



Public Health
England



**National Institute for
Health Research**

School for Public Health Research

The Public Health Practice Evaluation Scheme (PHPES)

Addressing the challenges faced by ‘front line’ practitioners

The evaluation of “Coping Through Football”



“Coping Through Football” (CTF) aims to engage people with severe mental health problems to improve physical and mental health, and social inclusion.

Background

“Coping Through Football” (CTF) is a project that was developed in a collaboration between the London Playing Field Foundation, the Leyton Orient Trust and NELFT (North East London NHS Foundation Trust). It started in London Borough of Waltham Forest in 2006 and has expanded since then to the boroughs of Redbridge, Havering and Barking and Dagenham. Attendees are referred to this service by health workers and participation in the project is part of their formal mental health treatment through the NHS. The project is open to males and females and operates for two age groups: 12-17 years old and 18y+.

London Playing Fields Foundation provides the football coaches for the project; occupational therapists from NELFT supervise the sessions.

Our practitioner partners

The PHPES scheme enables people working in public health, who are introducing innovative initiatives aimed at improving health, to work in partnership with NIHR SPHR to conduct rigorous evaluations of their cost-effectiveness. NIHR SPHR researchers worked with:



The London Playing Fields Foundation is dedicated to the protection, provision and promotion of playing fields across London.



NELFT is the North East London NHS Foundation Trust.



Leyton Orient Trust is a charity whose aim it is to positively impact on the lives of disadvantaged Londoners through sports, educational and leisure projects

Participants usually attend two weekly football sessions of 90 minutes. In addition to the training sessions, participants are also encouraged to attend healthy living workshops that teach about smoking cessation etc. Furthermore, social events are organised such as friendly tournaments and Christmas parties.

The intervention aims to foster physical and mental well-being as well as social inclusion. Participants become part of a team with others who are facing similar challenges. In addition to this “peer group experience”, participants are also encouraged to find exit routes into other (team) sports activities as well as volunteering and employment opportunities to further enhance their inclusion back into society.

Key issues

- Many people with severe mental health problems face physical health problems.
- Social isolation is often a key issue in people with mental health problems.
- Young men of ethnic minorities in deprived areas such as NE London are often considered a “hard to reach group” for mental health treatment – the majority of participants come from this demographic background.
- Alternative sports interventions should be explored as an option for mental health treatment.

Key research questions

- Does CTF improve mental, physical and social well-being in participants?
- If so, through which mechanisms does the intervention impact on the quality of life of the participants?
- What are the costs and benefits of the intervention?
- What do we learn from literature about the feasibility of using football as mental health intervention/treatment?

Method

The evaluation is taking a multi-method approach. The intervention and the evaluation were developed alongside each other to ensure that evaluators as well as facilitators have the same understanding of what the intended outcomes of the project are as well as how it can be measured in a reliable and valid way.

There are four main parts of the evaluation:

A **literature review** is being conducted to review evidence of effectiveness of similar football schemes that can potentially inform the further development of the CTF project and help to understand the general feasibility of football interventions for people with (severe) mental health problems.

Quantitative data has been collected from the start of the intervention to monitor regularly mental and physical well-being as well as exit routes and achievements of personal goals.

In **qualitative interviews** we will further explore how participants experience the intervention and its effects. In particular we are interested in learning if and how the scheme impacts on their lives and what aspect of the experience they particularly like or dislike.

A **cost effectiveness analysis** will be conducted to establish whether investment in this intervention “pays off” with regard to achieved health improvement in the participants.

Public involvement

Service users who participated in the project previously will play a key role in developing the interview schedule and in interviewing participants for the qualitative analysis.

Outcomes of this evaluation will be disseminated through channels that will reach the general public as well as stake holders and policy makers.

What next?

The next step will be the analysis of the quantitative data and the development of the qualitative interview schedule.

References/resources

<http://www.copingthroughfootball.org>

<http://pb.rcpsych.org/content/36/8/290.short>

SPHR Contact/Find out more

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About PHPES

PHPES projects are:

- **generated by front line practitioners,**
- **designed to provide transferable, robust evidence on the impact of local practice for local practitioners,**
- **developed and delivered in collaboration with NIHR SPHR academics building evaluative capacity in public health practice.**

About NIHR SPHR

The NIHR SPHR aims to build a high quality evidence base for cost-effective public health practices. We work with local practitioners and members of the public, carrying out a wide range of research projects and programmes with a school wide focus on alcohol, ageing well and health inequalities.

About PHE

Public Health England exists to protect and improve the nation's health and wellbeing, and reduce health inequalities. It does this through world-class science, knowledge and intelligence, advocacy, partnerships and the delivery of specialist public health services. PHE is an operationally autonomous executive agency of the Department of Health.