ISRCTN11650008 https://doi.org/10.1186/ISRCTN11650008

Effect of focused deterrence violence intervention on adolescents and adults involved in violence

Submission date
30/05/2023

Recruitment status
No longer recruiting

Registration date
04/06/2023

Overall study status
Completed

Last Edited
05/08/2025

Condition category
Mental and Behavioural Disorders

[_] Prospectively registered
[X] Protocol
[X] Statistical analysis plan
[_] Results
[_] Individual participant data
[_] Record updated in last year

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims
Focused deterrence is an intervention designed to reduce violent offending among people already involved in violence. The intervention can take several forms, but at its core are three interacting components: enforcement by police, support to desist from violence and expression of non-violence community norms.
In 2021, the Youth Endowment Fund created a framework describing a set of essential criteria for a focused deterrence intervention. The development of this framework was based on evidence from previous studies, interviews with professionals from the UK, USA, and Scandinavia, and input from an advisory group of experts. The framework was designed to allow for contextual variations across different locations, considering the history of focused deterrence programs.
In 2022, five organisations in cities in England were each funded to develop a violence prevention intervention based on this framework with the commitment that the interventions would be evaluated rigorously. The evaluation worked with the organisations to support the development of acceptable interventions and to develop a robust study design to evaluate the effectiveness of the programme.

Who can participate?
People aged 14 to 40 years old. Eligibility criteria vary across sites, but typically respondents have a criminal record for violence or are at very high risk of being involved in violence.

What does the study involve?
Participants will be randomly allocated to the violence prevention intervention or control groups (business as usual). The effectiveness of the intervention will primarily be assessed by comparing the number of violent offences perpetrated by the intervention group within 1 year of randomisation compared to those perpetrated by the control group. The secondary outcomes are involvement in group offending, which will be measured as the number of crimes attributed to the individual and one (or more) co-offenders within 1 year of randomisation, and time to offence, which is the number of days from randomisation to offence (right-censored if there is no offence).

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?
The programme is designed to support individuals involved in violence to desist from violence through a combination of mechanisms. The benefits of participating are that the support offer can address access to opportunities that may have been denied to that individual in the past through unequal distribution of service availability or other structural disadvantage while the deterrence component can offer a viable motivation for desisting from violence. These mechanisms may help the individual avoid future physical, psychological and social harms of involvement in violence. The risks of participating are that continued involvement in violence while exposed to enhanced police attention may result in legal consequences.

Where is the study run from?
University of Hull (UK)

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?
April 2022 to September 2026

Who is funding the study?
Youth Endowment Fund (UK)

Who is the main contact?
Iain Brennan, i.brennan@hull.ac.uk

Contact information

Type(s)
Principal investigator

Contact name
Prof Iain Brennan

ORCID ID
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2131-1599

Contact details
School of Criminology, Sociology and Policing
University of Hull
Hull
United Kingdom
HU6 7RX
+44 (0)1482465717
i.brennan@hull.ac.uk

Type(s)
Public

Contact name
Prof Iain Brennan

Contact details

School of Criminology, Sociology and Policing
University of Hull
Hull
United Kingdom
HU6 7RX
+44 (0)1482465717
i.brennan@hull.ac.uk

Type(s)
Scientific

Contact name
Prof Iain Brennan

Contact details
School of Criminology, Sociology and Policing
University of Hull
Hull
United Kingdom
HU6 7RX
+44 (0)1482465717
i.brennan@hull.ac.uk

Type(s)
Scientific

Contact name
Dr Tia Simanovic

ORCID ID
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6171-1613

Contact details
School of Criminology, Sociology and Policing
University of Hull
Hull
United Kingdom
HU6 7RX
-
t.simanovic@hull.ac.uk

Type(s)
Scientific

Contact name
Dr William Graham

ORCID ID
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6241-5186

Contact details

Abertay University
School of Business Law and Social Sciences
Bell Street
Dundee
United Kingdom
DD1 1HG
-
w.graham@abertay.ac.uk

Type(s)
Scientific

Contact name
Dr Paul McFarlane

ORCID ID
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6784-6014

Contact details
Jill Dando Institute of Security and Crime Science
35 Tavistock Square
London
United Kingdom
WC1H 9EZ
-
p.mcfarlane@ucl.ac.uk

Type(s)
Scientific

Contact name
Dr Alex Sutherland

ORCID ID
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0276-9705

Contact details
Research Design Consultancy
4 St. Andrew’s Park
Histon
Cambridge
United Kingdom
CB24 9ER
-
alex@researchdesign.uk

Additional identifiers

Study information

Scientific Title
Another Chance Fund Focused Deterrence programme: a multi-centred randomised controlled trial

Acronym
ACF1

Study objectives
Current study hypothesis as of 30/10/2023:
H1: If the intervention is effective, the average number of violence against the person offences attributed to individuals in the intervention condition after one year will be lower than for individuals receiving business as usual (control condition).

H2: If the intervention is effective, the average time to a violent against the person offence (in days) attributed to individuals in the intervention condition will be longer than for individuals receiving business as usual (control condition).

H3: If the intervention is effective, the average number of crimes involving two or more perpetrators attributed to individuals in the intervention group will be lower than for individuals receiving business as usual (control condition).

Previous study hypothesis:
H1: If the intervention is effective, the average number of violence against the person offences attributed to individuals in the intervention condition after one year will be lower than for individuals receiving business as usual (control condition).

H2: If the intervention is effective, the average time to a violent against the person offence (in days) attributed to individuals in the intervention condition will be lower than for individuals receiving business as usual (control condition).

H3: If the intervention is effective, the average number of crimes involving two or more perpetrators attributed to individuals in the intervention group will be lower than for individuals receiving business as usual (control condition).

Ethics approval required
Ethics approval required

Ethics approval(s)
Approved 01/03/2023, Faculty of Arts, Culture and Education Ethics Committee, University of Hull (Cottingham Rd, Hull, HU6 7RX, United Kingdom; +44 (0)1482465717; pvc-re@hull.ac.uk), ref: 2223STAFF14

Approved 01/03/2023, University of Hull Faculty of Arts, Culture and Education Ethical Review Committee (Faculty of Arts Culture and Education Ethics Committee, FACE Faculty Office, Wilberforce Building, University of Hull, Hull, HU6 7RX, UK; +44 (0)1482 464026; face-ethics@hull.ac.uk), ref: 2223STAFF14

Primary study design
Interventional

Study design

Multi-centred two-arm stratified randomized controlled trial

Study type(s)
Prevention

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied
Prevention of violent offending by 14-40-year-olds with a history of involvement in violence

Interventions
The intervention condition will be entered into a focused deterrence programme. The control condition will receive no intervention (business as usual). Participants will be randomised into treatment or control conditions stratified on child/adult status (child aged 18 years or under) and the number of suspected criminal offences in the preceding 2 years.

The focused deterrence programme is a combined programme of enhanced police enforcement and a tailored programme of desistance support combined with community norm messaging. The interventions in each of the five sites were developed on a set of nine expert-generated principles that are the fundamental features of 'focused deterrence' (https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/YEF_AC_ApplicationGuidance3.pdf, p.10-12).

The treatment unit is individuals who meet the eligibility criteria. The support component of the programme will typically last 3 months but will be responsive to individual needs, as will the nature of support.

Intervention Type
Behavioural

Primary outcome(s)
Number of violent offences, measured by a count of violence against the person offences in police records attributed to the individual after 1 year

Key secondary outcome(s)
1. Time to offence, measured by the number of days until a recorded offence of violence against a person in police records attributed to the individual within 1 year
2. Co-offending, measured by the number of recorded offences of violence against the person involving more than one perpetrator in police records attributed to the individual within 1 year

Completion date
01/09/2026

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria
Leicester:
1. A member or associate of a group involved in committing serious violence or engaged in activities which drive the local serious violence problem, such as drug supply
2. They must also meet one of the following criteria:
2.1. In the past 2 years, they have been arrested for or suspected of committing serious violence
2.2. Arrested for or suspected of committing offences involving a weapon or possession of a

weapon
2.3. Flagged as a habitual knife carrier
2.4. Arrested for or suspected of drug offences

Manchester:
1. Aged between 14 and 25 years
2. Connected to a homicide or near-miss violent offence with a group violence component committed in the past 2 years or who committed a non-domestic abuse flagged violent offence in the past 2 years
3. Reside in Manchester or North Trafford

Nottingham:
1. Aged between 14 and 24 years
2. Reside within the Nottingham City boundary or have group bonds to the area
3. They also must have been arrested for a violent or weapons offence in the previous 12 months, or for an offence that involved three or more perpetrators

Coventry 'high-risk cohort:
1. Aged 14 years or over
2. Objective link to a recognised group within Coventry
3. Address within the ward boundaries of Coventry
4. Either have a violent offence committed (or listed as a suspect) within the last 18 months that is non-domestic abuse (but includes violence with injury, homicide, possession of weapons) or be linked to an Organised Crime Group (OCG) with a violent threat/sub-threat in police intelligence logs

Coventry referral cohort:
The main criteria for the population of interest is a gang/group link or being at risk of criminal exploitation. The eligible individual further must have an unmet need and must live in the city or within 1 hour from it (if moved). The remaining criteria slightly differ based on the referral agency but include, for example:
1. Evidence of involvement in violence/exploitation
2. Arrest for a trigger offence
3. An OCG link
4. Association with criminal peers or in a known gang spot
5. Known to social care
6. Are a looked-after child
7. Presented with injury with requisite suspicion
8. At risk of school exclusion
9. Under probation or on licence
10. Evidence of unstable home environment/criminality

The trial population is those who have opted out of the intervention once having been referred, identified as eligible and offered the intervention.

Wolverhampton 'high risk' cohort:
1. Aged 14 years or over
2. Have an objective link to a recognised group within Wolverhampton
3. Have an address within the ward boundaries of the city
4. Either have a violent offence committed (or listed as a suspect) within the last 18 months that

is non-domestic abuse (but includes violence with injury, homicide, possession of weapons) or are linked to an Organised Crime Group with a violent threat/sub-threat in police intelligence logs

Wolverhampton referral cohort:
The main criteria for the population of interest is a gang/group link or being at risk of criminal exploitation. The eligible individual further must have an unmet need and must live in the city or within 1 hour from it (if moved). The remaining criteria slightly differ based on the referral agency but include, for example:
1. Evidence of involvement in violence/exploitation
2. Arrest for a trigger offence
3. An OCG link
4. Association with criminal peers or in a known gang spot
5. Known to social care
6. Are a looked-after child
7. Presented with injury with requisite suspicion
8. At risk of school exclusion
9. Under probation or on licence
10. Evidence of unstable home environment/criminality

Participant type(s)
Other

Healthy volunteers allowed
No

Age group
Mixed

Lower age limit
14 Years

Upper age limit
40 Years

Sex
All

Key exclusion criteria
No explicit exclusion criteria have been specified. However, if an individual is already subject to focused police attention through involvement with an organised crime group, they may be excluded at the request of police partners.

As the project is multicentred and operates in the context of a range of other ongoing violence interventions and related activity, exclusion criteria may emerge for reasons of participant or staff safety. These will be captured through an ongoing process evaluation.

Date of first enrolment
17/05/2023

Date of final enrolment

30/08/2025

Locations

Countries of recruitment
United Kingdom

England

Study participating centre
Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Violence Reduction Network
Police Headquarters
St Johns
Enderby
Leicester
United Kingdom
LE19 2BX

Study participating centre
Greater Manchester Combined Authority
Churchgate House
56 Oxford Street
Manchester
United Kingdom
M1 6EU

Study participating centre
Nottingham Violence Reduction Unit
Nottingham City Council
Station Street
Nottingham
United Kingdom
NG2 3NG

Study participating centre
West Midlands Police
Police Headquarters West Midlands Police
Lloyd House, Colmore Circus
Birmingham
United Kingdom
B4 6NQ

Sponsor information

Organisation
Youth Endowment Fund

Funder(s)

Funder type
Charity

Funder Name
Youth Endowment Fund

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan
The datasets generated during and analysed during the current study will be stored in a publicly accessible repository. The repository will be identified at a later date in consultation with the funder.

IPD sharing plan summary
Stored in publicly available repository

Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
Protocol article		28/03/2024	02/04/2024	Yes	No
Protocol file	version 2		31/05/2023	No	No
Protocol file	version 3.0	25/07/2025	05/08/2025	No	No
Statistical Analysis Plan	version 1.1	20/06/2025	05/08/2025	No	No