

Pilot area-level randomised controlled trial of Detached Youth Work

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Project title	<i>Pilot area-level randomised controlled trial of Detached Youth Work</i>
Developer (Institution)	<i>Centre for Evidence and Implementation (CEI) and four Regional Consortia (Greater Manchester, Wiltshire & Swindon, Leeds, Wakefield & Barnsley, and Middlesbrough & Stockton)</i>
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Evaluation setting	<i>40 ‘patches’ (20 delivery, 20 control) – public spaces across the geographical areas covered by four regional consortia across the UK (Greater Manchester, Leeds, Barnsley and Wakefield, Swindon and Wiltshire, Middlesbrough & Stockton)</i>

Target group	Young people aged 10-17 years old during the delivery period
Number of participants	Unspecified – young people in 20 delivery patches and 20 control patches

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1. Study rationale and background

This section provides context and rationale for undertaking a pilot randomised controlled trial of detached youth work (DYW). It begins by setting out what is known about this model of youth work intervention, including its potential to reduce youth violence and the mechanisms through which it may achieve this, and describes the evidence gaps this pilot seeks to address. The section also provides a summary of the findings from previous Youth Endowment Fund commissioned feasibility and scoping work that have directly informed the evaluation design for this pilot.

1.1. Overview

Detached youth work is a vital component of youth service provision, yet despite its long-standing history of practice, there remains very limited robust evaluation evidence about its effects and impact on young people and communities.

Detached youth work describes a broad range of practice and provision with and for young people, such as facilitation of youth-led projects, informal education, and sports, arts and cultural activities, among others (Hall et al., 2024). These practices are unified by a core set of features – it takes place ‘where young people are at’, is youth-centred, and engagement is always voluntary.

While many activities mirror those employed in centre-based youth work, the key distinguishing feature is that it takes place in young people’s territory – public spaces where they choose to spend their time such as parks, city centres, on the street, or in buildings such as shopping centres or fast-food outlets. This distinguishes it from centre-based youth work which typically takes place in institutional settings (i.e. youth centres and faith-based settings) (Dowling, 2020). The public location of the work requires a redistribution of power between young people and youth workers (Batsleer et al., 2010), as it radically alters the ‘boundaries’ of provision from those typical in centre-based youth work, both in terms of the physical space (as young people can remove themselves at any moment) and authority (as the youth workers are effectively seeking consent to move into the young people’s spaces and conversations).

Another distinctive feature of detached youth work is that in comparison to other youth provision, this work is not targeted. That is, it does not place on youth workers the expectation to meet any set of external targets, or outcomes (Dowling, 2020).

The features of detached youth work enable detached youth workers to meet and engage the most vulnerable and disengaged young people (Dowling, 2020; Fisher & Lab, 2010; Furlong et

al., 1997). Those who are otherwise not accessing support services and may not be attending school, often including higher rates of young people from minoritised ethnic backgrounds and young people who distrust formal services, making it an important form of provision to understand.

According to a report by the National Youth Agency (NYA) (2022) that analysed the landscape of youth work in England, detached youth work occupies a unique and prioritised position in youth services. More specifically, while universal work in this area (such as open-access youth clubs) has been subject to significant disinvestment, detached youth work has remained a core component of the services that most local authorities manage or fund directly. Indeed, their 2021 census in this area, showed that 50% of local authorities deliver some form of this intervention.

Detached youth work might be commissioned for a variety of reasons (NYA, 2022). For example, seeking approaches to improving children's socioemotional outcomes, improve social connectedness, address high or rising crime and antisocial behaviour, and protect children from exploitation. Economically, detached youth work is valued as a low-cost preventative provision (Dowling, 2020), which can make it attractive to commissioners balancing limited resources. It has been argued that detached youth work is well-positioned to work with young people most at risk of offending or reoffending. This population is often less likely to engage with other forms of provision that are more structured or setting-based (Furlong et al., 1997). It has also been argued that providing detached youth work is a more cost-effective use of resources than the costs of a young person entering the criminal justice system (Nicholls, 2011 as cited in Dowling, 2020, p.24). Some literature also suggests that a detached youth work approach could benefit young people facing sexual exploitation (Pearce, 2006). Furthermore, detached youth work is considered to benefit the communities in which it is delivered, by changing perceptions towards young people (Hall et al., 2024). These potential positives underscore the necessity for strong research and evaluation to understand if and how detached youth work benefits young people and communities.

Despite this, literature on the impact of detached youth work is scarce. Research to date that evaluates the impact of detached youth work is limited, though it is considered a promising intervention (Dowling, 2020; Mallion et al., 2026). Broadly, there is agreement in the sector that this intervention addresses a breadth of issues, including, but not limited to, young people's mental health and wellbeing, risky and antisocial behaviour, involvement in youth violence, and engagement in education, training or work (Hall et al., 2024; Mallion et al., 2026).

Written reports on the impact of detached youth work started to emerge in the late 1950s (Batsleer et al., 2010; Smith, 1996, 2005) and show mixed effects of this form of engagement.

More recent qualitative work has explored the benefits of detached youth work and the delivery challenges facing youth workers (Fritz et al., 2016; McInerney, 2012). These studies have centred the perspectives of young people and youth workers and show that they perceive positive effects of the work by building young people's resilience, challenging problematic behaviour, and providing physical safety in public spaces – all of which require authentic relationship building.

Recent reports by the National Children's Bureau (NCB) and the Essex Violence and Vulnerability Unit have sought to understand the reach of detached youth work, the nature of delivery, and how it contributes to individual-level changes in young people's relationships, social and emotional wellbeing, and employment, education and training, as well as local-level changes in crime and community cohesion (Clements et al. 2025; Essex VVU, 2024). Qualitative findings show overwhelmingly positive perceptions of the work. However, Clements et al.'s (2025) report demonstrated the challenges of evaluating this form of youth work, with *increased* recorded crime during periods of delivery, a finding at odds with project staff's perceptions of reduced crime. This may be due to increased reporting of incidents by young people once they have a relationship with a trusted adult or simply the increased congregation of young people in an area, associated to greater complaints around their presence and noise. These potential explanations will be explored in this pilot through interviews within the Implementation and Process Evaluation (see Section 4.3).

There are other challenges to research in this area. A 2025 report by Smith-Hillman & Duncan (2025) into the economic value of detached youth work identified clear barriers to identifying causal impact using Local Authority data. While the current authors recently conducted scoping work (Purdon et al., 2025) that indicates the possible effect sizes of detached youth work, very little is known about the magnitude or longevity of effects on violence and related harms at an individual- or community-level.

As the implementation of 'hot spot' approaches to policing have become more prevalent, so have academic concerns about the possibility of displacement; that is that intervention in one area of concern simply leads to crime and antisocial behaviour moving to another local area where no intervention is taking place. However, theoretical (Clarke, 1995) and quasi-experimental (Weisburd et al., 2006) research has demonstrated that this is likely to be a small or neutral phenomenon. For example, a young person may spend less time on a high-street and more time in a park playing football, illustrating a 'neutral' displacement effect, where the activity mainly shifts to a different public space rather than resulting in criminal behaviour elsewhere. Yet, a more recent review posed that most studies were underpowered to be conclusive (MacDonald et al., 2024). The geocoded crime and antisocial behaviour microdata we are seeking to obtain for this study will enable us to test for potential

displacement or diffusion of benefit using a Weighted Displacement Quotient approach applied to concentric buffer zones around the geographical patches (i.e. localised areas) (e.g. Bowers & Johnson, 2003; McLennan & Whitworth, 2008) included in the study.

The varied nature of detached youth work also makes it challenging to understand and test the mechanisms through which changes are achieved through evaluative methods. Whilst relationship-building has been highlighted as central to any positive outcomes by qualitative work, determining the *how* is more complicated: relationship-building is theorised as an all-encompassing component, simultaneously understood as an input, mechanism and outcome (Hall et al., 2024). Other potential mechanisms through which detached youth work achieves change include providing positive alternative choices and improving young people's understanding of their community (Hall et al., 2024), both theorised to decrease young people's engagement in violent behaviour by building emotional resilience and regulation and helping young people feel valued in their community (Clements et al., 2025).

Furthermore, in our review of research we have not identified any studies that have examined young people's experience of this detached youth work using an equity-lens, meaning we do not know whether effects differ by individual- or community-level characteristics such as gender, ethnicity or deprivation.

Detached youth work and youth violence

Detached youth work is increasingly seen as a promising approach to preventing youth violence through several causal mechanisms. The presence of detached youth work in public spaces enables practitioners to engage young people who are most at risk of becoming involved in violence, including those who are disengaged from services, and to build trusted relationships that foster skill development such as conflict management and emotional regulation. Through informal education, detached youth work can also encourage prosocial behaviours and provide alternatives to risk-taking activities. Furthermore, the visible presence of detached youth workers may deter exploitation, reduce opportunities for harm and support the de-escalation of conflicts in real time. By addressing these issues, DYW may contribute to reductions in antisocial behaviour and offending, and in turn, lower rates of youth violence.

The Youth Endowment Fund recently published their toolkit rating for detached youth work, summarising the available evidence and concluding that to date there is insufficient evidence to calculate the impact of this intervention on youth violence (Mallion et al., 2026). Thus, despite growing interest in this form of youth work practice, and an increase in qualitative and local-level evaluation taking place, the available robust causal evidence is minimal. Specifically, the published research to date does not indicate the size of impact that detached

youth work can have on young people's involvement in crime or antisocial behaviour or any others of the broad range of outcomes associated with the work. It also reveals little about the differential impacts for young people from different ethnic backgrounds and therefore its potential to reduce racial inequity in young people's life chances.

Although several studies have explored young people's experiences of detached youth work and described the practice, the absence of robust quantitative evidence about its impact means decision-makers are not able to make well-evidenced decisions about investment or about the relative effectiveness of different approaches or models.

1.2. Previous YEF work that informs this study

The Youth Endowment Fund previously commissioned work to explore the feasibility of evaluating detached youth work using robust experimental methods such as a randomised controlled trial or quasi-experimental design (Hall et al., 2024), followed by a scoping study to further explore the feasibility of undertaking a randomised controlled trial (Purdon et al., 2025).

The feasibility study, undertaken by the Centre for Evidence and Implementation (CEI) and Bryson Purdon Social Research (BPSR) sought to understand how detached youth work is delivered, how consistent it is across the country, and to design an impact evaluation that would be feasible and appropriate for the sector. We found that relationship building is held at the centre of detached youth work across all delivery agencies. However, the youth-led nature of the practice means that each young person or group of young people will experience a different constellation of activities and projects, determined by their own priorities and context. One feature of detached youth work that distinguishes it from other forms of youth work practice is that practitioners are working with peer groups – existing networks of friends with all the dynamics and history that come along with them.

The feasibility study found that activities delivered in detached youth work are broad-ranging and include befriending and relationship building; providing information, advice and guidance; signposting to services; sport, cultural and other street-based activities; intervening to defuse conflict or respond to potential or actual violence; engaging with peers; mentoring and being a role model; facilitating youth-led projects; and engaging with families. In the co-design phase of this pilot trial, delivery organisations emphasised the features of intentional group activities that a detached youth worker might employ, rather than prescribing activities themselves. These features include being practical and hands on, challenging and broadening young people's outlooks, offering skill-building opportunities, responding to young people's priorities, and fostering teamwork and social connection. Youth workers also describe advocating for young people to other community members.

The works also explored the aspects of young people's lives typically addressed by detached youth work. We found a diverse range, including wellbeing, confidence and mental health; antisocial behaviour; staying safe, gang exploitation and involvement in youth violence; substance misuse; social and emotional learning skills; engagement with other support agencies; relationships with peers and families; sexual health, engagement in education, training and work, and more. In collaboration with delivery organisations, we have grouped these outcomes into two broad groups; those that contribute to improved life chances for young people and those that contribute to improved safety for young people, their wider communities and better community cohesion.

Our previous work has also highlighted that detached youth work professionals see high-quality research and evaluation as being valuable to the sector and want to support this kind of work. There is particular interest in identifying and promoting high-quality, effective practice and ways of working and sharing approaches to adjusting practice for different populations and contexts.

The fluid and youth-centred nature of the approach presents significant challenges to its evaluation, conceptually and practically. We explored these challenges in detail through our previous work, by consulting detached youth work professionals in interviews, focus groups and surveys. Our work highlighted five key challenges and their implications for evaluability:

- **Recruitment, retention, and data collection with young people** – when interactions are inconsistent, voluntary, and trust-based, formalised activities can interrupt the youth work process. By the very nature of detached youth work, the young people involved may be disengaged from other services or may only be involved in provision that is mandatory in nature (this could include formal education and/or training but also welfare and criminal justice interventions). It therefore takes time to build a trusting relationship in which the needs and experiences of young people are understood (Golden et al., 2002). Attempts to engage young people in evaluation activities such as baseline data collection may jeopardise relationships between young people and youth workers, particularly early in the relationship. Data collection directly with young people in control areas is likewise infeasible as there is no trusting relationship via which to contact young people.
- **Selecting outcomes** – not being able to engage individual young people in data collection activities limits the measurable outcomes that could be investigated in an impact evaluation. Data must therefore be sourced from other indirect sources, such as local-level administrative data, police crime data, or perceptions from professionals and/or the community. An additional challenge comes from the locality across which the work is taking place and how geographically specific data are.

- **Establishing a true and reliable baseline** – interactions with young people start on an ongoing basis without a clear intake point, which makes ‘pre/post’ change hard to capture for individual young people. Detached youth work is also not offered based on established eligibility criteria for individual young people, which also makes it hard to establish a baseline from which to measure impact.
- **Undefined dosage** – the non-programmatic youth-led nature of detached youth work means that the nature and intensity of contact with individual young people is not possible to establish and can vary widely by person and over time. There is no standardised ‘user journey’. This makes it particularly difficult to tease out relationships between exposure and outcomes and to understand the mechanisms of change.
- **Determining and prescribing ‘business as usual’** – it is difficult to determine what constitutes ‘business as usual’ in relation to the support or provision that young people access in the absence of detached youth work (i.e. to establish a counterfactual). Because it is not a manualised programme offered to young people who are receiving other known services, it is challenging to identify a comparison group and clearly assess what is additional for young people engaged in detached youth work. Identifying the distinguishing features of a detached youth work approach from other youth work requires significant engagement with local partners and a robust monitoring system to keep track of fidelity and possible contamination. It also means that establishing buy-in from all local partners to “protect” control areas from detached youth work or similar activity becomes a requirement of any robust evaluation.

The feasibility and scoping studies provided a robust set of principles and limitations to support a successful impact evaluation design. These include:

- A co-design period in which delivery partners refine the shared practice model and theory of change
- The duration of delivery required for a good model of delivery (at least 12 months) and a pre-delivery reconnaissance period (six months)
- The unit of randomisation should be patch-level rather than individual-level, with patch-level outcomes
- Commissioning regional consortia to identify eligible patches, deliver the practice model, and prescribe and monitor detached youth work
 - Consortia should be made up of detached youth work deliverers, local authorities, police forces, violence reduction units/community safety partnerships, and other relevant organisations

- Using detailed police data on reported crimes and incidents of antisocial behaviour
 - A hierarchy of options for police data access has been established, with bespoke extracts of geocoded police data with youth related crimes and incidents flagged as the preferred option. The hierarchy of options was presented to the four pilot consortia (including police representatives) in a dedicated workshop (4th December 2025) and then discussed in detail with police data experts in each of the five police forces covering the four partner consortia (January 2026). The analysts in all five police forces agreed that providing bespoke extracts is the optimal approach to take for this pilot evaluation.

Considering the findings and recommendations of the feasibility and scoping studies, this pilot study will consist of four evaluation strands which together will allow us to assess the feasibility of implementing the proposed study design, including the feasibility of consortia delivering the shared practice model, defining and adhering to patches, randomisation, and outcome measurement.

1. A pilot area-level RCT, we will test the feasibility of assessing the impact of detached youth work on local-level incidences of crime and antisocial behaviour, with a focus on youth-related crimes and incidents.
2. As trial sample size is not adequately powered to estimate effect sizes for a full impact trial, we will conduct a retrospective QED study in parallel to supplement our work with bespoke police data extracts to estimate the likely effect sizes needed for a larger efficacy trial. This work will follow the process undertaken during our scoping study, with refined datasets and a greater range of appropriate comparator patches.
3. We will also conduct a robust implementation and process evaluation, including creative qualitative methods to amplify the perspectives of young people.
4. We will also undertake cost analysis of the detached youth work delivery, collecting data from each consortium on staff, facilities, materials and in-kind contributions to report the total cost of a typical patch and, where feasible, the cost per participant.

1.3. Evaluation design overview

Using insights from our feasibility study and scoping report we have designed a pilot area-level randomised controlled trial (RCT) to be implemented by four consortia of local organisations. The units of randomisation are patches (i.e. pre-defined geographical areas, rather than individuals or young people) within each consortium. Specifically, each consortium is asked to identify ten patches (40 in total) where detached youth work has not

been delivered for at least 12 months prior to the reconnaissance period commencing and where there is evidence of need for intervention to reduce youth crime or antisocial behaviour, for instance, presenting higher than average rate of police-recorded incidents. Overall, the trial will include 40 patches, with 50% randomly allocated to receive detached youth work and 50% allocated to the control group to receive business as usual within each consortium. Stratified randomisation will ensure balance across the intervention and control areas in terms of baseline crime rates, as well as geographical and social contexts (noting that, in practice, stratification prioritises local authority over other socio-demographic dimensions; see the Stratified randomisation section for details). The primary outcome will be youth-related violent and non-violent crime per hectare in each patch, and the secondary outcome will be youth-related antisocial behaviour, both using detailed, record-level, police data. As noted above, we aim to focus on youth-related crimes and incidents. We are in the process of negotiating this access with the National Police Chiefs Council and each DYW partner police force.

An implementation process evaluation (IPE) will run parallel to the trial. The IPE will monitor trial implementation and delivery fidelity, provide contextual insights to support the interpretation of impact findings, and the mechanisms and conditions through which change occurs – drawing on the perspectives of practitioners, young people and their communities.

A pilot trial is essential to test the feasibility of the proposed evaluation design and therefore determine whether a patch-level RCT is feasible, acceptable, robust enough, and desirable for progression to an efficacy trial. As described in section 4.1, this randomisation approach has been chosen after extensive exploration of possible approaches with key actors in the detached youth work sector and with methods experts. It is also important to establish whether and how the impact of detached youth work can be assessed using police data outcomes and what the likely effect size is. The design will be piloted across four diverse consortia, comprising a mixture of populations, urban and rural geographies and service structures. This will enable us to explore the generalisability of this evaluation design. The consortia design also allows the study team to understand the likelihood, impact, and management approaches of contamination, data access, and partner engagement and inform the progression to and design of a feasible and robust efficacy evaluation.

2. Intervention

Detached youth work is a responsive and flexible form of youth work that differs from most others as it takes place in public places where young people choose to spend their time. Rather than being structured according to a prescribed set of activities, detached youth workers support young people where they are at – both physically and emotionally. The work is guided by young people’s priorities, not a set agenda. These features of detached youth work clearly make it challenging to evaluate.

In order to understand *what* is being evaluated and to ensure a level of consistency between delivery partners, a key part of the feasibility study work was to develop a shared practice model (SPM) and theory of change (ToC) in collaboration with key deliverers and commissioners of detached youth work (Hall et al., 2024). Both documents were revised and updated with the participating consortia during the co-design phase of this pilot trial, which took place between October 2025 and February 2026.

2.1. Shared practice model

The shared practice model describes a model that constitutes a middle ground between delivery best practice (namely, the flexibility inherent to detached youth work) and trialability. The model describes principles and practice elements in full in Appendix A, and is summarised here:

- The principles of detached youth work emphasise that interactions between youth workers and young people take place in public spaces where young people choose to gather – to some extent ‘owning’ the territory – and that young people’s voluntary engagement is negotiated on an ongoing basis. These principles also state that detached youth work is relational and youth-centred, so that detached youth workers do not set the rules for engagement but rather focus on the young person’s strengths and seek to provide positive experiences and challenges. Finally, the principles stress that detached youth work is flexible and responsive to young people’s needs, as well as being equity driven.
- Project leads use local data and knowledge and community engagement in selecting areas and will undertake a six-month reconnaissance period to gain knowledge and integrate into the community.
- Each detached youth work team should include two detached youth workers, plus a supervisor or manager depending on the size of the delivery team. The lead detached

youth worker will have 2+ years of experience and will oversee delivery and provides regular supervision.

- Detached youth workers will have undertaken or be working to a level 2 certificate in youth work training and hold a defined set of skills (outlined in the SPM)
- Detached youth work involves detached youth workers being present for four hours a week in each patch and focusing their engagements with young people on building relationships. These engagements typically take the form of unstructured street-based contact and informal education: initiating conversations, spending time with peer groups, and offering one-to-one and group support or challenge where a young person is open to it. It can also include semi-structured activities that include practical skills, teamwork and collaboration, and skill building, if that aligns with young people's priorities.
- Detached youth work delivery will take place across a minimum of twelve months . Nearing the completion of the 12 months of on-street delivery, the ending of the project will be planned to ensure that young people are forewarned of a change or end to the provision.

We will hold webinars to train detached youth workers on the shared practice model between August and October 2026 to ensure consistency of delivery

The shared practice model will be delivered in half of each consortia's patches (between 4 to 5 patches in each), while the remaining patches receive business as usual (which may or may not include youth work activities other than detached youth work). The reconnaissance period is scheduled to begin in October 2026 and come to an end in March 2027. From there onwards, detached youth work delivery will commence in April 2027 and last until March 2028. Recipients of the delivery will be young people in the patches, typically aged 10 to 17 years old, and who are willing to engage with detached youth workers.

2.2. Theory of Change

The theory of change for detached youth work links the principles and activities of this approach with the short- to long-term outcomes for young people and their communities through a series of mechanisms of change. See Appendix B for the full theory of change. The theory of change principles closely mirror those of the shared practice model, establishing that detached youth work is youth-led. Practice take place in public spaces and rely on the voluntary engagement of young people, which is negotiated on an ongoing basis. The work takes a strengths-based approach that is mindful of cultural context and the systemic barriers that young people face.

Specific activities detailed by the theory of change include working with peer groups through informal education, conversation, mentoring and encouraging reflection, as well as securing buy-in from families and community members. Mechanisms of change are various and primarily focus on young people experiencing authentic, reliable and consistent positive relationships with an adult, which serve to model alternative and positive experiences of healthy change. The mechanisms of change also highlight changing how young people feel a sense of belonging in the community, their perceptions of others in their communities, and the wider community's perceptions of young people. This is thought to be achieved by building an understanding and respect for each other.

The theory of change describes the intended longer-term impacts of detached youth work: improving the life chances for young people, improving safety for young people and better community cohesion.

The theory of change visualises the hypothesis that detached youth work will reduce the likelihood of youth violence and offending by reducing exposure to exploitation, limiting the likelihood of participation in risky behaviour, and increasing access to earlier support and local provision, ultimately improving young people's safety, life chances and community cohesion.

Change through detached youth work is expected to take place in the following sequence: through consistent and voluntary engagement in their own spaces, young people develop authentic relationships with a trusted adult. With time, these relationships facilitate modelling and participating in positive choices, reducing young people's engagement in risky or violent behaviour. In parallel, detached youth workers and young people engage positively with the community which in turn fosters a sense of belonging and safety in the community, and understanding from the community about young people's right to public space, and a reduction of young people's exposure to exploitation. Over time, the outcomes of these proximal relational changes are hypothesised to produce long-term improvements in young people's life chances, safety and community cohesion.

2.3. Business as usual

The services received by young people in the control patches consist of 'business as usual' (BAU), i.e. they are the provision and support provided to young people by consortium and non-consortium youth organisations in the absence of the detached youth work intervention.

As reported in our previous feasibility and scoping work, one of the challenges of detached youth work is that it is difficult to determine conclusively what might constitute 'business as usual'. As detached youth work is not a manualised programme it is therefore important to understand what it *is not*, and from there to describe other youth engagement activities.

Findings from prior work that informs this protocol suggest a shared perception among stakeholders that marginalised young people who engage with detached youth work are unlikely to be engaged in other youth services. These young people might be in school but are also frequently attending pupil referral units or not in education, employment or training. This implies that for many of these young people, business as usual may involve little to no additional youth related specific support.

Nevertheless, the scoping work undertaken and the co-design phase of this work described a broad range of street-based provision that varies by area that may be present within the category of business as usual, including:

- Other youth work, such as centre-based activity and short-term street-based youth work or outreach.
- Usual and additional targeted police activity, including one-off or short-term youth engagement and outreach activity, hot spot policing, routine patrols, stop and search, rapid response, drug enforcement operations, ad hoc investigations, police interventions with individual suspected offenders including arrests, out of court disposal and criminal proceedings, and focused deterrence.
- Projects initiated or funded by violence reduction units/partnerships such as mentoring, hospital-based interventions and education programmes.
- Multi-agency planning and information sharing.

To ensure that this pilot trial can distinguish the features of detached youth work clearly from other provisions, consortia will be expected to engage significantly with local partners and maintain a robust monitoring system to monitor non-consortium youth provision in intervention and control patches where feasible. They will also monitor non-youth provision where relevant, such as hot-spot policing (see section 5.3 for more details). It is expected that delivery consortia will complete this bespoke monitoring form on a quarterly basis. This will help to monitor fidelity to the SPM and identify possible contamination in the control patches. See section 4.3 of this protocol for more information on the data to be collected.

3. Research questions

The present section sets out the research questions to be addressed across the four evaluation strands: the implementation and process evaluation (IPE), the pilot randomised controlled trial (RCT), the retrospective quasi-experimental design (QED) analysis, and the cost analysis. Together, these questions are designed to assess the feasibility of the proposed evaluation design and provide initial evidence on the promise of the shared practice model.

The objective of this pilot study is to test this study design and its potential to measure the impact of a shared model of detached youth work, provide insights into the evidence of promise of this model of detached youth work, and determine the likely sample size required for an impact evaluation. Together, these objectives will establish the feasibility of a full impact evaluation of this model of detached youth work.

The research questions to be answered are the following:

Implementation and process evaluation

1. Can a sufficient number of appropriate consortia sustain participation throughout the pilot study?
 - 1.1. Are consortia able to identify an adequate number of eligible patches for the pilot study (i.e., 10 per consortium)?
 - 1.2. What support is required to maintain ongoing engagement of consortia during the pilot study?
2. How feasible is it for consortia to deliver the shared practice model as intended?
 - 2.1. How acceptable and appropriate is the shared practice model for participants (i.e. delivery agencies and young people)?
 - 2.2. To what extent are consortia able to deliver the shared practice model with fidelity and how do delivery activities vary between patches?
3. To what extent do youth work agencies within the consortia follow the patch allocation and delivery parameters?
 - 3.1. To what extent can the consortia influence wider delivery partners in their areas to follow trial parameters?
4. Is it possible to engage young people in appropriate participatory and creative data collection methods within detached youth work settings?
5. What are the perceived impacts of detached youth work? (i.e. perceived impacts for young people and the wider community)
 - 5.1. What are the perceived mechanisms through which detached youth work may lead to change and to what extent do they align with the theory of change?
 - 5.2. Are there differences in the perceived impacts of detached youth work for young people from minoritised ethnic backgrounds?

Pilot randomised controlled trial

6. Can the required police data be obtained to conduct meaningful analyses comparing intervention and control areas?

- 6.1. Are the data available at a sufficient level of granularity to generate bespoke patch-level outcome measures?
 - 6.2. Can youth-related crimes and incidents be identified with a sufficient level of consistency?
- 7. Are there indications from police data that detached youth work has an impact on incidences of crime and antisocial behaviour?
- 8. Is it feasible to evaluate a shared model of detached youth work through an efficacy randomised controlled trial?
 - 8.1. Are amendments required to the shared practice model to make an efficacy study viable?
 - 8.2. Are amendments required to the study design to make an efficacy study viable?

Retrospective quasi-experimental design analysis

- 9. What sample size would be required for an efficacy study to detect an impact of detached youth work on police crime and incident statistics?

Cost analysis

- 10. What was the cost of delivery of the detached youth work?

4. Methods

4.1. Pilot trial RCT design

This is a randomised controlled trial that randomises ‘patches’. Local, socially and geographically meaningful ‘patches’ will be identified and defined by the regional consortia, according to the pre-established eligibility criteria. These patches will be randomised 1:1 to either the intervention or control group. The unit of analysis will be the patch, using patch-level (rather than individual or young person-level) outcomes. In parallel, we will conduct an in-depth implementation and process evaluation, including creative qualitative methods with young people – this is described in the following section.

A detailed exploration of the rationale for a patch-level RCT using administrative data (rather than an individual-level RCT or QED) is provided in the [feasibility study report](#) and summarised here. Randomisation of young people is not feasible as it would distort the very nature of detached youth work delivery and registration and consent would prove huge barriers to relationship building with young people. Similarly, a patch-level RCT using individual-level data would not be feasible; identifying and collecting data directly from young people in control patches would be extremely challenging, hard to match with the process in intervention patches, and could be deemed unethical. As this is a YEF trial, with a focus on reducing youth violence, the most appropriate administrative data source is considered to be police crime (violent and non-violent crime) and ASB data. This data is additionally well suited to the bespoke local remit of the intervention, with incident locations recorded with precise grid references.

These same challenges would present themselves in a patch-level QED design, with the additional challenges of identifying appropriate control patches and/or groups of young people, prescribing or influencing the delivery model, and maintaining delivery-free control areas. By its nature, DYW is prioritised in areas of highest need where immediate support is required, meaning that identifying comparison patches with similar characteristics would be challenging. A patch-level RCT design using administrative police data as the outcome was therefore selected as the most appropriate design.

Research questions

6. Can the required police data be obtained to conduct meaningful analyses comparing intervention and control areas?
 - 6.1. Are the data available at a sufficient level of granularity to generate bespoke patch-level outcome measures?

- 6.2. Can youth-related crimes and incidents be identified with a sufficient level of consistency?
7. Are there indications from police data that detached youth work has an impact on incidences of crime and antisocial behaviour?
8. Is it feasible to evaluate a shared model of detached youth work through an efficacy randomised controlled trial?
 - 8.1. Are amendments required to the shared practice model to make an efficacy study viable?
 - 8.2. Are amendments required to the study design to make an efficacy study viable?

Eligibility and randomisation

Each regional consortium is responsible for identifying ten potential delivery patches that meet the below eligibility criteria:

- No detached youth work has been delivered within the patch from October 2025 to the start of the reconnaissance period (October 2026).
- There is evidence of an issue of youth crime/ASB that detached youth work might help to reduce. This criterion does not have a numeric threshold, acknowledging variation across contexts and communities. However, consortia were provided with historical data about national averages to help justify what might be considered 'high' or 'normal' rates of incidents per hectare.
- The patch is an appropriate size for DYW teams to cover it within one session, while also being large enough to allow for some movement of young people, for example, between indoor and outdoor spaces that are favoured differently by young people depending on seasonal changes. Consortia have been asked to identify patches of between 10-100 hectares in size. If larger patches are proposed, then consortia are expected to provide evidence that these patches can be covered effectively by the detached youth work team each week.
- The patch covers an area where a reachable population of young people are known or observed to gather frequently. Consortia are expected to consider young people's movement between meeting places, and patches should therefore be designed to accommodate some movement.

- The consortia have sufficient local knowledge, relationships and commitment of relevant organisations to deliver, monitor and influence what takes place in the patch throughout the duration of the project.

Each consortium has identified ten patches by filling in a bespoke form and drawing the area perimeters in geojson.com to generate shapefiles. These will be imported into QGIS and relevant police.uk data will be attached to check the evidence that there are relatively high crime and incident rates within each patch. Any proposed patches that do not fit the study criteria will be checked with the delivery team prior to randomisation and refined or excluded (and replaced, if possible). A replacement for each will be sought.

While sufficiently restrictive to ensure comparability between patches, the criteria for patch identification are necessarily somewhat qualitative in nature, to account for the variability between delivery contexts and socio-spatial points of interest. Mirroring (to the extent feasible) delivery agencies' processes for identifying the areas they work in will also ensure the evaluation is assessing a form of detached youth work that is sufficiently similar to that typically employed across the country. Patches are therefore bespoke, hyper-local, unequally sized spatial units rather than publicly available ONS units such as lower-layer super output areas. They will vary somewhat by size, shape, land-use, population density, and key social features. An objective of this pilot trial is to understand if and how delivery in patches of this nature can be evaluated.

However, these features create a methodological challenge because of what is termed the Modifiable Areal Unit Problem (MAUP), first coined by Openshaw and Taylor (1979). MAUP is a form of aggregation bias (which has also been documented in different disciplines since the 1930s). The central problem with MAUP is that statistical relationships – correlations – vary depending on the spatial scale being used. They can vary in direction and magnitude, leading to different conclusions depending on the spatial unit used.

In the context of this pilot RCT, attempts to mitigate MAUP can cause further problems. Redrawing or aggregating spatial units may lead to treatment and control patches that differ in size, population composition or density, which in turn might drive differences in outcomes. Further, even if areal units were all the same size by area, they may still be fundamentally different in terms of how the space is used or in their spatial configuration (e.g. shape, layout, distribution of key social features), potentially leading to baseline imbalance. We therefore have acknowledged differences and address this through the study design. Our preferred stratification approach to mitigate baseline qualitative and quantitative variation between patches is described in the next section.

Stratified randomisation

During the mobilisation phase, the ten eligible patches per consortium (40 patches in total) will be randomly allocated to a study arm, five to detached youth work and five to control (business as usual) using stratification.

The randomisation will be stratified to mitigate baseline qualitative and quantitative differences on factors that are predictive of outcomes between intervention and control groups (Ariel et al., 2022). The optimal stratification dimensions will be best refined once we have full information on the nature of included evaluation patches. However, this section systematically outlines our preferred approach.

Stratified randomisation will be conducted by location (i.e. regional consortium), local authority (if necessary – applies to two consortia), median split crime counts in previous 12 months (from publicly available police.uk data), and if possible, size of patch measure in metres squared. Specifically, our approach will proceed in the following steps:

- **Stratification by regional consortium:** this stage recognises inherent differences in how the shared practice model is delivered locally, ensures comparability between different local contexts, and an equal distribution of DYW delivery across areas.
- **Stratification by local authority:** in regional consortia that cover more than one local authority, and where at least two patches have been identified per local authority, randomisation will be stratified by local authority to ensure at least one patch is randomised to the intervention group. This is deemed important to ensure local authority commitment across the evaluation period. This level of stratification has been agreed with the YEF evaluation manager. Stratifying by local authority has been prioritised over other potential stratifiers (deprivation, local area demographics) as it assures the buy-in required from participating local authorities at this stage in the evaluation process by guaranteeing that they will receive delivery in their area, despite constraining the ability to control for variation on these other dimensions.
- **Stratification by median-split crimes per hectare over previous 12 months:** patches within each local authority will be rank-ordered by crime rate and divided into two categories split by the median for the sample of patches in the study. Patches will be randomised 1:1 (1 treatment: 1 control) using a random number generator in a reproducible statistical programme and/or randomisation platform that logs allocations and has a random seed function.¹ Police.uk is easily accessible, publicly

¹ E.g. <https://sites.google.com/researchdesign.uk/alexsutherland/tools-for-experiments>

available crime data which can be mapped onto the shapefiles generated for each patch. Using the readily available police.uk data² as the source of a stratifier (rather than youth-crime data from police forces that will be used for outcome measurement) will allow for the random allocation to be completed very quickly during the mobilisation phase. This step will mitigate baseline differences in crime. Police.uk data uses 'snap points' for the location of incidents. For small patches, this may introduce noise and uncertainty to the data. If this challenge is not easily navigable, this step will not be conducted.

- **Stratification by patch size:** if deemed necessary and possible upon assessment of the evaluation patches, we will stratify by geographical size. Stratifying by many variables with a small number of units risks problems with 'sparseness' – that is, if divided by several variables it is likely that some combinations will have few or no patches in them. This can lead to severe imbalances that make it infeasible. This step will therefore only be if the features of patches make it feasible. This also has implications for degrees of freedom in the analysis. While this is manageable within a pilot of this scale, it is noted as a consideration for the design of any subsequent efficacy trial with a larger number of patches. We note that stratifying by crimes per hectare in the previous 12 months incorporates patch size so it may be that it is not necessary/collinear to include patch size as well.

The final approach will be established prior to the randomisation based on the assessment of evaluation patches; the evaluator team will conduct the randomisation only once (June 2026). The randomisation will be carried out within SPSS as it can log allocations and has a random seed function by the pilot trial statistician (Dr. Purdon).

Participants

The nature of detached youth work means that the young people who engage are not formally registered to an intervention or youth service. They engage, or do not engage, on a voluntary basis that may change from minute to minute and week to week. Participants will therefore be the young people who chose to engage with detached youth workers at any point during the course of delivery. Previous research has shown that these young people are predominantly aged 10-17 years old (Hall et al., 2024). After each session, detached youth workers record how many young people they worked with and how many of those young people were new to them, as well as perceived and actual (where appropriate) demographic information regarding the young people engaged. Perceived demographic information is

² Police.uk data is not available for Greater Manchester Police and thus stratification would require input from the relevant police analyst.

recorded to provide an indication of who the work is reaching when young people do not provide the information themselves. This information will be used by consortia to regularly reflect on whether they are reaching the intended population, including those believed to be at risk of exploitation, and if there are facing any barriers to them reaching and engaging children and young people from specific backgrounds through detached youth work.

The unit of analysis will be a patch. Patches will be selected according to the criteria described above.

Sample size

This pilot trial will involve 40 patches across four regional consortia: 20 detached youth work patches and 20 control patches. This pilot is not powered to detect a main effect of the intervention; this sample size has been selected to understand the feasibility of delivering the shared practice model and evaluating detached youth work using the current pilot design.

The sample size and recruited consortia will provide evidence for the feasibility of implementing this project across a variety of contexts within the UK; the consortia include a range of social, geographical, and cultural contexts in which delivery will take place.

The four consortia consist of compulsory partners (Youth work provider, LA, police force) and optional partners (Violence Reduction Units [VRUs], Community Safety Partnerships, OPCCs) and cover urban, semi-urban, and rural settings across six local authorities and five police forces. This number of patches (40) will enable us to observe how differences in youth needs and demographics, local service infrastructure, and patch types affects delivery fidelity, contamination risk (for example, detached youth work delivery in the control patches), and partnership working. The pilot trial will explore similarities and differences in the barriers and facilitators across these contexts and their influence on delivery and the participant journey. This will include understanding the factors that influence the ability of a patch or consortium to participate in a trial; if a number of patches withdraw (e.g. because the delivery organisation considers provision of DYW in the patch unfeasible during the reconnaissance period, a significant incident means local commitment to the project is withdrawn, or young people in an area do not engage with the intervention) or there is significant contamination, it will provide insights into the patch-level characteristics that may or may not be consequential. Understanding this diversity is crucial to understanding how the practice model and evaluation design could be scaled up nationally – current estimates suggest that several hundred patches would be required for an efficacy trial.

Each consortium was required to identify ten eligible delivery patches. This is to ensure sufficient numbers of patches per consortium to randomise. The criteria of ten patches per

consortium was also specified as beneficial for an efficacy evaluation; in terms of delivery management and resourcing, fewer consortia with more patches is considered more likely to be scalable and this model should therefore be tested at pilot. In terms of buy-in from delivery partners, the ability to deliver in at least five new areas also makes the project more desirable, supporting consortium recruitment and engagement.

The consortia have submitted their proposed delivery documentation ('blueprints'), budgets and proposed patches which will be assessed before randomisation during the mobilisation phase.

In combination with the retrospective quasi-experimental design analysis (see section 4.2) the pilot trial data will also give an approximate estimate of the effect size, albeit with wide confidence intervals. The QED, drawing on a larger historical sample, is intended to provide a more precise effect size estimate for this purpose. This will help determine the necessary sample size for a full efficacy study. It is possible that the pilot and QED give estimates of effect that are incompatible, that is they may be significantly different to one another. If this was to happen, the IPE will be used to explore why the difference has arisen and which estimate is most likely to reflect the probable findings from an efficacy trial, the expectation being that the pilot study estimates will probably be considered the most robust.

Outcome measures

The theory of change (Appendix B) outlines the intended impacts of detached youth work for young people and for local communities.

For this pilot evaluation, we plan to construct and measure one primary outcome, and one secondary outcome.

The **primary outcome** for the study will be offence counts per hectare (a 100m x 100m square / 10,000m²) of '**youth-related³ violent and non-violent recorded crime (non-domestic)**' within the delivery and control patches. Included crimes are the following violent and non-violent crime types (see Appendix C for a full list of notifiable offence types and how the Home Office group them into the following categories and Appendix D on how we gathered information on police forces work with youth-related qualifiers during the co-design phase):

³ 'Youth-related' is defined here to include incidents where a young person (aged under 18) is recorded as either the offender/suspect or the victim/complainant. The definition captures the DYW intervention's aim to reduce both violence perpetrated by young people and their victimisation. Using both offender and victim flags also maximises the data available for the primary outcome measure, since complete age data for offenders or victims is not consistently available across all five forces.

Violent crimes:

- Homicide
- Violence with injury
- Violent without injury
- Stalking and harassment
- Robbery
- Possession of weapons offences
- Violent disorder (offence code 62A, which the HO currently classifies as a type of public order)
- PLUS – *if possible* – any other crimes (of any type) that are flagged in the police data as involving knives/weapons (see below for further details/caveat)

Non-violent crimes:

- Vehicle theft offences,
- Theft from person,
- Bicycle theft,
- Other theft,
- Criminal damage and Arson (including HO code 59 Threat of Criminal Damage),
- Public Order (excluding code 62A Violent disorder, as this is already captured in the primary outcome),
- but EXCLUDING – *if already captured in the primary outcome* – any crimes that involve knives/weapons (to avoid double-counting with the primary outcome).

Note that we will seek to exclude records flagged as ‘domestic’ in nature.

Our conversations with police analysts during the co-design phase suggest this should potentially be possible for crime records by drawing upon offence flags for ‘youth related’ incidents held within the microdata, in combination with information recorded on the age of the victim and/or perpetrator (where either is aged under 18). Our conversations with police analysts suggest that using ‘youth related’ flags may not be possible for incidents of antisocial behaviour, due to data limitations, but we will explore this thoroughly with the police data analysts during the course of the data collation phase.

The primary measure is deemed appropriate for assessing outcomes directly related to YEF’s mandate regarding reducing youth violence while also being sufficiently inclusive of incidents for a meaningful analysis.

We also plan to construct a secondary outcome: police incidents of ‘youth-related antisocial behaviour’ per hectare. The ‘youth-related antisocial behaviour’ secondary indicator will

consist of counts of all police incidents of antisocial behaviour within the delivery and control patches across all three sub-categories:

- Personal
- Environmental
- Nuisance

We do not propose including youth-related antisocial behaviour within the primary outcome measure because the ASB data and recorded crime data are typically drawn from different police force data stores and the approach for identifying youth-related incidents may vary.

For the primary analyses, counts will not be limited to particular hours of the day as the evaluation is exploring the impact of detached youth work on young people's outcomes more widely, rather than only during specified hours when practitioners are present.

Depending on the numbers of violent crimes and non-violent crimes included in outcome data sets, we may explore some additional analyses for these two subsets separately, but any such work would be presented as supplemental exploratory analysis rather than dedicated outcome measure analysis. Similarly, depending on the final practical approaches to identifying 'youth related' recorded crimes and police incidents of ASB, we may be able to explore combining crimes and ASB into a single composite measure, but again this would only be undertaken as a supplemental exploratory piece of analysis, and it would not form part of the core primary or secondary outcome analyses. Supplemental exploratory analyses will also assess potential spatial displacement or diffusion of benefit (i.e., whether reductions in youth-related crime within DYW patches coincide with changes in immediately surrounding areas). This may include spatially weighted analyses applying distance-based weightings to incidents occurring outside but near patch boundaries.

It is important to acknowledge, however, that the outcome measures we are proposing here are new and innovative. As such, we may have to modify our plans, contingent upon the detailed data review and development process that will underpin this pilot evaluation. However, based on our discussions to date, we have sufficient confidence to recommend this as the best way forward for the pilot.

Outcome measure operationalisation

The primary outcome will be measured using counts of recorded crimes, and the secondary outcome will be measured using counts of police incidents of ASB per patch. There is an important distinction in police recording and statistical reporting practices between 'police recorded crimes' and 'police incidents of ASB'. Police recorded crimes are recorded in line with the National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS) and the Home Office Counting Rules

(HOCR) and are assigned to one of the c. 130 different notifiable offence categories for which the Home Office publish recorded crime statistics. Police incidents of ASB, on the other hand, are recorded in line with the National Standard for Incident Recording (NSIR) and are assigned to one of the three ASB-related categories of the National Incident Category List (NICL): personal, environmental or nuisance.

For this pilot evaluation, we will work closely with the police force data analysts to obtain the best possible data from each force. For instance, we will ensure that the definition of ASB used will be consistent with Annual Data Requirement 701 (ADR 701) rather than that used by forces for the alternative ADR 342 (as we know from our previous research that there are data quality problems with the ADR 342 definition of ASB, for instance, some forces include all 'records of contact' in their ADR 342 returns, many of which would not formally be regarded as a police incident).

Ideally, in addition to standardisation by counts per hectare to allow patches to be more directly comparable, we would like to investigate creating standardised counts that account for variation in patches socio-spatial contexts. However, the appropriate method for this would need to be established through exploratory analyses in the pilot, once the nature of identified evaluation patches can be fully explored. This approach will provide important learning for the optimal analysis approach for an efficacy trial and for future place-based studies of DYW or more general place-based initiatives⁴.

Data collection

Overview

Police recorded crime and antisocial behaviour incident data for the impact analysis will be collected directly from police forces. We will seek to establish appropriate data/information sharing agreements with support from the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC). We will then work with analysts at the relevant forces to design bespoke data requests which will be downloaded and shared with the research team monthly. In parallel with the monthly data extracts, we will have monthly contact with police force analysts through which we will identify and understand any data anomalies that could affect analyses. Please see below for

⁴ For instance, given that some patches may not include any residential properties (e.g. if the patch covers only park land or only retail areas), it would not be appropriate to produce crime/ASB rates using a simple resident population denominator. One option might be to use areal size (rather than population size) as the denominator for crime/ASB rates, but again this is potentially complicated if patches are very different in terms of functional land use. This pilot trial will therefore use counts of youth-related recorded crimes and police incidents of antisocial behaviour as the outcome measures. We will additionally conduct supplementary analyses of rate-based outcomes measures to establish whether or not they are suitable for an efficacy trial.

further details on our rationale for monthly extracts rather than a single extract at completion of detached youth work delivery.

Over the course of the co-design period, we have engaged directly with decision makers and data analysts at each of the five police forces (Cleveland Police, Greater Manchester Police, South Yorkshire Police, West Yorkshire Police, and Wiltshire Police) to understand what data they already collect, the form in which it is stored, and the likelihood of them being able to engage with the evaluation as we have proposed. These conversations have been very positive, with indications that forces will be able to provide the data in the form requested – subject to establishing appropriate data sharing protocols and obtaining approval from the relevant decision makers – which will enable the evaluation team to construct the requisite primary and secondary outcome indicators. There has been clear and demonstrable interest, enthusiasm and support from all partner police forces, with data analysts from each force engaging in detailed data-related discussions and providing written responses to a series of data-related questions posed by the evaluation team. Please see Appendix D for the blank information collection template form that has been completed by all five partner forces.

Data requirements and access

To understand changes in reported crime and antisocial behaviour related to young people, the data need to be both sufficiently local to the selected evaluation areas and specific to incidents involving young people. These requirements present challenges to acquiring data on the primary and secondary outcomes – youth-related violent and non-violent crime and antisocial behaviour – in addition to the challenge of accessing force-level police data, which can take lengthy negotiations to establish, especially when inquiring about sensitive data related to young people. Furthermore, although all sources of police crime and antisocial behaviour data essentially relate to the same events that happen ‘on the ground’, the processes through which these police data are recorded, managed and (potentially) made available for analytical use can vary quite substantially (i.e. depending on whether it is accessed direct from forces, via a centralised repository of raw data, or via a centralised repository of publicly available open data – as we know that slightly different data cleaning and processing steps are applied to the data depending on the source). This can lead to notable differences in the resultant data resources, which can have implications for their use for evaluation purposes.

In the scoping study report we described and ranked five potential options for sourcing police data from most to least optimal. Evaluation team members have prior experience of accessing police crime and antisocial behaviour data through each of these five options, so there is demonstrable precedent for gaining access to the requisite data for this Detached Youth Work pilot evaluation. In this current protocol, we propose using the most optimal approach, as this

is most likely to provide the data required to conduct meaningful impact analyses. Our discussions with police force analysts during the drafting of this protocol have not raised any specific concerns that suggest that our preferred option will not be possible, but we remain mindful of the need to secure the necessary data permissions, as is standard practice when seeking to work with police data.

If the preferred data access option is not successful, this will directly inform research question 6 regarding whether it is possible to access appropriate data to conduct this trial.

However, if this option is not workable, as described in the scoping report, there are four further data access options that could be explored. This means that the trial will still be operationalizable, though with the limitations described in Appendix E.

The most optimal (and our preferred) option is to source bespoke extracts of geocoded data from the police forces covering the selected DYW and control patches. Data provided through this approach will be available for the researchers in the pilot evaluation to analyse flexibly as required. This approach has the advantage of being designed specifically for the purpose of evaluating the DYW patches. This data option will:

- allow us to identify the specific crime type(s) of interest (of ~130 separate notifiable offence types) and incidents of antisocial behaviour (please see Appendix C for a detailed list of the notifiable crime categories (plus ASB) that we plan to include in the primary outcome measure);
- allow us to identify the specific dates and times of the crime or incident occurrence (and potentially linked to DYW activity in the intervention areas)– although this would not feed into the primary outcome measure, it would provide valuable contextual information on the patterns of youth-related crime and antisocial behaviour in the patches;
- provide maximum accuracy in the geographical location assigned to each crime and incident (drawing upon actual eastings and northings or, if these are not recorded for some reason, the full postcode);
- ensure the data is as up-to-date possible (reflecting, for instance, changes and reclassifications of crimes and incidents in the days, weeks and sometimes months following the initial report);
- allow the evaluation team to query any unusual data features with the local police force experts;

- and, critically, provide the opportunity to include relevant ‘flags’, ‘markers’, or ‘qualifiers’ in the dataset that identify crimes or incidents that are youth-related (as offender or victim).

Through conversations so far, we understand that all participating police forces do attach a qualifier or ‘flag’ to indicate crimes and incidents that are ‘youth related’. However, there is limited statutory guidance on how this qualifier should be applied, and hence there may be a degree of variation in coding approaches between different police forces and there may be some data quality issues due to inconsistent use.

We will work closely with police data analysts to understand how the qualifiers are applied in their police force and how best they could be used within the pilot evaluation. Through our conversations with police analysts during the protocol drafting phase, we have jointly identified the possibility of deriving enhanced youth-related indicators through drawing upon the suspect and victim ages as recorded on the crime and incident recording systems, in combination with youth-related qualifiers to mitigate data quality issues. For reported incidents of ASB where no perpetrator or victim has been identified, ages are typically not available against which to check youth-related qualifiers. Therefore, for ASB, our default approach will be sequential: where age data are available against ASB incident records, we will use them to confirm youth involvement; where they are not, we will rely on the force’s own youth-related qualifier flag, assigned by call handlers per NICL standard with a focus on the protagonist of the incident. If a force’s qualifier data proves insufficiently complete or consistent, we will consider whether to analyse all ASB incidents within the patch and will report any such decision and its rationale transparently. We will also work with each force’s data analysts to map how qualifier codes are assigned and assess their reliability and comparability across forces before finalising the analytical approach.

The investigation of youth-related ASB as a secondary outcome will be exploratory. The pilot will first establish how ASB is recorded across the five participating forces, then aggregate the different data formats into a workable analytical framework. Findings on the ASB secondary outcome should therefore be interpreted as exploratory and developmental, not as summative evidence of impact. We will address data quality limitations explicitly in the interpretation of results, including consistency of qualifier application across forces and the risk of under-identification of youth involvement due to adultification of young people from minoritised ethnic groups.

As noted above, there are numerous precedents for this type of approach at local level (i.e. where researchers work closely with police analysts for a particular project in a particular

police force)⁵ and there is also a precedent for national level coverage of this type of approach (covering all 43 territorial police forces of England and Wales).⁶ All consortia in this study have secured the cooperation of the relevant police force(s), and we have also contacted the National Police Chief's Council (NPCC) to request their support, which we hope will help foster support from the requisite police force decision makers (initially at Chief Constable level) to provide the required access to data and analysts' time. We have had initial conversations with NPCC senior representatives during the co-design phase, and will be formally commencing the process of requesting NPCC's support in the mobilisation phase. While the existence of precedents should not be interpreted as a guarantee that this approach would be achievable for this pilot study, conversations so far with the police have been positive.

Assuming data permissions are approved, then each of the selected police forces would supply a series of monthly bespoke extracts of geocoded police recorded crime and antisocial behaviour incident data to the evaluation team, to be collated on a secure data processing machine. See the section below for further details of the rationale for the monthly extract approach.

An important constraint of this approach is that the sensitivity of the data would require all storage and processing to be undertaken within a secure data environment, which may potentially require one of the local police forces to agree to physically host the researcher(s) for the duration of the work. Again, there is precedent for this form of working, and we have already commenced the process of seeking such physical desk space with a partner police force.

The rationale for sourcing monthly police data extracts for the pilot

Through the co-design discussions with police force analysts, it became clear that there is a consensus across all five partner forces in support for our preferred data access option (as set out above), subject to securing the necessary data access permissions. The force analysts also agreed there is merit in adopting a monthly extract approach, both for the evaluation team and for the force analysts themselves.

Based on our experience of working with police analysts on these sorts of data requests, we are clear that our research team has a duty to balance the evaluation's need for robust police data with the need to minimise the resource burden placed on force analysts. If our request of force analysts is not reasonable and does not take into account their recommendations

⁵ See, for instance, Brennan, et al (2024) Focused Deterrence Randomised Controlled Study: Early Implementation Report. Youth Endowment Fund.

⁶ McLennan, D. (2022) Harmonised crime statistics for England and Wales at Lower layer Super Output Area level: Technical Note. Internal report for the Home Office.

and preferences, then there is a real risk that the evaluation will not be able to draw upon the best possible data. As we set out below, adopting a monthly extract approach mitigates this risk in a number of ways.

It is important to clarify that the monthly extracts will be collated up until the end of the detached youth work delivery period and then combined to form the basis of the final primary and secondary outcome measures, which will be the *annual* crime and incident counts at patch level. The baseline period for the primary outcome measure will be October 2025 – September 2026, and the intervention delivery period will be April 2027 – March 2028. (Note that the six-month reconnaissance period of October 2026 – March 2027 will be excluded from the primary data analysis but explored through exploratory analyses.) The monthly extracts will be used to build these annual outcome statistics. It is *not* the intention to create month-by-month outcome measures.

Given the very short time between the end of delivery and submission of the draft report, an advantage of sourcing monthly data extracts is that it will allow the evaluation team to start building and testing the regression models of potential intervention impact whilst the delivery of detached youth work is still ongoing. This will help ensure that the final data analysis can be undertaken in full at the end of the delivery period, as the methodological development and testing will be done prior to this end point. Importantly, the evaluation team will ensure there is no communication of any test model results to any consortium partners or other parties during the delivery time window, so as not to jeopardise the fidelity of the evaluation.

Police analysts already submit a range of monthly data uploads (e.g. to Police.uk, etc). This standardised process means that establishing a monthly bespoke extract download was seen by the police analysts engaged in the co-design phase to be preferable to a single final data tranche or six-monthly tranches etc. A primary reason for this is that the data we are requesting for this pilot evaluation are new and innovative and will require bespoke processing by the force analysts to derive a ‘youth related’ indicator for each recorded crime and ASB incident record.

The new and innovative nature of the police data we are requesting for our primary outcome measure means that there will inevitably be an initial intensive period of data development by the police analysts in conjunction with the evaluation team. The force analysts have advised us that in order for us to produce the best evaluation outcome measures they will need to undertake data development work to combine existing ‘youth related’ flags/qualifiers with supplemental information on victim and/or perpetrator/suspect age. This will then be used in combination with other flags/qualifiers to identify knife/weapon-related crimes (as needed for the primary outcome measures) and to identify domestic-related crimes (to exclude them from the outcome measures). As far as we are aware, this combination of data

requirements has never been done before in this way. As such, it will require iterative development between the pilot evaluation team and the five police force analysts.

During the co-design phase, the force analysts provided key feedback confirming that it is typically easier for them to give their input on a 'little and often' basis than for them to undertake significant pieces of work in a few large blocks. Monthly extracts allow the coding scripts to be tweaked iteratively (if needed) on a monthly basis, with any corrections retrospectively applied to previous months' data. Again, based on our previous experience of working with police crime and incident data, we appreciate that achieving the 'final' version of a dataset may take multiple attempts, though a data analyst in the co-design phase described the process as becoming "a monthly push of the button" once the data request has been finalised.

This same consideration of 'little-and-often' police analyst input applies equally to the quality assurance work that will be undertaken by the evaluation team, in conjunction with the police analysts. Receiving police datasets on a month-by-month basis means that the quality assurance can similarly be undertaken monthly, and any anomalies in the latest month fed back to the respective police analyst(s) for their immediate review. These data anomalies could be caused by a range of different factors, such as changes to police force recording practices, changes to police force IT systems, or changes to Home Office Counting Rules etc. During the co-design phase, the force analysts indicated that it would be more manageable for them to review small month-specific data queries than be presented with a long list of data queries towards the end of the pilot evaluation covering a 12-month span. Routine monthly extracts increase the likelihood of the evaluation team and force analysts identifying issues early and rectifying those issues so as not to jeopardise the primary outcome measure.

Moving to a two-monthly or three-monthly data transmission plan would not reduce the amount of time required to develop, quality assure and clean the data; it would simply require more time to be invested at less frequent intervals. As noted above, this is sub-optimal for both the police analysts and the evaluation team.

A further advantage of adopting a monthly extract approach is that it mitigates the risk of police analyst turnover within the partner police forces. Once a monthly extract has been established as a routine exercise, this can be continued uninterrupted should a key data analyst leave their post. We are aware from our previous work with police forces that staff turnover can result in the loss of important institutional knowledge from police analytical teams. It would be risky to assume that the evaluation team could depend on each partner force to provide one single extract of all the requisite data with no data quality concerns at the completion of the detached youth work delivery period. Adopting that single-extract approach may result in one or more forces not being able to provide any useable data or

providing data that is inconsistent with the other partner forces or missing key qualifiers. This would have serious consequences for the pilot evaluation as a whole.

In summary, although we acknowledge that the police data development and collation (and analysis) components of this pilot evaluation represent a notable portion of the overall budget, our previous experience of working with police forces, and of developing bespoke datasets, leads us to strongly recommend this approach. The alternative, of seeking less frequent extracts, introduces significant risk to the data development and collation process, and therefore risks jeopardising the analysis of the evaluation's primary outcome measure. And, as noted above, it would not result in less work and therefore it would not result in a budget reduction. Although we cannot guarantee that our preferred data access option will be feasible, our conversations with force analysts have confirmed to us that this will certainly give us by far the best chance of achieving this goal.

Data analysis

This pilot RCT will not be powered to detect impact as it would be at full efficacy study scale. However, we plan to run regression models to generate the estimated effect sizes and their confidence intervals for the police data outcomes. These models will account for baseline levels, as police data will be collated over a 12 month period prior to the reconnaissance period, providing a stable estimate (note that we will collate data for 24 months prior to the reconnaissance period, and use this to inform our quality assurance and data cleaning processes, but the actual 'baseline' period will be the 12 months prior to the commencement of the reconnaissance period, namely October 2025 – September 2026). The study will use DYW 'patches' as both the unit of randomisation and unit of analysis. Prior to running the main analysis we will conduct a simple comparison of baseline means to establish whether the two arms of the pilot trial are equivalent and the trial report will describe any differences observed.

As noted above, we plan to construct and measure one primary outcome, and one secondary outcome.

The **primary outcome** for the study will be offence counts per hectare of '**youth-related violent and non-violent crime**'.

Analysis will be on the basis of intention-to-treat (ITT) – i.e. analysing patches as randomised, regardless of whether they received treatment or not. We will use combined crime counts per hectare in each patch for included offences (see list above) for the 12 months of delivery (April 2027 – March 2028 inclusive), as the primary outcome for the study. As 'patches' do not translate to ONS geographical units such as OA/LSOA or Ward it would not be appropriate

to use crime-rates as a result. The study is working with count data analytically so the analysis model will account for this via the use of Poisson or quasi-Poisson regression models. Depending on the outcome distribution i.e. how many zeros and whether over-dispersed, it may be necessary to use a zero-inflated or negative binomial model to analyse the data. For the purpose of this protocol, we will work on the basis of a standard Poisson model.

$$y = \text{intercept} + \text{treatment}_{[0/1]} + \text{baselineprev}_{12} + LA_{1\dots k} + \text{crime_hi}_{[0/1]} + e$$

Where y is the count of included offences per hectare in the 12 months of delivery in each patch (April 2027 – March 2028). The analysis model will be a baseline controlled outcome analysis, with the crime count per hectare from the baseline 12 months (October 2025 – September 2026, inclusive) acting as the pre-intervention baseline for each patch. This has the benefit of accounting for within-patch prior offending counts (e.g. patch-specific variation in the outcome pre-intervention) and reducing pre-treatment between-patch variation, thereby increasing power. The model will also include $k-1$ dummy variables for Local Authority, as randomisation is stratified by LA. As we will include prior crime per hectare we will not need to include the median-split hi/lo crime rate stratifying variable. Finally, treatment group will be signified by a 0=control and 1=treatment group indicator variable and an error term (e). To account for possible mis-specification in the main ITT analysis we will use robust standard errors. We appreciate that this will increase the size of standard errors; however, we think that is better to guard against misspecification at the expense of power in an already underpowered trial.

Strata variables used in stratification are included in the regression model because random assignment is conditional on those variables and, as noted by Kahan and Morris (2012), the inclusion of such variables in randomisation introduces a correlation between treatment groups. Omitted stratification variables leads to an over-estimation of p -values, confidence intervals and inaccurate significance testing. The baseline crime rate deciphered using police.uk data used at stratification will not be included in the regression model due to multicollinearity with the baseline youth-related crime count.

The spatial element of the trial means that several other sensitivity analyses may be necessary to assess whether there is any displacement effect. Similarly, there are also spatial auto-correlation issues to account for - which we have dealt with largely through ensuring that delivery and control patches are not geographically contiguous.

Similar regression models will be run for the **secondary outcome: 'youth-related antisocial behaviour'**.

If feasible, we will also run some exploratory analyses on shoplifting and drugs offences, but we do not recommend including these in the primary or secondary outcomes. Shoplifting can

only happen where there are shops, and we do not know which patches will/won't contain shops, and the stratification process will not consider 'points of interest', such as high streets or specific shops. Rates of recorded drugs offences are highly dependent on hyper-local targeted police efforts and local policy and are therefore likely to vary significant between and even within (temporally) patches.

We will also conduct analysis to account for fidelity to the shared practice model. If one or more of the patches or consortia are not considered to have followed the SPM sufficiently, then sensitivity analysis excluding this/these patches or consortia will be conducted separately and the results presented. The pilot will be insufficiently large to allow for formal IV analysis.

The close contact with police force analysts and sharing of bespoke extracts that we plan to establish will allow timely and accurate identification of data anomalies or missing data, with the ability to amend or account for data issues via sensitivity analyses as needed.

Assuming a standard Poisson model is used, effect sizes will be reported as Incidence Rate Ratios with 95% confidence intervals in the form IRR [lower, upper]. All analyses for the RCT and QED will be conducted either in R Studio, Stata, or in equivalent statistical software.

Missing data

If, for any reason, a force cannot provide useable data for a given month – and we cannot resolve this with the force during the evaluation period – then it is likely that the problem will apply to the entire force area, rather than a particular geographical portion of the force. Therefore, the issue, as unlikely as it is to occur, would likely affect the delivery patch and the control patch. As such, we would use an imputation approach to complete the missing observation(s), with imputations set to 1000 using all the variables in the equation above and auxiliaries relating to land use and socio-economic status.

Additional feasible analyses

The presence of detailed spatial and temporal detail in the police data if accessed via the preferred data access option will enable the evaluation team to perform a wider range of analyses than is required for the primary outcome. These additional analyses would be able to inform best practice for an efficacy study and are only preliminarily described (without definitive models and equations) and dependent on the richness of the accessible police data. They should be viewed as exploratory and aimed at providing suggestions to maximise the robustness of a future efficacy trial rather than as conclusive evidence. At the most basic level, the records will be aggregated to detached youth work patches to form a core set of detached youth work crime and antisocial behaviour statistics, but these statistics can also be produced

for researcher-defined temporal periods to identify unusual spikes that may mask trends, facilitating more comprehensive and meaningful analysis.

The data can also be spatially aggregated in various ways. For instance, aggregating to grid squares or hexagons may provide insights into how crime and antisocial behaviour patterns and trends are changing *internally* across different parts of the selected detached youth work patches, and in immediately surrounding areas, which will help us understand spill-over or displacement effects.

This data will also allow us to examine the extent to which the geographical definition of the detached youth work patches directly or indirectly affects the crime and incident outcome statistics. For instance, detached youth work patches that consist largely of open spaces (e.g. parks) may not contain many addressable locations (as these are typically property-based) and are unlikely to contain a postcode centroid. As such, crimes and incidents that occur in these open spaces may be geocoded to locations outside of the open space, and therefore outside of the defined geographical extent of the detached youth work patch.

A key element that we will seek to explore through the pilot evaluation is the extent to which our analyses can focus on crimes and incidents that are youth-related, through the use of qualifier flags that police forces add to their data. These qualifiers are not collated into any national repository, so the only way to reliably determine which crimes and incidents have an element of youth involvement is to source the data direct from the respective police forces. As part of our analyses, we will assess patterns and trends in the youth-related crimes/incidents and compare these to the patterns and trends in crimes/incidents that are not recorded as being youth-related. This again will enable us to add extra nuance to the analysis and help determine whether an efficacy study will need to focus on youth-related crime and incidents or whether more general crime statistics are adequate.

4.2. Retrospective QED analysis

Research question

9. What sample size would be required for an efficacy study to detect an impact of detached youth work on police crime and incident statistics?

QED analysis approach

Whilst the pilot RCT will produce an effect size estimate, this will be based on 40 patches and will therefore have wide confidence intervals, limiting its precision for power calculations. The QED will draw on a substantially larger historical sample (approximately 60-80 patches),

providing a more precise estimate to complement the pilot findings. The two estimates will be triangulated as described in section 4.5.

We previously conducted a retrospective QED study to generate an estimate of the impact of detached youth work on the number of police incidents, as recorded in the publicly available police.uk data. This analysis involved 52 patches where detached youth work had been delivered for at least a year between 2020 and 2023, and 104 comparison areas (LSOAs) where detached youth work had not been delivered. The comparison LSOAs were selected to have the same rate of police incidents in 2019 per hectare as the detached youth work patches and the same trend in those rates between 2016 and 2019.

This analysis did not generate any evidence of a positive impact of detached youth work on police incident statistics, but there were a number of reasons identified to explain this. Firstly, it was somewhat unclear as to how intensively detached youth work had been delivered within the 52 patches, especially for the larger patches. Secondly, the outcome statistic (police incidents) covered all reported incidents (not specifically youth-related incidents). Both factors could lead to an underestimate of the effect size. Thirdly, the data was taken from the publicly available Police.uk repository, in other words our least-preferred 'option 5' for data access as this is least suited to the task (see Appendix E). Going forwards, our QED will use bespoke police data in the same way as for the pilot RCT analysis, as noted further below⁷.

To supplement the pilot study estimates of effect size we will conduct a retrospective QED, expanded with some modifications:

1. The existing 52 detached youth work patches will be reduced down to a refined set where we can gain evidence that the detached youth work delivered was closer to the Shared Practice Model that is to be adopted for the pilot. This will exclude any patches where the DYW was not delivered at an intensity comparable to the model adopted for the trial in order to provide an accurate estimate of the effect size for this model of delivery.
2. We will work with the police forces and delivery teams participating in the pilot RCT to identify patches within their remits that could be included in the retrospective analysis (i.e. there was detached youth work delivered between 2020-2023 but not between 2018-2020, so that the pre-intervention trend period used in the QED model remains unaffected by prior DYW activity)

⁷ The analysis of the QED data will be replicated using police.uk data to give an indication of the implication for estimated effect size of using this data as an outcome.

3. The outcome data used will be youth-related police incidents rather than ‘all incidents’. This will be collected through existing relationships with police analysts in the participating forces, plus an anticipated further five police forces to cover the previous analysis areas.

This analysis will require that we collect more detailed information from the detached youth work agencies involved in the scoping study QED about the nature of their work per patch. Through this process, we will conduct sensitivity analyses to assess the effect of including London patches. This is because they skewed the scoping study QED analysis findings, following a different pattern of change than patches identified in other areas. If a significant number of patches are filtered out through this process, we will consider replacing them through conversation with the participating delivery agencies. We anticipate including approximately 40 patches of the original 52, plus a further 20-40 from the pilot RCT participating regions. We are confident that we will be able to include at least 40 patches with delivery sufficiently close to the SPM in the analysis, because it is a small refinement of the previous work which identified 52 plus we will have additional historical patches from the delivery agencies participating in the pilot.

Of the ten PFAs represented in the previous retrospective QED, two are currently participating in the pilot RCT. Of the remaining eight PFAs we will focus on the five with the largest numbers of patches for the purposes of data access.

The process for identifying appropriate comparison patches will be reassessed to ensure that it proves the fairest test of retrospective detached youth work, we expect the process of selection will remain broadly the same, as follows:

- For each DYW patch, two LSOAs from the same PFA are selected as comparison areas.
- For each patch and each LSOA in England, three statistics are generated:
 - Number of police incidents in 2024 per hectare (the outcome variable);
 - Number of police incidents in 2019 per hectare
 - The linear trend in the number of police incidents per hectare between 2016 and 2019.
- The two LSOAs selected per detached youth work patch are then identified in three stages:
 - The list of LSOAs is reduced to those in the same PFA as the patch;

- The full list of LSOAs is reduced to those where the number of police incidents in 2019 per hectare was within between 0.9 and 1.1 times the equivalent detached youth work rate;
- Within this reduced list, the two LSOAs that are closest to the detached youth work patch on the linear trend between 2016 and 2019 are selected.

This process gives comparison areas that closely match the detached youth work patches firstly in terms of their ‘baseline’ level of police incidents, with 2019 being selected so as to avoid the main covid years when there may have been anomalies in the data, and secondly in terms of the trend in the three years prior to that. That is, the detached youth work patches and the comparison areas are matched in terms of their pre-detached youth work level of crime and in terms of the trajectories the areas were on.

Having selected comparison areas the DYW youth agencies will be asked whether they have any knowledge of DYW having been delivered in these areas in the period 2019 to 2024. If there is evidence of DYW having been delivered, these comparison areas will be excluded and alternative ones selected following the process described above. This exclusion method is necessarily limited by the historical nature of the delivery (and non-delivery), relying on local and institutional memory regarding where detached youth work was or was not delivered up to ten years ago. The only LSOAs out of scope as comparison areas are those areas where it is known that DYW was undertaken in the specified period.

This analysis will necessitate gaining data directly from local police forces additional to those participating in the current pilot RCT. This will need to be negotiated and will take time to achieve. It will also benefit from the work of the pilot with PFAs. For these reasons the re-analysis of the QED will be done alongside the pilot study rather than in advance.

For the QED analysis a linear regression model in R Studio, Stata or equivalent statistical software, will be fitted to the data:

$$\begin{aligned}
 (\text{incidents per hectare } 2027)_i &= \alpha + \beta_1(DYW) + \beta_2(\text{incidents per hectare } 2025)_i \\
 &+ \beta_3(\text{linear trend } 20 \text{ to } 25) + \beta_4(\text{hectares}) + \varepsilon_i
 \end{aligned}$$

where i =patch/comparison area; detached youth work is set equal to 1 for the detached youth work patches and 0 for the comparison areas, and ε_i is the individual level error.

This model will be fitted across all areas. Each area counts equally in the model irrespective of its geographical size, and as with the RCT, counts per hectare are used (rather than counts of incidents) to make areas more comparable.

Effect sizes will be calculated using *Hedges' g*, as specified in the following equation:

$$ES = \frac{\beta_1}{s^2}$$

where *s* is the pooled unconditional standard deviation (incorporating a small sample bias correction) of the two groups, detached youth work and comparison. Robust standard errors will be used in the calculation of the confidence intervals.

4.3. Implementation and process evaluation

This section describes the design and methods of the implementation and process evaluation (IPE), which runs in parallel to the pilot RCT. The IPE will use a range of qualitative and monitoring approaches, and will assess how well the shared practice model of detached youth work is being delivered, capture the perspective of practitioners, stakeholders and young people, and provide contextual insights to support the interpretation of the other evaluation strands.

Research questions

1. Can a sufficient number of appropriate consortia sustain participation throughout the pilot study?
 - 1.1. Are consortia able to identify an adequate number of eligible patches for the pilot study (i.e., 10 per consortium)?
 - 1.2. What support is required to maintain ongoing engagement of consortia during the pilot study?
2. How feasible is it for consortia to deliver the shared practice model as intended?
 - 2.1. How acceptable and appropriate is the shared practice model for participants (i.e. delivery agencies and young people)?
 - 2.2. To what extent are consortia able to deliver the shared practice model with fidelity and how do delivery activities vary between patches?
 - 2.3. To what extent does the feasibility of delivering the shared practice model and engagement differ for groups of young people from minoritised ethnic backgrounds?
3. To what extent do youth work agencies within the consortia follow the patch allocation and delivery parameters?
 - 3.1. To what extent can the consortia influence wider delivery partners in their areas to follow trial parameters?
4. Is it possible to engage young people in appropriate participatory and creative data collection methods within detached youth work settings?

- 4.1. Are there particular barriers or enablers to the participation of young people from minoritised ethnic backgrounds in creative and participatory data collection activities within detached youth work settings?
5. What are the perceived impacts of detached youth work? (i.e. perceived impacts for young people and the wider community)
 - 5.1. What are the perceived mechanisms through which detached youth work may lead to change and to what extent do they align with the theory of change?
 - 5.2. Are there differences in the perceived impacts of detached youth work for young people from minoritised ethnic backgrounds?

Research methods

The IPE will employ a range of research methods including monitoring data and qualitative approaches to provide a rich and nuanced picture of delivery across the participating pilot consortia. We will liaise closely with consortium leads to maintain understanding and commitment to the project, collect monitoring data, coordinate a Community of Practice between detached youth workers, recruit and coordinate interviews with delivery staff and local stakeholders, distribute a survey with delivery organisations, and organise qualitative research with young people using creative co-produced methods.

Liaison with detached youth work agencies and consortia representatives:

Regular (ideally at least monthly) the evaluation team and the YEF programme management team will liaise separately with the consortium lead and other key members of each of the regional consortia. These meetings will be used to support compliance with the study arrangements and collect information about what is happening ‘on the ground’ (both in terms of detached youth work and other provision in the intervention and control areas), any local incidents that may affect the delivery and impact of detached youth work and any other contextual information (e.g. any relevant updates or changes to school or local authority policies). This liaison will also present the opportunity to plan other elements of fieldwork, hear deliverers’ perspectives on the project and address any issues as they arise.

The evaluation team will also liaise regularly (less frequently) with other consortium partners (such as Violence Reduction Units and community safety partnerships) to monitor service delivery and any incidents that arise.

Monitoring data

The evaluation team will work closely with delivery teams to collect administrative delivery data to monitor issues which may affect the outcomes of interest. A key focus of monitoring will be to track whether any detached youth work or adjacent practice is delivered within the control patches. This could be because either the consortium delivery team or another organisation has felt it necessary to enter the patch. We will also monitor other provision and/or activities happening in the intervention and control patches to understand business as usual.

Monitoring will primarily be the responsibility of the delivery consortia. However, the evaluation team will establish a single bespoke monitoring form (to be completed by each agency for all intervention and control patches at quarterly timepoints at times that coincide with their reporting requirements with YEF to ease their burden) to understand whether detached youth work agencies have delivered with fidelity to the shared practice model, collect data about business-as-usual services and check for any detached youth work delivery in control patches.

In intervention patches, the data collected will include information about:

- Reconnaissance activities and planning;
- Delivery start and end dates;
- Session frequencies and duration;
- Numbers of young people engaged;
- Types of engagement used in each session;
- Descriptive demographic information (perceived and actual) about young people, including whether they were new or repeat contacts;
- Activities delivered and topics addressed;
- Whether and why delivery stopped early;
- Movement of young people within the patches and in and out of patches;
- Youth worker and manager characteristics, training and supervision;
- Notable incidents and activities in the patches including usual and additional police activity;

- Other youth work provision during the study period.

In control patches, a lighter-touch approach will be used to collect data about any detached youth work and non-detached youth work provisions. This will include:

- Youth work provision (detached youth work or similar) during the study period, including usual and additional police activity;
- Notable incidents and activities in the patches.

Monitoring data will provide data on the young people who are engaging with detached youth work and allow us to explore the assumptions that detached youth work is uniquely placed to engage the most marginalised young people in society. We will pay particular attention to monitoring the proportion of young people who are from minoritised ethnic backgrounds, to see how reflective of their local community they are and whether additional or targeted efforts might be needed to engage them.

Community of Practice

The Community of Practice will serve three main purposes for the IPE: 1) to support peer learning and reflection among detached youth workers across the pilot consortia; 2) to enable the evaluation team to capture practitioners' evolving understanding of the shared practice model in a collaborative format and have some light-touch monitoring of emerging delivery challenges; and 3) to generate qualitative data on practitioners' experiences.

The evaluation team will coordinate a Community of Practice for all practitioners involved in the delivery of the shared practice model. The Community of Practice will take place on a quarterly basis throughout the delivery period (six sessions overall). These sessions will be held online, with each lasting approximately half a working day. The evaluation team has engaged a skilled facilitator with a strong background in youth work who will design and facilitate each session. The evaluation team and consortium participants will be consulted on the topics in advance, to identify salient areas for exploration. Session topics will be developed collaboratively with the participating practitioners, but the evaluation team foresees they could include delivery fidelity, working with young people from minoritised ethnic backgrounds, managing contamination risks, and their perceptions of impact.

Members of the core evaluation team will not participate in the Community of Practice sessions. After each session, the facilitator will produce a summary note to be shared with all participants to ensure it adequately reflects their experience and shares information that they deem appropriate for the evaluation team to access without disclosing any personal and/or confidential information that they would rather keep private. Once approved by the

participants, the note, alongside the facilitator's reflections on the session, will be shared with the evaluation team to provide insight into the experience of detached youth workers within the pilot study. These notes will be analysed thematically and triangulated with information from interviews and surveys as part of the IPE analysis.

Delivery survey

We will design and administer online surveys to detached youth workers from each consortium. The survey questions will be tailored to the end of the delivery stage, and will address questions across the areas of feasibility, evidence of promise and trialability. Specifically, to assess feasibility of implementation, surveys will include the Weiner (2017)⁸ validated measures of implementation outcomes for feasibility, acceptability and appropriateness. Other items relating to detached youth workers' perspectives on training and feedback on the shared practice model will be developed by the evaluation team. Finally, to explore the perceived impact of detached youth work, CEI will develop bespoke survey items with Likert scale statements to explore potential perceptions of change in young people and their communities.

We expect at least an 80% response rate on the survey by detached youth workers, reflecting good engagement with the evaluation. Our previous experience of working with detached youth work professionals indicates a high level of engagement with research activities – we had high response rates for the sector survey and invitees were eager to attend interviews and focus groups. We anticipate that staff committed to participating in this trial will demonstrate good engagement. The exact sample number of potential respondents will be specified during the mobilisation phase of the study, depending on consortium's work arrangements with detached youth workers (i.e. whether each patch has its own team or teams deliver in multiple patches). We currently estimate a range between 20 to 40 potential respondents (at least 5 per consortium).

Surveys will be distributed online by the evaluation team, using Qualtrics at the end of delivery, in March 2028. All detached youth workers will be invited to respond through an email containing a link to the survey. We will aim to design the questionnaire so that it takes no longer than 15 minutes to complete. At the start of the survey, there will be an introductory section participants will be required to read and check to gather their consent, ensuring their understanding of, and agreement to, participation. Answers from these surveys

⁸ Weiner, B. J., Lewis, C. C., Stanick, C., Powell, B. J., Dorsey, C. N., Clary, A. S., ... & Halko, H. (2017). Psychometric assessment of three newly developed implementation outcome measures. *Implementation Science*, 12, 1-12.

will be analysed descriptively and triangulated with information gathered from interviews with consortium partners.

Qualitative research:

Interviews with consortium partners:

We will undertake semi-structured interviews with staff in a variety of roles (consortium lead, delivery managers, team leaders, youth workers, local authority partners, police partners, VRU representatives) in a purposively selected sample of detached youth work patches, to represent the full range of variety in delivery contexts, organisational structures, and roles and responsibilities. These interviews will be undertaken at two points in time, one towards the beginning of delivery and one towards the end.

We aim to speak to 6-8 consortium partners and practitioners from each consortium at each timepoint, for a total of 48-64 interviews. This range in numbers will allow for sufficient diversity in roles of interviewees within each consortium, without oversampling or overburdening staff. Additionally, this number is expected to allow us to reach thematic saturation within and across consortia.

These interviews will provide more depth to our understanding of the detached youth work activities being delivered, how decisions are made about what to deliver, the nature of the groups and individuals the teams are working with and how these change over time, perceived impacts for young people and their communities and any other changes observed in the local area. We will deeply explore the often shared assumption that detached youth work reaches young people who are highly marginalised and otherwise not accessing any support, and that detached youth work works with a higher proportion of young people from minoritised ethnic backgrounds. We will also be able to explore any unintended or adverse changes that may have taken place as a result of detached youth work intervention, such as displacement, increased reporting of incidents due to adults being present, and increased antisocial behaviour (or perceived behaviour) due to young people congregating. We will explore the barriers and facilitators to high-quality delivery in compliance with the shared practice model and how these vary by delivery context, as well as the acceptability and appropriateness of the delivery model and evaluation procedures for a full efficacy trial. We will also explore evaluation burden of each element of the RCT and IPE.

Interviews with local stakeholders:

We will also undertake semi-structured individual and/or group interviews with a range of local stakeholders, including representatives from local schools, shop staff, transport providers and other local businesses/agencies, and residents. To identify potential

participants, we will rely on each consortium to provide the evaluation team with a list of the relevant stakeholders they identified during the reconnaissance period and then the evaluation team will purposively select a locally representative sample. These interviews will be used to understand how detached youth work is perceived, identify where and how change is happening in the local area and further afield, gauge local attitudes to young people and how they shift over time and understand other contextual changes in the local area.

Interview methods

Interview guides will be developed using an implementation science framework, such as the Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research⁹ (CFIR) or Exploration, Preparation, Implementation Sustainment framework¹⁰ (EPIS) as well as incorporating project specific questions. We will use a semi-structured interview approach, allowing participants' answers and priorities to guide the focus of each interview while also ensuring coverage of key themes. We have previously successfully used CFIR as a framework on several projects including for YEF (Successfully implementing diversion using Outcome 22; Multi-site trial of mentoring; England and Wales Boxing trials).

All participants will be provided with a full information sheet and data privacy notice, explaining their rights as a participant and data subject. Prior to each interview, participants will be required to read, sign and return a consent form to confirm their understanding of and agreement to participation. Participants will be given the opportunity to have any questions or concerns about the interview answered prior to taking part and can decline at any stage in the process. Participants will also be able to withdraw their data from the evaluation up until the point of analysis (approximately March 2028).

Interviews will be conducted online using Teams or via phone call. Interviews will last 45-60 minutes and will be audio recorded then transcribed verbatim for analysis.

Where possible, members of the evaluation team will conduct in-person visits to each consortium, to help ground findings from remote research methods.

Research with young people:

We will undertake primary research with the young people involved in the project to understand their perspectives on it. This element of the work will be extremely important to

⁹ Damschroder, L. J., Reardon, C. M., Opra Widerquist, M. A., & Lowery, J. (2022). Conceptualizing outcomes for use with the Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research (CFIR): the CFIR Outcomes Addendum. *Implementation science*, 17(1), 7.

¹⁰ Moullin, J. C., & Aarons, G. A. (2022). Exploration, preparation, implementation, sustainment (EPIS) framework. In *Implementation Science* (pp. 51-55). Routledge.

centring young people's voices in the evaluation. Through the previous feasibility work and current co-design period, we have established a framework for culturally cognisant, equitable, and meaningful engagement of young people in qualitative activities. In this section, we describe the key considerations for this element of work and propose a 'menu' of options which can be adapted to each delivery context. It will be essential to work directly with delivery teams and young people to specify the activities and approaches taken by the evaluation team and ensure they are appropriate in their context – particularly for minoritised ethnic groups and individuals.

By listening to young people using a variety of data collection methods, we will seek to understand their experiences of detached youth work, the changes it has brought about for them, the acceptability and appropriateness of the shared practice model for them and surface any issues around equitable delivery.

Unlike most evaluations, young people who engage with detached youth work as part of this project will not be registered as evaluation participants. However, young people will be required to provide consent or at least assent (if under 16) to take part in any evaluation activities that involve personal data collection. When designing the approach to any data collection with young people, there are some key issues to consider ensuring that the work is not only respectful of the young people's experiences but also empowers them and is consistent with the spirit and principles of detached youth work. It is important that any research activities that involve young people complement ongoing delivery and do not interfere with relationships between young people and detached youth workers. This is particularly important, given the likely greater disadvantage and vulnerability of the young people involved in detached youth work.

The impact of an outside professional coming into the youth workspace could be deeply detrimental to young people's trust in practitioners. The power imbalance and potential for distrust between researcher and participant is more present and consequential in this study than in most others – particularly where young people belong to minoritised ethnic groups or are otherwise exposed to systemic inequalities. We will therefore co-produce appropriate survey and/or qualitative methods with practitioners and, where possible, young people. Co-production shifts the decision-making power from researchers to participants, reducing the potential for top-down, potentially biased perspectives of researchers to drive data collection and interpretation. Instead, co-production can lead to the development of more culturally sensitive methods and relevant, nuanced findings that reflect participants' priorities.

To do this, during the mobilisation phase the evaluation team will work closely with delivery partners to explore effective and acceptable methodologies for young people. Where possible and meaningful, we will invite young people to collaborate on designing methods

and materials. We will take a flexible and adaptive approach, recognising that what is optimal will depend on the nature of detached youth work in each area (and the extent to which data collection can be embedded in it), the circumstances of the young people, the relationships they have with the youth workers and the experiences and capabilities of the practitioners.

A menu of approaches for data collection with young people:

For the qualitative work with young people, we will focus on one patch per consortium. Patches will be selected in collaboration with delivery partners to identify those where there are groups of young people who are likely to be willing and able to engage with research activities, while also reflecting the diversity of delivery contexts. It is difficult to predict how many young people will choose to engage with research activities in each patch. We estimate that the number of participating young people will vary per patch, probably ranging between 2-10 per patch, giving a total of 8-40¹¹.

We will provide consortia with a “menu” of proposed creative approaches, developed by the evaluation team and Dr Kaz Stuart, an expert in creative methods and youth work, and will work with each of the relevant delivery teams to agree which approach/es would be most suitable for use and how they could be adapted for their contexts. This approach will enable local knowledge to drive decision-making on the most appropriate tools, so that they are not imposed from an evaluator’s perspective. This helps to redistribute the power of researchers to participants (both deliverers and hopefully young people) on how research is conducted and interpreted. Additionally, this approach will allow for a level of consistency across data types while also respecting contextual and cultural differences and reducing racial inequity regarding options for participation.

To minimise the disruption of evaluation team members facilitating any creative qualitative methods with young people, we will explore the possibility of training peer researchers (young people from the detached youth work patch) or embedded researchers (e.g. youth workers from other agencies not connected with the detached youth work providers). The goal is to train peer researchers to lead qualitative work with young people, and the evaluation team members will shadow and/or join as co-facilitators where appropriate. Our team has good experience of developing participatory methods and working with young people. For example, CEI conducted a review and created practice guidance on Youth Participatory Research for the Youth Futures Foundation, we are working with the Wellcome

¹¹ The range of potential participants provided here is quite large because prior work in the area provides little information that could allow to narrow this prediction. For instance, Hall et al. (2024) feasibility report, found that the number of young people that receive Detached Youth Work varies significantly between the time of year and location, and could not provide an accurate estimate on group sizes per session.

Trust on embedding people with lived experience into research, and Dr Kaz Stuart, is an expert in creative qualitative methods.

On previous evaluations, this has worked by setting up full or half-day training sessions for peer researchers in which individuals from the team introduce the purpose of research and how different methods can help us understand our research questions. We then work through the relevant research method, providing a good grounding in confidentiality and ethics. The data collection may then take place within the group – for example peer researchers taking it in turns to facilitate creative exercises, or participants informally interviewing each other while walking around their local area – or at a separate time for by peer researchers engaging with young people in the community without the research team present. Analysis sessions likewise can take place within the day's activity – joint interpretation and sense making can be a particularly powerful tool – or data and notes (written, visual, or recorded) can be shared with the evaluation team to analyse at a separate time.

Embedded and peer researchers are more likely to have lived experiences similar to those of the young people and to know the local community, and they will therefore be able to relate to and build rapport with the young people and their peers. This can result in more relevant, nuanced, and credible findings that reflect the priorities and needs of participants, rooted in their experiences. They are better placed than the evaluation team to stay in contact with individuals across multiple time-points, if that is the preferred method established in the co-production phase. Training embedded or peer researchers may also provide benefits to the community recipients as well as the research itself. Rather than an extractive research exercise, which involves 'taking from', this approach enables the evaluation to 'contribute to' the community.

The benefits of using peer or embedded researchers include:

- A reduction in the risk of a power relationship between the researcher and the participant
- An increased likelihood of mutual understanding and shared language
- An increased likelihood that young people will feel they can answer honestly (particularly when wanting to express dissent or dissatisfaction)
- The presence of insider knowledge on the part of the interviewer
- A feeling of empowerment on the part of both the interviewer and participant
- An ability to avoid placing additional workload on service providers.

Challenges and disadvantages of embedded researchers and peer researchers include the following:

- There are ethical issues around putting researchers into potentially risky situations and invoking memories of their own lived experiences.
- There is the possibility that the research and the detached youth work will become conflated or that the research will interfere with the detached youth work approach.
- Peer-researchers in particular, are more likely to be less experienced in conducting research activities than the evaluation team, which may affect the quality of the data collection and ability to deal with potentially very sensitive issues. Embedded researchers in contrast are likely to be better equipped to handle sensitive situations that may arise during data collection with young people.

Possible creative qualitative methods include (but are not limited to):

- Peer-led story circles: Peer facilitators or embedded researchers host an informal discussion in which young people answer simple prompts about their experiences with detached youth work. Data could be captured through peer facilitator notes and reflections or audio recordings.
- Walking and talking: Peer facilitators or embedded researchers go for a walk around the patch with young people who would like to share their experiences, during which they are invited to describe the area where they spend time and comment on how that has changed since they became engaged with the detached youth work project. After the walk, the facilitator would write fieldnotes from the encounter.
- Mapping the patch: Youth workers and/or peer facilitators or embedded researchers invite young people in small groups to annotate a map of the patch with prompts such as where they feel more or less safe, welcome or unwelcome, where things have changed etc. using words, emojis, illustrations etc.
- Other organic creative projects: Detached youth work often entails youth-led projects in which young people express themselves through various means. We will work with delivery teams to establish when and how it would be appropriate for the evaluation to view or engage with these projects.

Each of these methods would have different implications for the level of input and participation required by the evaluation and delivery teams as well as the accessibility and appropriateness for young people.

Surveys of young people:

A survey of young people engaged in detached youth work will provide the opportunity to capture a snapshot of their experiences with this intervention. The form of the survey would be established with the delivery teams and young people during the mobilisation phase. We will explore the survey mode, timing, content, and consent processes with participating agencies throughout the mobilisation phase. A detailed assessment of the merits of various survey approaches is described in our previous feasibility report (Hall et al., 2024).

Analysis

Survey and monitoring data will be analysed descriptively and used to provide context for impact findings.

We will use the framework method for thematic analysis¹² of qualitative interviews, with themes identified both deductively and inductively. Framework analysis facilitates systematic theme-based comparison within study populations (e.g. between different individuals) and between study populations (e.g. comparing the views of youth workers and managers), as well as consortium-level analysis (e.g. exploring how the delivery and people's experiences vary between areas).

Analysis of creative and participatory work with young people will depend on the methods selected during the set-up process with detached youth workers throughout the delivery and will likely vary between areas. Further information will be provided once these methods have been established and agreed.

Fidelity monitoring

Understanding the ability of regional consortia and local delivery teams to adhere to the shared practice model of detached youth work is central to this pilot trial. This will provide vital information regarding the appropriateness of this delivery model and study design for a future efficacy study.

Fidelity to the shared practice model will be monitored per patch and per consortium using quarterly monitoring data, the staff survey, and other data sources where required. A bespoke monitoring form will be established during set-up, based on delivery consortia's existing processes. As described in the monitoring data section, this will capture the location, frequency and dates of sessions, characteristics of young people that are engaged, activities

¹² Goldsmith, L. J. (2021). Using framework analysis in applied qualitative research. *Qualitative report*, 26(6).

delivered and topics covered. Consortia will also provide information on any other youth provision taking place in the area. This data will be requested and analysed quarterly (in line with YEF reporting cycles to minimise burden) with evaluator support at each timepoint to provide the data and support interpretation (e.g. where there are anomalies or missing data).

The staff survey will capture information about detached youth worker training and supervision at one timepoint (end of delivery in March 2028) which will inform the overall fidelity rating. Training and supervision data will also be collected on a quarterly basis through the monitoring form (see monitoring data section above), allowing for trend analysis throughout the delivery period. The end-of-delivery survey will provide a comprehensive summary, while quarterly monitoring data will enable ongoing tracking.

Scoring criteria will be established across key constructs to quantitatively and consistently rate fidelity. These constructs will reflect elements of the shared practice model deemed essential for delivery, namely the location and duration of sessions, quality of interactions and activities and workforce training and supervision. Each construct will consist of multiple criteria against which delivery fidelity will be measured using a RAG rating which will be summarised using a prescribed set of rules to give each patch and each consortium a fidelity RAG rating. Interim ratings will be used in quarterly monitoring conversations with consortium leads to identify and rectify barriers to adherence where possible. In interpreting fidelity ratings, it will be important to distinguish between youth worker or organisational fidelity failures and engagement barriers arising from the patch context (including cases where the reconnaissance period did not identify suitable young people to approach or where young people chose not to engage). Low scores on engagement-dependent criteria (such as delivery location or dosage) will therefore be contextualised against the quality of reconnaissance and the voluntary nature of young people's participation before fidelity conclusions are drawn.

Example fidelity criteria are as follows:

- Delivery location:
 - Green: At least 90% of sessions take place in public space where young people choose to gather.
 - Amber: 80-90% of sessions take place in public space.
 - Red: <80% of sessions take place in public space.
- Delivery dosage:
 - Green: Four hours of delivery takes place weekly.

- Amber: Four hours of delivery takes place most ($\geq 75\%$) weeks.
- Red: Four hours of delivery takes place some ($< 75\%$) weeks.

An example of how this will be assessed is included in Figure 1 below.

Quarterly monitoring data and meetings with consortium leads will additionally be used to monitor activity in control patches and potential contamination. These data sources will be used to understand the presence and type of consortium and non-consortium youth provision and the extent to which this is considered “detached youth work-like”, how it might interact with the pilot trial, and whether it differs from provision in the intervention patches. Consortium leads will be responsible for monitoring and reporting on all relevant provision in both trial and control patches.

Figure 1: Detached Youth Work fidelity scoring criteria

Fidelity construct	Assessment criteria	Data Source
Delivery location	% of sessions delivered in public or accessible community spaces (on-street, parks, housing estates, shopping centres etc.) Note: a maximum of 10% of annual delivery hours (~20 hrs) may take place indoors, within the patch boundary, to account for weather or specific young people's requests.	Quarterly monitoring form
Delivery dosage	Total hours of DYW delivered per quarter, calculated as: sessions delivered $\times$ average session duration. Threshold: 4 hrs/week $\times$ 13 weeks = 52 hrs per quarter. 75% threshold = 39 hrs.	Quarterly monitoring form
Quality of interactions	Checklist of four criteria rated Yes/No each quarter (1 point per Yes): (1) Pre- and post-session debriefs held consistently (2) Sessions shaped by young people's priorities and pace (3) All young people engagement is voluntary (4) Workers adopt a strengths-based approach Score: 0–4 (sum of Yes responses)	Quarterly monitoring form (self-reported checklist)
Workforce training & supervision	Three criteria rated Yes/No each quarter (1 point per criterion met): (1) All active DYW staff enrolled in or have completed a Level 2 Certificate in Youth Work (2) ≥ 3 supervision hours delivered in the quarter (minimum 1 hr/month) (3) At least one team member attended the quarterly Community of Practice Score: 0–3 (sum of criteria met)	Quarterly monitoring form; end-of-delivery staff survey (March 2028)

4.4. Cost data reporting and collecting

Research questions

10. What was the cost of delivery of the detached youth work?

Cost analysis overview

The evaluation will follow the requirements for cost data collection and reporting for pilot trials specified in the [YEF Cost Reporting Guidance](#). Data will be collected by consortia leads from detached youth work agencies and other relevant consortia partners and will cover staff and labour costs, buildings and facilities, materials and equipment, in-kind contributions and other relevant costs. We will:

- Adopt a bottom-up costing approach, breaking costs down into prerequisites, set-up costs and recurring costs.
- We will report the total cost of a typical single patch receiving detached youth work, as well as the cost per participant if feasible, assuming full compliance with the shared practice model.
- Depending on the variation in costs across patches, we will either report the average cost or select the case that best represents the expected future costs of typical detached youth work delivery.

To report on costs at the end of this study, we will provide each consortium at the end of the mobilisation phase with a template to complete throughout the delivery process, with appropriate periodic reminders. Completed templates will then be collected from the consortia on a quarterly basis.

4.5. Data triangulation and interpretation

Methods overview

Research methods	Data collection methods	Participants/ data sources (type, number)	Data analysis methods	Research questions addressed
Police data on recorded crime and incidents of antisocial behaviour	Administrative data	Preferred option (Option 1): incident level data regarding recorded crime and incidents of antisocial behaviour including geolocations and youth-related qualifiers from 24 months prior to delivery to 1 month post-delivery across five police forces	Regression models and sensitivity analyses	6,7, 9

Research methods	Data collection methods	Participants/ data sources (type, number)	Data analysis methods	Research questions addressed
Liaison with detached youth work agencies and consortia representative	Meeting notes	Key members of delivery teams and consortia partners	Framework thematic analysis	1.2, 2, 3, 5, 8,
Monitoring data	Bespoke monitoring system	Agencies from all 40 patches	Descriptive analysis	2, 3, 8, 10
Community of Practice	Fieldnotes and reflections from facilitator	- Detached youth workers from all consortia - Expert facilitator	Framework thematic analysis	1.2, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8
Survey	Individual online survey	- 80% of detached youth workers from each consortium	Descriptive analysis	2, 3, 5, 8
Qualitative research	Semi-structured individual and/or group interviews	- 20 to 40 consortium representatives (<i>i.e., consortium lead, managers, team leaders, youth workers, local authority, police reps, etc.</i>) - Range of local stakeholders (<i>i.e., local schools, shop staff, transport providers and other local businesses, and residents</i>)	Framework thematic analysis	1.2, 2, 3, 5, 8
Research with young people	Qualitative exploration of peer /embedded researchers	Young people from 4 patches (1 per consortia)	Framework thematic analysis	2, 4, 8
	Surveys	TBC during mobilisation phase	Descriptive analysis	

This pilot study will use a mixed-methods approach to triangulate and interpret findings from the RCT, retrospective QED and IPE. Data from each of the described research methods will be analysed separately, then triangulated to identify areas of difference and reinforcement and to use multiple data sources to substantiate and explain findings.

Quantitative police and monitoring data will be integrated with qualitative insights to build a coherent picture of the feasibility of the practice model and evaluation method and how that would translate into recommendations for an efficacy trial.

We will use qualitative insights to explain causal mechanisms, barriers and enablers to change, and to contextualise variation across patches and consortia, especially where quantitative data show unexpected outcomes.

5. Outputs

Throughout the study period we will produce a comprehensive pilot study report, and short accessible outputs for key stakeholders. The pilot study report will detail the study rationale, design, methods, analytic approaches and findings of the RCT, IPE and retrospective QED analysis. Following YEF's reporting guidance, this will also include an assessment of the feasibility of the delivery model and evaluation design for an efficacy trial at scale and recommendations. We will additionally produce accessible outputs detailing key findings for stakeholders including a delivery agency facing summary; and young people facing outputs using accessible formats and language to share relevant findings and young people's experiences.

We may also provide presentations to wider stakeholders to hear back from participating organisations, reflect on findings, and consider how they may shape future funding and policy decisions – this element is to be determined in collaboration with YEF.

6. Diversity, equity and inclusion

The Centre for Evidence and Implementation and its pilot study partners are committed to conducting research in which equity, diversity and inclusion are at the forefront of every phase of the evaluation process, from co-design to analysis and reporting. To ensure this work is purpose-driven, we have applied and will continue to apply throughout all phases of work the CEI Equity Framework. This framework is grounded in equity-focused implementation science and is designed to embed an equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) perspective in our evaluations. It draws on recent writing on equity in implementation and research, including guidance from Child Trends¹³ on embedding equity in research.

The CEI Equity Framework is intended to be used as early as possible in an evaluation and was initially applied to guide discussion during proposal development, which fed directly into the study design. The framework has since been applied again during the co-design phase to guide and reduce bias in evaluation design decisions. As the framework has already been used to identify and address equity considerations related to programme design, implementation, data collection, analysis and reporting across protected characteristics, the YEF Equality Impact Assessment will be completed during mobilisation to further build on this early equity framing.

CEI's Equity Framework also aims to serve as a live thinking tool, updated throughout the project's life cycle. During the co-design phase, we have purposely sought to ensure that the Theory of Change, the Shared Practice Model and the patch design embody and safeguard those principles. These documents have also been reviewed by YEF's Race Equity Associate.

Given YEF's mission, we place particular importance on race equity. It is understood in the sector that detached youth work often engages young people who face significant structural disadvantage, including due to race or ethnicity. These young people are often under-served or disengaged from other services and face a higher risk of safeguarding concerns. These young people are also frequently over-policed and have more contact with formal services early in their lives, leading to distrust in law enforcement and often other statutory services. Our approach to evaluation design and execution has therefore been designed to ensure that the pilot study promotes sensitivity and inclusion, which has a heightened importance considering the needs of this population of young people.

¹³ <https://www.childtrends.org/publications/a-guide-to-incorporating-a-racial-and-ethnic-equity-perspective-throughout-the-research-process>

For example, consortia have ensured that race equity considerations have been embedded into their early patch selection, ensuring that patches are representative of the ethnic diversity in their local contexts and where there is less ethnic diversity, ensuring patch selection is aligned with existing demographic profiles rather than artificially imposed. The shared practice model specifies that detached youth workers must have significant knowledge and experience of the areas they are working in. Additionally, our data collection tools will be designed to enable us to gather information about EDI groups of focus without over-burdening or further reinforcing negative experiences with perceived outsiders or professionals. This shaped the overarching design of this study – data will not be directly collected from young people (apart from in very specific and carefully managed situations) but rather through administrative data. This limits the likelihood that the research and researchers will interfere with or disrupt the important trusting relationship between young people and detached youth workers.

We will use accessible youth-friendly language, provide translated materials where necessary, and pilot any tools or methods with detached youth workers to check they are culturally appropriate for local contexts and acceptable for street-based engagement.

Our approach to all work involving contact with young people will consider race equity to ensure young people from all backgrounds feel comfortable participating. We will work with delivery organisations to identify the most appropriate approaches in each of their contexts, adapting the approaches to respect local and individual cultural context. Across consortia, this includes working with ethnically diverse DYW teams that are representative of the communities they will be working in, attending cultural competence and EDI training, and supporting ongoing reflective practice so that race equity, diversity and inclusion (REDI) considerations remain embedded throughout delivery. This should support trust building and meaningful, authentic engagement among minoritised young people.

During the analysis and reporting stages, we will be mindful of potential differences arising from our data regarding the EDI groups in focus, and we will take care when reporting these to ensure that our findings can help to address inequities and avoid undermining these groups, acknowledging, for example that police data could present some associated flaws in this regard. We engage in frequent reflection sessions as part of our internal team meetings to identify and challenge preconceptions and biases that might inform data collection and interpretation activities, as well as being reflexive regarding our role as researchers and the power imbalance that infers with all participant groups. Where possible, we will engage peer researchers in the interpretation of any data or materials they collect.

For the most part, our evaluation design is not directly informed by young people or communities with lived experience of detached youth work. This is due to multiple reasons, including the ever-changing nature of groups of young people engaging with detached youth work as they grow older, and the fact that formalised groups of young people that are more likely to engage with research work are less likely to have the relevant lived experience to inform a DYW study design. Furthermore, we recognise that detached youth work often engages with young people who are at risk or wary of engaging with institutional support. We have therefore opted to prioritise safeguarding these young people and avoid placing them in groups where we might not have the capacity to build proper rapport with them and involve them more meaningfully.

Nonetheless, there is a component of research with young people, in which the study's design will purposefully attempt to include peer-researchers or embedded researchers to gather young people's voices and experiences. Through this component, we will explore with detached youth workers and delivery agencies the best ways of engaging young people in data collection about their own perspectives and experiences. We will ensure that recruitment for this component includes racially and ethnically minoritised young people so that their perspectives meaningfully inform the trial findings. To do this, we will work with detached youth workers, which will enable us to reach young people who may not ordinarily engage with formal research opportunities. We hope that this component will also serve to inform future processes of data collection with this population.

Furthermore, this study design has been informed by extensive consultation with and collaboration with detached youth work sector leaders, practitioners, and stakeholders who are deeply embedded in their local communities and have provided rich understanding of the needs and sensitivities of this project. Many of the youth workers who have contributed to shaping this work were themselves recipients of youth work prior to training, and have provided significant insights into the experiences of different marginalised groups, and the topics researchers must consider when working with them. In addition, insights from the 2023 sector survey – of which 77% of contributing organisations were led by women, Black or other minoritised ethnicities, people with disabilities or LGBTQ+ individuals – have also shaped the protocol. Together, these inputs ensure that the pilot trial is intentionally designed to reflect and include a wide range of grounded, community-based perspectives.

7. Ethics and registration

Ethical approval for the RCT and IPE will be sought from the Social Research Association Ethics Service during the study's mobilisation phase (April – September 2026).

Formal consent will not be required from young people to participate in any detached youth work activities – this will be delivered on a voluntary basis as is the norm for this provision. Likewise, the administrative police crime data does not require consent – it will be provided as anonymised data which cannot be linked to any individuals. Robust information sharing agreements will be established, as described below.

Young people aged 16+ years who participate in the survey and/or creative and participatory activities will be provided with child-friendly information about the study with an appropriate reading age. We will also explore creating short videos to convey key study information. Young people will be supported to read and understand this information by an appropriate adult and provide informed consent prior to participation. For children under the age of 16, we will explore feasible options for providing informed consent and assent during the mobilisation phase, such as seeking parental consent, but we may need to exclude them from these activities.

For adult participants (youth workers, managers, residents, and other stakeholders), informed consent will be sought for all evaluation activities that are not covered by administrative data. At the start of every evaluation activity involving human participants, we will provide clear information about the voluntary nature of participation, the right to withdraw or skip questions, and full information about data privacy. Information sheets and consent forms will be piloted before distribution. The study protocol will be registered and assigned an International Standard Randomised Controlled Trial Number (ISRCTN) which will be included in the protocol once issued, and primary outcomes will be formally updated at study completion.

8. Data protection

The legal basis for processing personal data will be Article 6.1(f): “processing is necessary for the purposes of the legitimate interests pursued by the controller, except where such interests are overridden by the interests or fundamental rights and freedoms of the data subject which require protection of personal data, in particular where the data subject is a child”. Article 6.1(f) applies because the evaluation of Detached Youth Work serves a legitimate public interest in building the evidence base for effective youth crime-prevention programmes, and this interest is not overridden by data-subject rights given the robust safeguards in place. To ensure that we respect the essence of the right to data protection and provide suitable measures to safeguard the fundamental rights and interests of data subjects, we will only proceed with qualitative data collection activities after obtaining informed consent. Additionally, should a data subject withdraw their consent before any analysis has begun, CEI will delete that personal data and not include it in the project, to meet data privacy legislative obligations.

CEI has robust data protection systems overseen by an independent registered DPO, who will establish data sharing agreements with all relevant parties (CEI and evaluation partners (BPSR, DJM Social Research and Alex Sutherland), and the delivery partners) in accordance with the UK regulator’s code of conduct for data sharing. CEI will be the data controller. Egress or a similar secure system will be used for the transfer of personal and/or special category data through 256-bit encryption to emails.

All data collected will be treated as confidential and pseudonymised for analysis. There may be scenarios where we are subject to a legal obligation to disclose or share personal data, such as with law enforcement agencies, regulatory bodies, or public authorities to prevent or detect crime. The evaluation team will only ever disclose personal data to these third parties to the extent we are required to do so by law.

Data will be held securely, accessible only to the research team. Notably, considering our preferred option for obtaining primary outcome measures from police data requires highly detailed and sensitive information, we are conscious that its appropriate handling will require storage and processing to be undertaken within a secure data environment or secure data processing machine. Furthermore, this may require one of the local police forces agreeing to physically host a researcher from the evaluation team for the duration of the work.

CEI will retain copies of all personal data collected throughout the project for a further 2 years after the completion and approval of the final report. This is considered a reasonable retention period should the data require reanalysis or repeat analysis sometimes desired of

research datasets in this field of study. CEI will remain the Data Controller for this data until the data is securely deleted.

As a note on consent, ethical practices within research require informed consent (“Ethical Informed Consent”) to be gathered for a person’s participation in the project as a research participant. Notwithstanding, we are aware that Ethical Informed Consent is not equivalent to consent as a lawful basis under GDPR (“GDPR Consent”). Thus, we will provide participants with an information sheet including a link to the DPN and ensure they have the right to opt in or out of evaluation activities. Should a data subject withdraw the Ethical informed Consent before any analysis has begun, CEI will delete that personal data and not include it in the project, to meet data privacy legislative obligations.

9. Stakeholders and interests

9.1. Delivery Consortia:

The following are the lead contacts for each of the four consortia responsible for delivering detached youth work in their areas:

Consortia Lead Contacts

Name	Consortium	Role
Andy Malcolm	Wiltshire & Swindon	CEO, Young Swindon & Wiltshire, Wiltshire & Swindon
Beth Major	Middlesbrough & Stockton	CEO, The Junction based in Middlesbrough, Tees Valley
Dmitry Fedotov	Leeds, Wakefield & Barnsley	CEO, The Youth Association based in Wakefield, West Yorkshire
Helen Gatenby	Manchester	Director, M13 Youth Project based in Manchester

9.2. Evaluation team:

CEI Project Team

Name and affiliations	Role and responsibilities
Dr Katherine Young, CEI	Director (UK) and Project director Overall responsibility for project delivery.
Amy Hall, CEI	Principal Advisor, project lead, co-project manager and lead researcher Providing content area expertise on detached youth work and undertaking the IPE data collection and analysis.
Dr Paula Verdugo, CEI	Advisor, co-project manager and researcher Undertaking the IPE and cost data collection and analysis.
Shania Rankin, CEI	Research Assistant Undertaking research support in all aspects of the evaluation, including the retrospective QED

Bryson Purdon Social Research (BPSR) Team

Name and affiliations	Role and responsibilities
Dr Susan Purdon, BPSR	Partner, statistician Co-leader in the development of impact evaluation approaches.

Independent Collaborators

Name and affiliations	Role and responsibilities
Dr David McLennan	Lead in the negotiation, access and cleaning of police data. Co-leader in the development of impact evaluation approaches and undertaking the impact evaluation data collection and analysis.
Professor Alex Sutherland	Expert advisor in RCTs, criminal justice and evaluation. Advising on the design and analysis of the RCT impact evaluation.
Professor Kaz Stuart	Facilitator of the Community of Practice for detached youth workers Expert advisor on creative methods with young people

9.3. Funders:

- The Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) will fund the delivery and evaluation of the trial.

9.4. Quality Assurance and Project Management:

Overall, project management and quality assurance will be led by the Centre for Evidence and Implementation (CEI), overseen by a Director and led day-to-day by an experienced project manager. CEI will oversee delivery and evaluation activities through regular project management processes to ensure clear communication, accountability and timely delivery, including clearly defined roles and responsibilities including robust senior oversight, a regularly reviewed week-by-week project timetable, and weekly team meetings to monitor progress, risks and emerging insights. CEI will provide regular updates to YEF and will use our online, real-time resource management system to track tasks, timelines and resources.

CEI will also draw on its internal Methods Lab to ensure methodological rigour and high-quality data practices, including expert input into trial design, outcome measurement and analysis, and quality assurance of data collection and implementation fidelity.

10. Risks

The following table sets out a comprehensive list of the risks associated with the evaluation. We will use this risk register to manage the evaluation process. CEI will review it regularly and update it to capture progress.

Risk	Likelihood Impact	Mitigation
Consortium engagement	Likelihood: Low Impact: High	Both YEF and the evaluation team have excellent networks for the engagement of agencies; other existing networks will also be used if necessary. The co-design stage supported retention. Monthly meetings will allow us to anticipate and mitigate any challenges early through joint problem solving We will work to reduce burden on delivery teams as much as possible Community of practice will allow peer to peer problem solving Drop out reasons will inform findings of the study
Patch identification	Likelihood: Medium Impact: Medium	Consortia have been advised to identify patches large enough to allow for young people to move between locations This is hard to control, but it is part of usual practice in detached youth work. Where it happens, it has the potential to dilute/bias impacts, particularly if young people move to control patches.
Patch retention	Likelihood: Medium Impact: High	We have established a patch selection process which includes evidence of commitment to the trial Regular contact with consortia to monitor and anticipate any challenges will take place (monthly)
Contamination	Likelihood: Medium Impact: Medium	Clear expectations were set from the start about evaluation requirements, reinforced in the co-design phase with clear instructions and now with formal agreements in place. We have buy in from local authorities and police forces within each consortium The evaluation team will liaise regularly with consortia to identify risks early. It has been agreed and made clear during the co-design phase what can be provided in control patches, including other forms of youth work, such as short cultural and sports work, and business as usual. Monitoring meetings will track any DYW/related activity in control areas We have buy-in from relevant local authorities and police forces.

Risk	Likelihood Impact	Mitigation
		Sensitivity analyses based on trial adherence will be conducted.
Premature ending	Likelihood: Medium Impact: Low	Consortia have been advised to identify patches large enough to allow for young people to move between locations and with a sufficient population to ensure a youth presence year-round. Regular monitoring calls between RCs, CEI and YEF will aim to pre-empt and mitigate any premature closing of work. If delivery finishes early because the organisations feel the need has diminished, this should show through positive outcomes. If delivery finishes early because organisations fail to get traction, this is fine (as this is part of a trial of the usual approach to detached youth work), although it will dilute the impacts.
Challenges in accessing police data	Likelihood: Medium Impact: High	The evaluation has expertise and prior experience in accessing police data including good relationships with analysts in all participating forces. A sufficient timeframe was allowed in the co-design phase and integrated to the mobilisation phase to negotiate access. The police forces are included in the local consortia and have committed to supporting the evaluation. Initial conversations with analysts from all 5 police forces have been promising and analysts are highly engaged. Support from the NPCC will be sought out to reassure and persuade Chief Constables to approve the project. There is a precedent for sharing data of this type through data conducted by members of this team. We have fallback options for data sourcing which would enable RCT analysis.
Youth flags	Likelihood: Medium Impact: Medium	Initial conversations have suggested fair levels of consistency between forces We will define rules for inclusion prior to analysis in collaboration with force analysts We will conduct intensive data cleaning and work with analysts to understand the data in order to identify and mitigate any data anomalies We will conduct sensitivity analyses e.g. for youth-related incidents vs. all incidents
Data access hosting	Likelihood: Medium Impact: High	There is a precedent for this kind of access via Lancashire police; DM will seek similar via GMP as this is commutable from his home We will explore options for more flexible data hosting such as a secure laptop There is time factored into the project to allow for set up and approval/vetting to be established

Risk	Likelihood Impact	Mitigation
Serious safeguarding incidents	Likelihood: High Impact: Medium	Detached youth workers are expected to be trained and applying safeguarding policy and practice guidelines Any new detached youth workers will receive appropriate training for the role Supervisors of delivery agencies will provide supervision on safeguarding and incident management. Supervisors of delivery agencies will periodically review detached youth workers adherence to safeguarding policies outline in delivery agencies blueprints.
Delivery fidelity	Likelihood: Medium Impact: High	We will provide training webinars and refresher sessions throughout the mobilisation and delivery periods We will develop a simple fidelity checklist to support the SPM so that managers and practitioners understand the requirements of the trial
Baseline equivalence	Likelihood: Medium Impact: High	We will work closely with police force analysts to understand their data and how incidents or recording practice may influence trends and notable changes etc. We will adjust for baseline levels within sensitivity analyses by varying baseline periods
Young people engagement in qualitative activities	Likelihood: Medium Impact: Medium	The mobilisation phase includes the co-development of high-quality, locally tailored research instruments and processes. Menu of creative activities available and plans for evaluation team members not to directly have contact with young people, facilitating the administration is led by trusted people.
Evaluation team capacity	Likelihood: Low Impact: High	CEI has a global team of experienced researchers who would be able to cover any transition periods We include a wider team than the immediate project leads in key meetings to ensure knowledge and understanding of the project context and activities in case additional capacity is required
Increased in reported crimes	Likelihood: Medium Impact: High	RCT data will be triangulated with IPE data to fully understand the context and implications of findings We will report any findings cautiously as pilot evidence

11. Timeline

Building on the co-design activities (October 2025-February 2026), the evaluation is planned across four phases of work. The table below sets out the intended timetable for these phases. A six-month period of set up and mobilisation for the pilot trial, followed by 18 months for programme delivery, including six months of reconnaissance work and 12 months of detached youth work, data collection and analysis. The final nine months cover the final analysis, reporting and dissemination activities.

1Dates	Activity	Staff responsible/ leading
Phase 1: Mobilisation		
April 2026 – July 2026	Set up of data protection systems Development of data collection instruments, including interview guides, young people survey, information sheets & consent forms Design of implementation data monitoring systems	CEI
June 2026	Randomisation of patches and communication of allocations	BPSR, AS & CEI
June 2026 – August 2026	Development and application of ethical appraisal	CEI
March 2026 – March 2028	Collaborative work with police force analysts Development and application of ethical appraisal	CEI & DM
August 2026 – October 2026	Training for consortium on evaluation procedures	CEI
Phase 2: Pilot study and programme delivery		
October 2026 – March 2027	Programme delivery – 6 months of reconnaissance phase	Consortia

1Dates	Activity	Staff responsible/ leading
April 2027 – March 2028	Programme delivery – 12 months of detached youth work	Consortia
December 2026 – March 2028	Collection of programme monitoring data	Consortia & CEI
May 2026 – April 2028	Monthly contact with consortia and police force analysts and support for data monitoring	Consortia CEI & DM
June 2027 – July 2027	Mid-delivery IPE data collection	CEI
February 2028 – March 2028	Final IPE data collection	CEI
March 2028– September 2028	Monitoring data analysis	CEI
March 2028 – September 2028	IPE data analysis	CEI
Sept 2026 – April 2028	Costs data collection and analysis	CEI
March 2028 – August 2028	Analysis of police outcomes data	DM, BPSR, & AS
Phase 3: Retrospective QED		
April 2026 – March 2028	Negotiate access to data from 10 police forces	DM, BPSR, & AS

1Dates	Activity	Staff responsible/ leading
January 2028 – September 2028	Data cleaning and analysis	DM, BPSR, & AS
Phase 4: Reporting		
March & November 2027	Interim presentations	All
June 2028 – October 2028	Draft report	All
November 2028	Submission of final report for YEF and peer review comments	All
January 2029- March 2029	Dissemination of findings	All

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13. Appendices

A: Shared practice model

B: Theory of Change

C: Full list of notifiable police offences

D: Police data form

E: Alternate police crime and ASB incident data access options

13.1. Appendix A: Shared practice model

December 2025

Shared Practice Model

Detached Youth Work Pilot Evaluation



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Introduction

The purpose of this document is to draw together the values and principles of detached youth work as delivered by all partner delivery agencies on the Pilot Evaluation of Detached Youth Work funded by the Youth Endowment Foundation to define a shared practice model that may be evaluated via an experimental design and implementation and process evaluation.

The first draft of this model was designed using input from interviews, workshops and a survey with sector leaders to align common principles and practices into a shared model that would support both impact evaluation and fidelity monitoring (Hall, et al., 2024). The current version also incorporates feedback from representatives from the four consortia involved in the co-design phase of this pilot evaluation in late 2025. This document outlines the principles underlying delivery followed by the four parts of the model:

- Set up and implementation
- Ongoing delivery
- Closing the project
- Knowledge, skills, and behaviours

The use of the term ‘Elements’ used throughout this document relates to aspects of practice and delivery that must be adhered to for this shared practice model of detached youth work. Throughout the document, additional or optional aspects of detached youth work are also described that may feature within practice settings to a greater or lesser extent. In line with the young people-centred and community-specific nature of detached youth work, an intentionally high level of flexibility has been worked into the model, albeit underpinned by clear principles.

For consistency, we use the term ‘detached youth worker’ throughout to refer to the qualified adult that is involved in detached youth work delivery. We recognise that, in practice, this adult may have a range of other titles/job roles depending on the project, setting or agency in which the provision is located. In referring to ‘adults’, we are specifically addressing youth work roles that imply positions of trust and that are formalised either through volunteering or paid employment, and which are occupied by those aged 18 or over. This is intended to specifically differentiate those in a peer or near-peer role, who may be under 18.

Principles of detached youth work

The principles of detached youth work are largely in line with those that underpin youth work in a broader sense. Distinct from centre-based youth work, there is, however, particular emphasis on working relationally with the experiences of young people, the public location of interactions, and being rooted in community context.

Interactions take place in public spaces

Element P1: contact with young people is predominantly made in public or accessible community spaces.

The initial contact with young people will be made in public and community spaces, such as on-street, parks, housing estates, and shopping centres, etc. Meeting young people in this way is the first step in meeting young people where they are at in their patch, redressing the power-imbalance of more structured or centre-based youth services. After initial contact, detached youth work will take place almost exclusively in public spaces. However, considering weather conditions that influence engagement (especially over the winter months) and/or responding to young people’s requests, detached youth work sessions with an established group of young people may briefly transition to indoor structured spaces where young people

are comfortable, such as a library or youth centre, not exceeding more than 10% of annual delivery (equivalent to approximately 20 hours of delivery in total). The indoor space should be within the geographical remit of the pre-defined patch.

Voluntary engagement is negotiated on an ongoing basis

Element P2: young people always choose whether, when and how they wish to engage with detached youth workers.

The nature of working in public and community spaces changes the power dynamic between detached youth workers and young people, as the adults do not have 'ownership' over the space and cannot set the rules of engagement in the same way. Respect and trust from young people must be earned and maintained by the detached youth workers through consistent and reliable practice. Delivery patterns to support this are described in Element 01. Detached youth workers will intentionally and continually create opportunities for young people (as individuals and groups) to opt-in to participation without demanding it. They will do this while remaining respectful of young people's space, reading and respecting young people's willingness to engage, and mirroring young people's pace.

The work 'starts where young people start' and is strengths-based

Element P3: detached youth workers will centre and engage with the experiences and skills of the young people with whom they are working.

Whilst detached youth workers may be asked to work to a particular set of objectives (such as crime reduction or engaging with young people who are considered particularly vulnerable to exploitation), a key principle of detached youth work is that it is **youth centred**.

It is essential that detached youth workers adopt an active listening stance towards young people, with their actions led by the principle of prioritising the thoughts, feelings, ideas and experiences expressed by young people (in groups and as individuals as appropriate), as opposed to the imposition of an external agenda, pace, activity or conversational topic. Active listening helps young people feel heard and valued and ultimately builds trust between the detached youth worker and young people. This is particularly important for young people who feel disenfranchised from services and distrust in professionals.

Detached youth workers will focus on the existing and emerging skills and positive qualities of young people, rather than on deficits and perceived risks, for example by reframing challenges using positive language, co-producing goals and plans to achieve them, and building on positives such as supportive relationships. This strengths-based approach supports young people to experience positive alternatives and healthy challenge. As most detached youth work interactions take place in groups, this can be achieved through group discussions and peer support. Examples of the kinds of activities that detached youth workers may draw on are provided in relation to Element 03.

Relational, flexible, responsive, dynamic

Element P4: detached youth workers will build trusting and respectful relationships with young people, relying on authenticity and integrity.

Quality relationships between detached youth workers and peer groups of young people are built on mutual trust and respect. This is achieved by the detached youth worker demonstrating integrity and authenticity, being consistent with their actions and words, and having a genuine commitment to the young people with whom they are working. Relationships in detached youth work settings entail a degree of informality, while maintaining professional boundaries and prioritising young people's safety. They typically also include advocacy for young people, acting as a trusted voice to promote young people's interests in the community. Detached youth workers understand that the quality of the relationship is the foundation for all other 'work'

that may take place. In detached youth work, quality relationships are even more intrinsic than in other centre-based forms of youth work. They are the vehicle through which informal education, structured activities, healthy challenge, and genuine experiences of care and empathy are delivered.

Element P5: the work is flexible and responsive to young people's needs, concerns and interests and also to young people's preferred locations and times.

All detached youth work sessions will take place within the pre-defined patches for the funded time. However, detached youth workers will adapt their practice within these parameters, responding to the changing circumstances, energy, and ideas that young people bring. They will adjust the timing, and focus locations or routes within the patch to respond to young people's presence, seasonal weather and local events to maximise accessibility and contact with young people (for example, if no contact is made for two consecutive weeks). Adjustments should be made gradually and/or alongside informing known young people as relevant, so that young people still know where and when to find them. Any structured activities and informal education will also be responsive to young people's priorities. This flexibility and responsiveness supports young people to feel empowered in their communities.

Equity-driven integration and empowerment

Element P6: detached youth workers will have local knowledge and will work with local stakeholders, the community and young people to encourage critical thinking and challenge structural disadvantages experienced by young people.

Detached youth workers are committed to social justice and reducing the inequity experienced by young people in society. Successful detached youth work is dependent on workers holding a deep understanding of young people's identities, needs and experiences, as well as the geographical context in which they are delivering. Ensuring that detached youth workers have shared lived experiences and/or deep and genuine knowledge of the identities and experiences of local communities is essential to promoting engagement with young people from all backgrounds, but particularly minoritised ethnic backgrounds. These qualities contribute to detached youth workers' perceived credibility, often built through shared cultures, languages or interests, and strengthened by involvement in community events and familiarity with local spaces. They will also have a commitment to dismantling the deeply embedded societal power imbalances that prevent young people from feeling genuinely integrated and empowered to have a voice in their communities – particularly for young people from minoritised ethnic backgrounds.

Detached youth workers will take a holistic approach to increasing or reducing barriers to positive options for young people by working with young people and community stakeholders. They will support young people to make informed choices that align with their strengths and aspirations through community participation.

Deep local knowledge of the patch enables detached youth workers to leverage community resources, including those of allied provision, such as social care, local authorities, buildings-based community projects, or community policing, as well as develop risk management processes. In practice, community integration can look very different between detached youth work patches, but all activities should remain patch-based. For example, it might involve facilitating meetings between young people and local businesses or working with a tenant-management organisation to make an area safer for young people. Without good levels of integration with the local community, detached youth work risks being less effective.

Practice model

This section outlines key elements of the shared practice model across the phases of 'Set up and implementation', 'Ongoing delivery', 'Closing the project' and 'Knowledge, skills and behaviours'. We recognise that detached youth work practice is often undertaken outside the parameters of a tightly defined project with a beginning, middle, and end. However, for the purpose of ensuring our proposed model is evaluable, we have described a semi-structured approach. The shared practice model is based on delivery by a 'team' (i.e. two detached youth workers plus a supervisor or manager).

Set up and implementation

Area selection

Element S1: project leads will use data and local knowledge, such as community engagement, to determine the area(s) in which to deliver detached youth work.

Defined area selection processes, based on police data and local knowledge, are used to choose areas for the detached project. The criteria for patch selection are as follows:

- Demonstrable level of need: Each proposed patch must evidence a meaningful level of need for detached youth work. Patches should be selected where detached youth work is likely to have meaningful impact.
- Geographical size: The size of each patch should be small enough for a detached youth work team to cover it within one session and large enough to contain an active population of young people.
- Reachable population of young people are present: A patch should include known or observed gathering points where young people are frequently present.
- No current or recent detached youth work: No detached youth work has taken place or is planned to take place between October 2025 and October 2026.
- Local knowledge and influence: The consortium should have sufficient local knowledge, relationships and commitment of relevant organisations to deliver, monitor, and prescribe what happens in intervention and control patches for the duration of the project.

Reconnaissance

Element S2: detached projects will begin with an initial reconnaissance period of six months in which detached youth workers will build integration in and knowledge of the community.

The purpose of a reconnaissance period is to understand existing support networks, build relationships in the local area and identify how footfall and behavioural patterns vary across the year, to establish the project locally.

During the reconnaissance period, the detached youth work team will seek to:

- Identify and communicate with key allied services/stakeholders in the patch, such as alternative provision settings, local schools, colleges and alternative provision settings, shop and business owners, social services, and the police. Feedback from these stakeholders will be documented and used to inform detached youth workers knowledge of the area, locate opportunities for joined up working, inform risk management, and establish effective modes of collaboration and communication for the project's duration.
- Identify and understand the groups of young people who gather in the patch and with whom they may be likely to work in later stages of the project delivery. Detached youth workers will seek to understand who they are and their context-specific experiences (political, structural, and cultural).

- Situate background information (police data and local insights) within the context and experiences of young people.
- Gain an in-depth understanding of safety concerns/risks associated with specific geographical 'hot spots' in the chosen area.
- Understand local timelines, including time-related 'crunch points' in relation to support needs as well as seasonal changes.

Team composition

Element S3: detached youth work teams will comprise two experienced detached youth workers plus a supervisor or manager and trainees.

To ensure the quality of detached youth work projects, teams will comprise two detached youth workers and depending on the size of the young people's group, two detached youth workers will be present per session. This ensures the ratio of detached youth workers to young people does not lead to the perception that youth workers are monopolising the space. An additional team member such as a supervisor may join a minority of sessions, for example when responding to risk concerns.

Element S4: detached youth work managers will oversee project delivery and support the team with training, peer-to-peer learning opportunities and regular process supervision.

Effective team management and supervision is crucial to ensuring that a detached youth work project runs effectively and supports the wellbeing of detached youth workers in their practice. This will include holding pre- and post-session 'briefs and debriefs', pairing inexperienced or newly qualified team members (paid and voluntary) with experienced detached youth workers, and providing at a minimum monthly supervision to support a reflective practice throughout the project. Delivery staff will also be invited to attend a quarterly community of practice as part of this evaluation. These elements can strengthen the quality of the project provided by the detached youth work team. It is important for detached youth workers to think, question, consider, and learn from their ongoing experiences as practitioners, and this requires structured support and protected time.

Ongoing delivery

Consistent presence

Element O1: detached youth workers will be present in each patch for a minimum of four hours a week for direct project work with young people.

Detached youth workers should be available and present in each evaluation patch for four hours a week, to ensure sufficient contact with young people to have an impact in the area. The same detached youth work team should be present for the allocated four hours per patch where feasible so that they can become trusted, familiar adults to local young people. Being present in an area can mean walking around a particular patch, on a set or flexible route, or being in one place, depending on the location and movement of the young people within the patch. Detached youth workers may at times need additional time to respond to immediate safeguarding or welfare needs of the young people they support, and their funded time and working hours will allow for this flexibility.

Relationship building

Element O2: detached youth workers focus their engagements with young people on building relationships with peer groups.

Unlike other youth services such as mentoring and centre-based youth work, detached youth work involves building relationships with established peer groups of young people, which alters the power-balance and nature of interactions. Detached youth workers will focus all their contact and engagement with young people

on developing trust, respect, and emotional safety, working through a strengths-based approach. Through engaging groups of young people in dialogue, listening to them and enabling them to be heard, detached youth workers will build insight into young people's experiences, needs and concerns. Through this interaction, detached youth workers model positive relationships, enable young people to be heard, and can reframe issues that are affecting young people. Detached youth workers aim to take the role of a trusted adult by listening and responding to young people's concerns or questions.

Activities

Element 03: detached youth workers engage young people in a range of activities that centre on informal education.

Detached youth workers will foster relationships with young people and provide learning environments in informal settings that respond to young people's agendas (as groups or sometimes as individuals) through conversation, referred to here as informal education. They will provide opportunities for young people to experience challenge and reflection and to learn from their experiences. Detached youth workers will support young people's personal and social development alongside learning on specific topics that respond to experiences, needs and interests.

Informal education does not necessarily entail teaching, skills development or giving advice, though detached youth work can include such activities. Informal education typically places emphasis on the process of unstructured learning through reflective thinking, conversation and discussions, and varied experiences, enabled through genuine enquiry.

Activities through which relationship building and informal education are achieved will vary depending on the context and often entail organic conversation and discussion rather than structured activities. However, more structured activities that are suited to these aims are ideally practical and hands-on, conducive to teamwork and collaboration between peers, offer skill building opportunities, and respond to young people's priorities. Accordingly, detached youth work may include a variety of activities, such as facilitating youth-led projects, sports, arts and culture and other recreational activities – delivered in public space within the relevant patch.

Advocacy

Element 04: detached youth workers facilitate their organisations advocate for young people in their local contexts.

In this context, advocacy is taken to mean working with groups of young people to promote their voices and views, ensuring fair representation, and providing an opportunity to engage with other agencies on a level playing field. This may include detached youth workers or their supervisors engaging with the local authority, community forums, local businesses, and the police about issues raised by young people. When advocating for young people, the intention is to enable young people to be heard. Therefore, the detached youth worker needs to recognise when their organisations should speak for young people and when to encourage them to speak for themselves. Detached youth workers will engage in advocacy within their organisations to a greater or lesser extent, depending on the local context, the young people they are working with, and the available time and resources.

Duration of engagement

Element 05: a minimum commitment of 18 months in each patch is required for reconnaissance, relationship building, delivery, and successfully closing the project.

It is recommended that detached youth work is conducted in each patch for 18 months including the first six months of reconnaissance, as described above. The next 12 months are then used to deliver detached youth work, based on that knowledge. Taking a long-term approach enables detached youth work organisations to earn and build quality and trusting relationships with both young people and the local community.

Limitations associated with short-term programmes are that the young people and community lose trust in detached youth workers because they feel abandoned or feel support is only available in the presence of antisocial behaviour issues. Short-term programmes also reduce the support detached youth workers can offer.

Closing the project

Element C1: detached youth workers will prepare young people for the end of a detached youth work project to avoid the potentially damaging effects of sudden withdrawal of support.

An important part of all youth work is managing endings, and this is particularly true for detached work which can often engage the most marginalised young people in a community. If a project is closing, detached youth workers will plan ahead for a mindful end of delivery and will work with the young people they have formed relationships with so that they are aware that the youth work relationship is going to come to an end and/or change going forward. They may choose to conduct group reflection sessions, to collectively think about shared experiences of the project. The end of a project will be communicated to any community contacts and allied services. Endings are as important as relationship building to ensuring positive social impact of the work.

Knowledge, skills and behaviours

Quality detached youth work is predicated on the skills and experiences of the detached youth worker and their commitment to the principles of detached youth work. As such, this model specifies minimum training and experience requirements for project workers, as well as a commitment to the principles of detached youth work described in this document. In addition, there are specific working practices that must be adhered to, such as the undertaking of consistent reflective and supervisory activities.

Skills and experience of detached youth workers

Element K1: detached youth workers will have undertaken or be working towards the completion of a level 2 certificate in youth work training.

As a minimum, employed detached youth workers will have undertaken or be working towards the completion of a level 2 certificate in youth work training. This qualification confers an accredited qualification as a Youth Support Worker. Detached youth work managers will also ideally be qualified youth workers with relevant experience of detached youth work.

Element K2: lead detached youth workers will be confident and have experience in the area in which they will be working.

An experienced detached youth worker is defined as someone who is confident and experienced in the area, with a deep knowledge of the community and context in which they are delivering. They should have a minimum of two years of experience in the areas they are working.

Element K3: detached youth workers will hold the below skills and qualities.

To provide a project that is engaging, fun, and interesting to young people whilst maintaining professional boundaries and ensuring safety for all parties, detached youth workers must demonstrate:

- Strong ability to work with peer groups as well as with individuals;
- A commitment to the principles of detached youth work, as described in this document, namely: social justice and equity-driven, youth-centred practice;
- Deep understanding of the geographical context in which they are working;

- Flexibility and adaptiveness: an ability to adapt to the needs of young people and the context;
- Authenticity: 'realness' in their interactions with young people;
- Resilience: an ability to manage challenging situations;
- Dependability: an ability to be consistent, reliable and trustworthy in the things that are said and done;
- An ability to manage boundaries;
- Strong negotiation skills;
- Strong psychosocial skills: an ability to build voluntary relationships with young people and other community stakeholders, as well as the ability to effectively facilitate relationships between young people and community stakeholders, encouraging joint working through dialogue and action;
- Respect for young people's territory and their existing strengths;
- A high level of professional judgement, being able to consider various perspectives when making decisions, both in the moment and when planning for future sessions;
- Exhibit confidence in understanding and applying safeguarding policy and practice guidelines and effectively respond to risk throughout detached youth work session in matters such as first aid, mental health crisis response, recognising acute risk;
- An ability to be critically reflective, think and challenge their own actions, motivations, and assumptions;
- Conflict management skills;
- A person-led approach: listening to, understanding, and working with young people through reflection and dialogue; and
- An ability to effectively understand, implement and be responsive to equality and the diversity of young people and community stakeholders.

Ongoing supervision

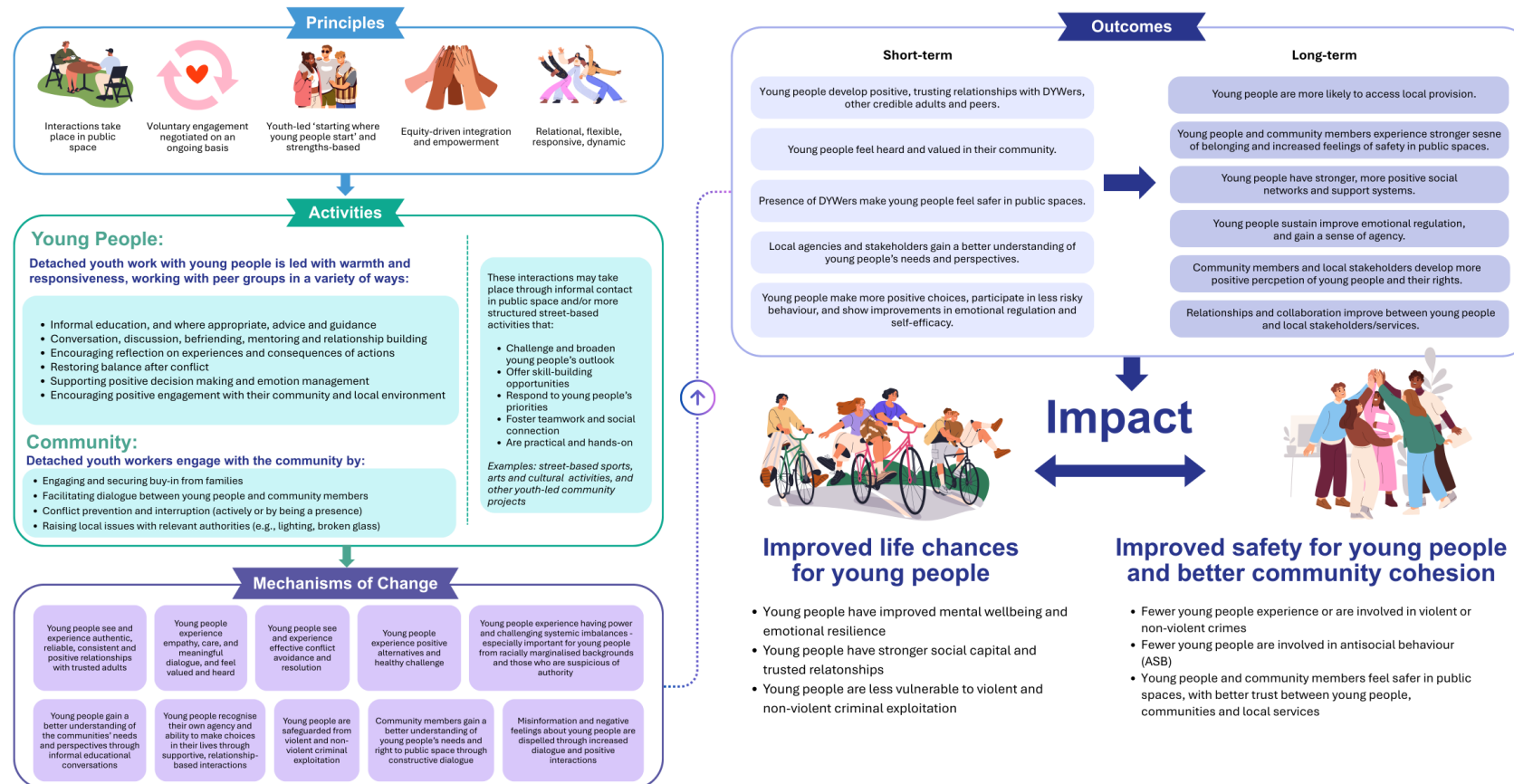
Element K4: detached youth workers should be provided with the opportunity to reflect on their practice through an experienced detached-youth work supervisor, a minimum of once a month.

Supervision may be provided by an experienced detached youth worker, team leader or manager, or an external supervisor with an in-depth understanding of detached youth-work, to critically reflect on and learn from practice. Supervision should take place at least for one hour every month. Peer-to-peer reflective spaces may be provided by participating delivery organisations, where detached youth workers within a regional consortium can come together and discuss concerns or practices that worked on the ground. Additionally, all detached youth workers will be invited to participate in community of practice. Community of practice meetings will take place online on a quarterly basis, to facilitate inter-consortium discussions and knowledge sharing.

13.2. Appendix B: Theory of Change

Detached Youth Work: Theory of Change

Context and assumptions: Detached youth work responds to a clear need for trusted support for young people in public spaces, particularly given growing concerns about violent and non-violent criminal exploitation. Many young people spend significant time in parks, streets, shopping centres and other public spaces, where they may be exposed to risks but have limited access to support. Detached youth work is uniquely positioned to meet this need because it takes place "where young people are at", shifting the power dynamic compared to traditional centre based youth practice. Detached youth work engages with peer groups, operates on voluntary engagement, is youth-centred, and has the ability to reach young people not otherwise engaging with youth services.



13.3. Appendix C: Full list of notifiable police offences and groupings

Offence

VICTIM BASED CRIME

1	Murder
4.1	Manslaughter
4.1 0	Corporate manslaughter
4.2	Infanticide

Homicide

4.4	Causing death or serious injury by dangerous driving
4.6	Causing death by careless driving when under the influence of drink or drugs
4.8	Causing death by careless or inconsiderate driving
4.9	Causing death by driving: unlicensed or disqualified or uninsured drivers
37. 1	Causing death by aggravated vehicle taking

Death or serious injury - unlawful driving

2	Attempted murder
4.3	Intentional destruction of viable unborn child
5D	Assault with intent to cause serious harm
5E	Endangering life
4.7	Causing or allowing death or serious physical harm of child or vulnerable person
8N	Assault with injury
8P	Racially or religiously aggravated assault with injury
8S	Assault with injury on a constable
8T	Assault with injury on an emergency worker (other than constable)

Violence with injury

3A	Conspiracy to murder
3B	Threats to kill
11 A	Cruelty to children/young persons

13	Child abduction
14	Procuring illegal abortion
36	Kidnapping
10 4	Assault without injury on a constable
10 5A	Assault without Injury
10 5B	Racially or religiously aggravated assault without injury
10 6	Modern Slavery

Violence without injury

8L	Harassment
8M	Racially or religiously aggravated harassment
8Q	Stalking
8R	Malicious communication
8U	Controlling or Coercive behaviour

Stalking and harassment

19 C	Rape of a female aged 16 or over
19 D	Rape of a female child under 16
19 E	Rape of a female child under 13
19 J	Rape of a female - undefined
19 F	Rape of a male aged 16 or over
19 G	Rape of a male child under 16
19 H	Rape of a male child under 13
19 K	Rape of a male - undefined

Rape Offences

28 E	Burglary - Residential
28 F	Attempted burglary - Residential
28 G	Distraction burglary - Residential
28 H	Attempted distraction burglary - Residential
28I	Residential burglary of a home
28 J	Attempted residential burglary of a home

28 K	Distraction burglary - residential (home)
28 L	Attempted distraction burglary - residential (home)
28 M	Residential burglary of unconnected building
28 N	Attempted residential burglary of unconnected building
28 O	Distraction burglary - residential (unconnected building)
28 P	Attempted distraction burglary - residential (unconnected building)
29 A	Aggravated burglary -Residential
29 B	Aggravated burglary - residential (home)
29 C	Aggravated burglary - residential (unconnected building)
30 C	Burglary - business and community
30 D	Attempted burglary - business and community
31 A	Aggravated burglary - business and community

Burglary

37. 2	Aggravated vehicle taking
45	Theft from a vehicle
48	Theft or unauthorised taking of a motor vehicle
12 6	Vehicle interference

Vehicle offences

39	Theft from the person
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Theft from the person

44	Theft or unauthorised taking of a pedal cycle
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Bicycle theft

46	Shoplifting
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Shoplifting

35	Blackmail
40	Theft in a dwelling other than from an automatic machine or meter
41	Theft by an employee

42	Theft of mail
43	Dishonest use of electricity
47	Theft from automatic machine or meter
49	Other theft
49 A	Making off without payment

All other theft offences

56 A	Arson endangering life
56 B	Arson not endangering life

Arson

58 A	Criminal damage to a dwelling
58 B	Criminal damage to a building other than a dwelling
58 C	Criminal damage to a vehicle
58 D	Other criminal damage
58 J	Racially or religiously aggravated criminal damage

Criminal damage

OTHER CRIMES AGAINST SOCIETY

92 A	Trafficking in controlled drugs
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Trafficking of drugs

92 C	Other drug offences
92 D	Possession of controlled drugs (excluding cannabis)
92 E	Possession of cannabis

Possession of drugs

10 A	Possession of firearms with intent
10 B	Possession of firearms offences
10 C	Possession of other weapons

10 D	Possession of article with blade or point
81	Other firearms offences
90	Other knives offences

TOTAL POSSESSION OF WEAPONS OFFENCES

9A	Public fear, alarm or distress
9B	Racially or religiously aggravated public fear, alarm or distress
62 A	Violent disorder
66	Other offences against the State or public order

TOTAL PUBLIC ORDER OFFENCES

15	Concealing an infant death close to birth
24	Exploitation of prostitution
26	Bigamy
27	Soliciting for prostitution
33	Going equipped for stealing, etc.
33 A	Making, supplying or possessing articles for use in fraud
38	Profiting from or concealing proceeds of crime
54	Handling stolen goods
59	Threat etc. to commit criminal damage
60	Forgery or use of drug prescription
61	Other forgery
61 A	Possession of false documents
67	Perjury
69	Offender Management Act offences
76	Aiding suicide
79	Perverting the course of justice
80	Absconding from lawful custody
83	Bail offences
86	Obscene publications, etc and protected sexual material
95	Disclosure, obstruction, false or misleading statements etc
96	Wildlife crime
99	Other indictable or triable-either-way offences
80 2	Dangerous driving
81 4	Fraud, forgery associated with vehicle driver records

13.4. Appendix D: Police data form

Detached Youth Work pilot evaluation

Scoping possible Recorded Crime and Antisocial Behaviour data sources

Overview

One of the key aims of the Detached Youth Work pilot evaluation is to test whether the delivery of detached youth work intervention activities leads to reductions in recorded crime and/or antisocial behaviour in the intervention 'patches' (i.e. small, locally defined, geographical areas) compared to similar control 'patches' that have not been subject to detached youth work delivery.

The pilot evaluation will therefore be dependent upon the successful construction of statistical 'outcome measures' using geocoded police recorded crime and antisocial behaviour incident data. These geocoded crime and ASB data will be aggregated to geographical 'patch' level, for both intervention and control patches.

As part of this initial co-design phase of the pilot evaluation, the evaluation team is seeking the support and guidance of data experts within the partner police forces to help us better understand the content and structure of geocoded police data in each respective police force.

We would very much appreciate your assistance by answering the questions below. The questions are structured under two main headings: (1) Youth-related qualifiers; and (2) General spatial and temporal considerations. Please could you add a short comment under each question heading?

Please could we request that this completed form is returned to the evaluation team by close of play on Tuesday 13th January?

The evaluation team will liaise directly with each partner police force via MS Teams to follow-up on the answers provided in this form. To help ensure we liaise with the correct contacts in your force, please could you confirm the contact details of the primary data expert(s) for geocoded crime and ASB data. Please add further boxes if you would like us to liaise with more than two data experts.

Name	
Position	

E-mail address	
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Name	
Position	
E-mail address	

Youth-related qualifiers

Are these qualifiers collected/added by your police force?

Please add some comment here to help us understand whether youth-related qualifiers are added to recorded crime and/or ASB data.

If so, what definition of 'youth' is used? (e.g. age)

Please add some comment here to help us understand how any such youth-related qualifiers might be assigned, such as the ages that would be considered as 'youth'.

Are the qualifiers collected on the incident recording system and/or crime recording system?

Please add some comment here to help us understand when and how the qualifiers are added to the data systems.

Qualifier quality considerations: Crime type? ASB? Time period? Location?

Please add some comment here to help us understand the data quality of any youth-related qualifiers, such as whether they are consistently recorded across all crime and ASB incident categories or just a subset, and whether there are any notable variations in qualifier quality over time and/or between different geographical parts of the police force area.

General spatial and temporal considerations (i.e. not only related to qualifiers)

Consistency of recording systems and recording practices.

Please add some comment here on the extent to which the general crime and incident recording systems and recording practices in your force have remained consistent since April 2022 to present day. Please also let us know if there are any planned (or potential) changes to recording systems or practices due in the coming years.

Careful assessment of 'patch' spatial delineation <-> police geocoding.

Please add some comment here to help us understand any features of the source crime and incident data that might affect the ability to map these records to small, locally defined, geographical 'patch' areas. For instance, since April 2022, have there been any notable changes to the broad proportion of crimes/incidents that have detailed grid reference of occurrence, or are any future changes in the pipeline?

Careful assessment of temporal trends / spikes.

Please add some comment here to help us understand whether there are any known issues with the geocoded crime/ASB data for your force that might lead to unusual (spurious?) temporal trends, such as spikes at particular hours of the day that do not reflect the reality of crime occurrence?

13.5. Appendix E: Alternate police crime and ASB incident data access options

This protocol presents the data collection and analysis approach via the preferred route. However, we have established four further data access options that would enable a trial to progress if the relevant information shared agreements and permissions are not granted. These options are summarised below.

How we would deal with data sourced through a combination of options

We recognise that the practicalities of accessing police data may mean that we may not be able to secure the necessary data permissions required for the preferred data to be used in this pilot trial. If different police forces provide different levels of access, this would require us to collate data through a number of the options set out in this protocol. As we have done in other research with police forces, we would strive to work collaboratively with them to maximise consistency of approach across the partner forces, whilst maximising the quality and utility of data provided by each force. We will tailor our analyses to ensure we make best use of the data we collate for each police force. In this scenario, we would also conduct exploratory sensitivity analyses to understand the influence of different data types on the ability to determine the impact of the intervention.

Option 2: Request bespoke pre-aggregated statistics from selected police forces: This approach would have many of the benefits of the optimal approach, but has two main drawbacks: (i) it significantly restricts the flexibility of what the evaluation team is able to do analytically as we would be dependent upon the police force analyst to construct outcome indicators to our specifications, which may vary as the pilot progresses; and (ii) based on our extensive experience of working with police forces and police data, our strong recommendation is to try to minimise the resource burden placed on forces, as time consuming requests are more likely to be rejected. This approach would be dependent upon securing the necessary data permissions.

Option 3: Negotiate access to the geocoded recorded crime held on the Home Office Data Hub (HODH): This approach would potentially provide an overall national dataset of geocoded recorded crime, with detailed spatial and temporal information, and would provide the evaluation team with the flexibility to aggregate it as needed. However, this approach has four main drawbacks: (i) it does not contain any antisocial behaviour data; (ii) it is not designed to be used by external researchers, so considerable data cleaning/preparation would be needed to get it into shape; (iii) although most police forces do submit data to the HODH, a small number do not (and this is subject to change over time); and (iv) it does not contain any qualifiers to indicate whether the crimes are youth-related. In relation to this final

point, it may be possible to request specific bespoke extracts for youth-related qualifier flags from the selected police forces and merge these into a HODH spine, which would result in a hybrid of the optimal approach and this HODH alternative option. A challenge of using this data is that access to Home Office data can take a long time to establish. We would need to identify whether this option is feasible very early in the process (i.e. by Dec 2026) to make it feasible to achieve within the project timelines. It may be possible to use this option for recorded crime data, and option 4 (set out below) for antisocial behaviour data. This approach would be dependent upon securing the necessary data permissions.

Option 4: Access the 'raw' data that police forces submit to Police.uk, i.e. not the publicly available data that has been subjected to spatial anonymisation: Whilst the HODH is arguably the more reliable source of recorded crime data of the two, Police.uk has the advantage of including antisocial behaviour, which the HODH does not. Police.uk could also be used for recorded crime data should the force in question not submit data to the HODH. The greatest drawback for Police.uk in relation to antisocial behaviour (and indeed this also applies to the recorded crime data in Police.uk) is that there are no qualifiers for youth-related incidents (or crimes). However, as noted in the point above, there may be scope to work with selected police force analysts to obtain a bespoke extract of antisocial behaviour qualifier flags for youth-involvement and then merge these into the Police.uk spine. This approach would be dependent upon securing the necessary data permissions.

Option 5: Use the publicly available (anonymised) Police.uk data on recorded crime and antisocial behaviour: As we set out in detail in the scoping study, should none of the options above prove successful, we would turn to use the publicly available data from Police.uk for the purpose of the pilot evaluation. This would cover recorded crimes and incidents of antisocial behaviour, but the data lack the level of spatial or temporal accuracy that are likely to be required for an efficacy study, and there would be no youth-related flags. This approach would **not** require securing any data access permissions as the data are already in the public domain.