

Evaluation Summary	
Age range	Secondary (Year 9)
Number of pupils	c. 1,600
Number of schools	80
Design	Randomised controlled trial with randomisation at the school level
Primary Outcome	English and Maths

Proposed protocol for EEF-funded evaluation of ‘Youth United social action’

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Introduction

The project to be evaluated is an intervention as part of ‘Youth Social Action’ taking place in secondary schools in the north of England, including Lancashire and Middlesbrough. It is led by Youth United Foundation (a charity supporting the network of voluntary organisations offering established long term programmes such as Scouts, Girlguiding, Boy and Girl Brigade, Cadet forces and St John’s Ambulance) and is intended to have an impact on levels of pupil attainment, a range of wider non-attainment outcomes such as aspiration, motivation and self-confidence, and some longer-term outcomes such as enhanced opportunities for subsequent employment.

Youth United Foundation (YU) is a charity supporting a Network of independent organisations such as the St John’s Ambulance where they are working together on projects of mutual interest (some funded by government such as the Department of Communities and Local Government) to try offer every young person in the UK the opportunity to be a member of at least one of its organisations. Its other aims are diverse, since they are the aims of each separate but linked organisation. But key mutual issues include promoting volunteering, inspiring young people to do community work, learn skills such as life-saving, and be an active citizen of the country. It plans to set up new units in the relevant areas to involve Year 9 pupils, with the normal programmes offered by the organisations. These would generally involve weekly weekend and/or after school sessions with activities focused on fun and development and some community project. . These

programmes have not previously been rigorously evaluated, and there is no particular evidence of impact other than self-reports of volunteers, and some before and after data. The feasibility of the programme has not been established by and for YU itself. However, the organisations within it have a long-established tradition of recruitment and reported success.

Impact evaluation

Design

The trial is a simple two-group comparison over one school year (but with a second within-school comparator – see below). One set of participating schools will receive the intervention, and the remainder will receive an incentive payment of £1,500 on completion of the post-test in Autumn 2015. The incentive is to help reduce any post-allocation demoralisation or dropout since it is contingent on remaining in the trial (i.e. providing the necessary data). The control Year 9 cohort will remain in existence as a long-term comparison with the impacts of one year of YU in the other group, and subsequent attainment and other behavioural measures can be compared (but this is beyond the time of this evaluation). Control schools are welcome to set up units involving other year groups and cohorts.

Sample

The trial will take place in Middlesbrough (possibly extending to Cleveland and Redcar), Lancashire and probably Merseyside. A total of 80 secondary schools will be recruited to set up a YU-led activity site on their premises. School recruitment will be handled by YU.

It is planned to offer an average of 20 pupil places across years 9 in each school at the outset. There will therefore be around 400 pupils in the experimental arm of the trial. However, testing and analysis will also be conducted for the whole classes or years from which these pupils come. For secondary schools, this means testing around 12,000 pupils altogether (based on year groups of 150) on each occasion (pre- and post-).

Allocation

The 80 schools in the YU trial will be evenly divided into two groups using a pseudo-random number generator. The sampling and the allocation procedure will therefore be at school level. A planned 40 schools will receive the intervention from September 2014, with the other 40 providing a control. The trial will end in July 2015.

In schools where more pupils than the normal size of unit volunteer to participate for the activity, the places will be allocated randomly using a pseudo-random number generator. The unsuccessful applicants will then form a second within-school comparison group. The exact size is not known at this stage.

Generally, 40 cases (schools) in each arm would be considered a small sample, but of course the trial involves more than one type of outcome, and the effect sizes possible for wider outcomes are likely to be substantially higher than for attainment (Gorard and Smith 2010). Non-cognitive outcomes are generally less structurally and socio-economically stratified than attainment, and so should be more malleable. Considering only the 20 or so pupils active in each treatment school and their peers in control schools, there would be 800 pupils per arm. If these were individually randomised then Lehr's approximation suggests that this would give sufficient power to detect an effect size as low as $|0.14|$. If the 80 randomised schools are treated as the cases, then 40 cases per arm would be sufficient to detect an effect size as low as $|0.45|$. In reality, the power will lie somewhere between these two (probably sufficient to detect an effect size of $|0.28|$). If fewer than 60 schools were to be recruited this would seriously endanger the trial.

Power will be considerably enhanced by the number of observations (pupils) taken for each school estimate, and the likely correlation between pre- and post-test outcome scores. There is also a second comparison group formed of unsuccessful volunteers (those who form the within school comparison group) in all treatment schools. Assuming that the proposed numbers are achieved, this will be a powerful test.

There is a range of Youth Social Action trials taking place across England over the same time period as this one, and it is being planned that some of the outcome measures will be common to several of these. This creates the chance to aggregate the data from this trial with one or more of the others trials to create an even more powerful estimate of generic impact.

Testing for attainment

The trial will use KS2 test results as the pre-intervention attainment measure, and KS3 test results as the post-intervention attainment measure. Tests will be for English and maths. This approach will allow results in a number of subjects with the minimum load for schools and pupils coupled with high external validity. Measures will be in the format of fine point scores, and as total KS point scores per pupil. This approach will yield a cost-effective result by September 2015.

Longer term – beyond the scope of this evaluation proposal – pupils can also be tracked in terms of subsequent qualification, education, and employment trajectories.

Testing the wider outcomes

The issue of assessing the wider outcomes is more complex for three reasons. There are many possible inter-related and conflicting concepts involved, and fewer standardised instruments for such outcomes. Also it is important to use the opportunity to co-ordinate at least some of these measures with other Youth Social Action trials being run by the Cabinet Office. The wider outcomes will be assessed pre and post-intervention via a bespoke instrument developed especially for use in this trial. This instrument will be developed in co-operation between evaluators, YU and other interested parties. It will be piloted in the remainder of the academic year 2013/14 in schools from areas unrelated to the trial.

The instrument will have some basic questions about respondents' lives and within this will be items about what kind of activities like the YU interventions they already do, and about how keen they are to undertake such activities. The pre-test results from the latter items can be used to help identify a fair set of comparator volunteers in the control schools (i.e. those who would have been in YU if their schools had been treatment schools). The pre-test will take place in the summer term 2013/14 for all year 8 pupils. The post-test will take place in the autumn term of 2014/15 2015/16 for all year 10 pupils.

In addition, the instrument will contain a set of single item questions on a range of wider outcomes including reports of mental concepts, behaviour and future intentions. A number of suitable test items already exist, and can be adapted, such as those developed since 2003 as part of an ongoing EU-funded study of young people's views on school, society and justice, and their civic participation and willingness to assist others less fortunate than themselves (Gorard and Smith 2010). One of the lessons from early work (EGREES 2005, EGREES 2008) is that rather than using the usual psychometric approach of multiple questions for each theme, the single best item can be used instead (perhaps the item with the highest loading to the underlying 'factor' after principal component analysis). This approach is at least as accurate in terms of measuring these rather hard to pin-down concepts, and has several advantages including ease of analysis and reporting. For this proposal perhaps the most important advantage is brevity. It should be possible to assess or discuss via standard vignettes a wide range of possible outcomes in just *one*

questionnaire for pupils. This will minimise boredom and dropout, and increase completion rates without substantial cost. Further possible items are being provided by ONS, the Cabinet Office, reviews of the literature, and professional advice.

Of particular interest here are measures of:

Communication

Confidence/self-esteem

Social skills

Teamwork

The items must be measurable, malleable and considered important by stakeholders either in their own right or because they are linked to behavioural outcomes including attendance and participation. The instrument has to be suitable for all pupils, some with assistance, to respond to and so the reading-age must be suitable for Year 9 pupils, and the completion process should be pre-coded tick-box as far as possible. The instrument will be taken to each school by the evaluators, who will also oversee the completion process and collect and take away all completed forms for data entry and marking. A draft instrument is attached as an appendix.

Other data

As standard, the study will collect and collate suitable background characteristics for pupils in both groups, in order to run sub-analyses (such as for FSM-eligible pupils or boys and girls separately) and to assist potential generalisation of the results to other schools and areas.

It would also be interesting to collect any outcome data in common with similar on-going interventions elsewhere. This could be for comparison, and to add to any aggregated analysis where feasible.

Analysis

Two main analyses will be conducted. One will assess the impact of the intervention on the volunteer and participating pupils only. The other will assess the impact on the whole school. Each analysis will follow the EEF guidance protocol. In summary, each outcome measure will be analysed using the pre-test to control for prior attainment. The results will be expressed as Hedge's g effect sizes.

The headline result for attainment will be the effect size for the post-test in KS total points scores, based on the whole school year group. This will be clear but conservative. Secondary results will be calculated for both English and Maths following the EEF guidance protocol. Once the wider outcome instrument is developed YU will be asked to nominate no more than three items to act as the primary wider outcomes. This is to prevent post hoc dredging for success given the likelihood of so many possible results.

In addition, the main analyses will be re-run with FSM-eligible pupils only, and for boys and girls separately. A regression model will be created for each primary outcome, with the post-test score as the predicted variable, and the pre-test score, pupil background variables and treatment group as predictor variables. Further analyses and models can be run by agreement.

Given the relatively small number of cases (schools) in a trial of what is essentially a set of school-based interventions, and given the underlying similarity of the approaches, the results will be aggregated where possible with those from at least one other trial of youth social action. This could be done for attainment, self-confidence and a small number of other previously agreed wider outcome measures. This will provide a powerful estimate of the impact of the kind of activities

from several organisations, and add value from running the trials in the same way as far as possible. The plan would then be to report the result of this trial individually and in aggregate.

Process evaluation

The fieldwork for the process evaluation will be standard for EEF work, and include observation of setup, training, implementation, and testing for each intervention. This will provide formative evidence on all phases and aspects of the intervention. This can be used to help assess fidelity to treatment, and the perceptions of participants including any resentment or resistance, and to advise on improvements and issues for any future scaling up.

Around 10 schools will be studied in depth with follow-up visits to assess progress over time. The site visits will lead to the generation of some additional data from observations and interviews with staff, focus groups with pupils, discussions with parents and YU managers, plus observation of training, delivery and testing. These will all be as simple and integrated and non-intrusive as possible. The schedule of visits will be agreed with the intervention team and the schools. Schools will agree to be part of this evaluation when agreeing to be part of the intervention.

Indicative Timeline

December 2013-	Begin development of battery of tests and items
March 2014-	First pilot of wider outcome test materials Observation of training for intervention Observation of school recruitment process
June 2014-	Second pilot of wider outcome test materials if needed Conduct wider outcomes pre-testing in all schools Randomised allocation of schools to two groups
September 2014-	Intervention starts (Pre-tests where necessary) Collect prior KS2 scores and pupil background data Start light touch observation as part of ongoing process evaluation Interviews with project members, staff and pupils
October 2015-	Conduct wider outcomes post-testing in all schools Update background data Analyse outcome data Synthesise with process evaluation data
November 2015-	Complete EEF report on results

References

- European Group for Research on Equity in Educational Systems (2005) Equity in European Educational Systems: a set of indicators, *European Educational Research Journal*, 4, 2, 1-151
- EGREES (2008) *Developing a sense of justice among disadvantaged students: the role of schools*, Brussels: European Group for Research on Equity in Education Systems, 141 pages
- Gorard, S. (2013) *Research Design: Robust approaches for the social sciences*, London: SAGE
- Gorard, S. and Smith, E. (2010) *Equity in Education: an international comparison of pupil perspectives*, London: Palgrave

- This is not a test. It is a survey to find out about your views on things which are important to young people. There are no right answers to the questions, and no prizes for finishing quickly.
- We want to use your knowledge to help create better opportunities for young people to learn things which will help them to be successful now and in the future
- What you say here will not be told to your school, your family, or to anyone else. It will not be used to make any decision about you. Only the researchers involved in the study will see your answers.
- We have asked for your name so that we can compare what you say now to what you might say in the future. Your name will be deleted once the forms have been matched.

Please complete all questions, and to do so honestly.

Use a black ink pen, and just tick the right box for your answer.

If you wish to write something as well, please write neatly in the centre of the page.

When you have finished answering the questionnaire, please wait quietly until all others have finished too.

1a. Please enter your full name and date of birth

First name, or given name, in CAPITALS (e.g. FREDDIE)

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Surname or family name, in CAPITALS (e.g. JONES)

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Your date of birth (e.g. 12 February 2004)

Day

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Month

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Year

--	--	--	--

OR

1b. You or your teacher can write in your Unique Pupil Number (UPN)

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If you are not sure of any answer in this section (don't know), or want to suggest any other activity, then please write neatly on the dotted lines below.

2. In the last 6 months, have you done any voluntary activities like the ones below in your own time?

- Unpaid help at a local club, group, organisation or place of worship
- Raise money for a charity
- Organise a petition or event to support a local or national issue
- Do something to help other people, or improve the local community

Never	Sometimes	Often

Other activity, or comment.....

3. In the last 6 months, have you done any activities like the ones below in your own time?

- Music lessons, sports clubs, hobby clubs
- Language or supplementary school
- Events in libraries or museums

Never	Sometimes	Often

Other activity, or comment.....

4. In the last 6 months, have you been part of any group like those below?

- Children's University
- Sea Scouts, Army Cadet Force, Boy's Brigade
- Brownies, Girlguiding, Cubs, Scouts
- St John's Ambulance, Police Cadets, Fire Cadets

Never	Sometimes	Often

Other activity, or comment.....

5. The following statements are about you.

Please say how much you agree with them from "not at all true" (0) to "completely true" (10).

Please tick only one numbered box on each line.

	Not at all true										Completely true
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
I am confident about explaining my ideas clearly											
I enjoy making other people feel better											
I often work out different ways of doing things											

I am satisfied with my life nowadays												
I like meeting new people												
I can work with someone who has different opinions												
I can do most things if I try												
I can work out my problems												
I give up easily when doing something difficult												
I am a hard worker												
I want to try and make my community a better place												
I am confident about having a go at new things												
I try to understand the problems other people might have												
I like to be told exactly what to do												
I feel happy most days												
Other people generally like me												
I prefer to work in a group rather than alone												
I know where to go for help with a problem												
I like school work best when it really makes me think												
Once I have started a task, I like to finish it												
I can keep concentrating when a lot is going on												
If someone is not successful it's their own fault												

6. Please read the story below and then place a tick in the box next to the statement that you agree with the most:

Jacinta has difficulty reading and finds it hard to keep up in class. The teacher has to spend a lot of time helping Jacinta and gives her a lot of attention. Sometimes the other students have to wait for the teacher to stop helping Jacinta before helping them.

Tick one box

Jacinta needs extra help so it is fair that the teacher should spend more time helping her, even if the other pupils have to wait.

Jacinta should work harder to keep up with the rest of the class.

Jacinta should be taught in a separate class.

7. The Children’s University offers children and young people learning activities and clubs that run before and after school, or during lunchtime, weekends and holidays. If given the chance, how strongly would you want to be in a programme like this?

Not at all	Maybe	A lot

8. Youth United offers children and young people structured activities and new skills such as expeditions, first aid, sailing, parascending, and volunteering outside school hours. If given the chance, how strongly would you want to be in a programme like this?

Not at all	Maybe	A lot

9. Which group contains jobs that are most like the one you would like to do in the future?

Tick one box

- Hairdresser, postal worker, factory worker, cleaner, labourer, caretaker, farm worker, waiter, security guard, fitness instructor.
- Doctor, scientist, lawyer, architect, vet, accountant, teacher, hospital nurse, journalist, manager, artist, businessman/woman, musician, sports player/coach.
- Police officer, fire officer, secretary, nursery nurse, office clerk, electrician, builder, childminder, motor mechanic, clothes designer.
- I don't know what job I want

If you cannot find a similar job in the list, then please write down the job that you want to do in the future:

.....

10. Which one of these choices is most like what you want to do as soon as you leave school?

Tick one box

- Continue in education at college or university.
- Get a job.
- Move to training or apprenticeship for a job.
- I don't know yet.
- Or any other possibility – please write what it is below

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Thank you very much for completing this questionnaire. We value your help greatly.

If you want to say anything more about the kinds of things asked so far, please write your comments neatly on the dotted lines below.

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