiting health and social care services such as hospital wards, surgeries and care homes. The young people will then be able to report their findings from their unique perspective. If you would like a group of young Healthwatch volunteers to visit your service please contact elleanor.ryles@healthwatchcentralbedfordshire.org.uk.

There is a lot more information on the Young Healthwatch website, <https://healthwatch-centralbedfordshire.org.uk/young-healthwatch>, including the great achievement of one of our volunteers who has secured a fantastic apprenticeship with Cancer Research UK.

If you are under 25, why not consider becoming a member of Young Healthwatch Central Bedfordshire? Get in touch for more information, email elleanor.ryles@healthwatchcentralbedfordshire.org.uk or call **0300 303 8554**.





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