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Is a dedicated case management/mentoring programme delivered with children and young people involved in (or at risk of involvement in) youth violence and offending behaviours, focused on understanding and managing emotions, an effective approach to reducing children and young people's future engagement in youth violence and offending behaviours compared to light-touch young person-led wellbeing and safety support?

Submission date 21/05/2024	**Recruitment status** No longer recruiting	[_] Prospectively registered [X] Protocol
Registration date 31/05/2024	**Overall study status** Completed	[X] Statistical analysis plan [_] Results
Last Edited 01/05/2026	**Condition category** Other	[_] Individual participant data [X] Record updated in last year

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims

The Cerridwen project is a volunteer-based program where each young person is paired with a case manager or mentor. This program uses methods from cognitive behavioral therapy, which is a type of therapy that helps people change their thinking and behavior patterns. The project will take place in Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, and Swansea in South Wales. It was created in response to research that found:

- There has been an increase in youth violence incidents in England and Wales over the past year (Cardiff University News, 2023 and Welsh Government, 2022).
- More young people in Wales are being referred to Youth Offending Services for violent crimes (Morgan, 2022).

The Cerridwen model is based on evidence showing that:
a) Encouraging young people to develop empathy (the ability to understand and share the feelings of others) can help prevent future offenses (Bateman and Cook, 2021).
b) Mentoring and key worker programs have been shown to improve factors linked to violence,

such as substance abuse, behavior problems, school performance, social connections, emotional health, and self-esteem (Gaffney, Jolliffe, and White, 2022).
c) Having strong social networks, including relationships with trusted adults, can reduce the risk of offending (Gaffney, Jolliffe, and White, 2022).
d) Programs tailored to the specific needs and characteristics of young people are more likely to be successful in keeping them engaged and reducing reoffending rates (Christensen, Hagler, and Stams et al., 2020).
e) Cognitive behavioral approaches and mentoring can be effective in reducing reoffending (Adler et al., 2016).
f) Voluntary participation that considers individual interests and uses a trauma-informed approach (understanding and considering past trauma in the person's life) leads to better engagement with services than mandatory interventions (National Lottery Community Fund, 2018).

There is strong justification for conducting a Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT) to test the effectiveness of the Cerridwen program. An internal pilot trial and an evaluation of how the program is implemented and its processes are also planned. Initial evidence from a qualitative evaluation (which involves detailed interviews and observations) by Swansea University, which has been running since 2015 in Cardiff, suggests that Cerridwen could be useful for various organizations and practitioners in supporting young people who show violent behaviors (Morgan, 2022). This evaluation included positive feedback from young people and partners, suggesting that the project can reduce the severity and frequency of violence among youth. A more rigorous evaluation using an RCT will strengthen its evidence base.

There is currently limited strong evidence in the UK about what works to reduce offending among young people, especially for those aged 10-17 at risk of crime (Ross et al., 2011). Some evidence suggests that mentoring programs may help young people avoid crime, but more research is needed (Jolliffe and Farrington, 2008). While the Youth Endowment Fund Toolkit indicates moderately strong evidence for mentoring in general, this does not specifically focus on young people already involved in crime or violence. An efficacy RCT of Cerridwen will contribute valuable knowledge about what works to reduce offending in this group.

Who can participate?
Young people aged 10-17 years old are eligible to participate in the Cerridwen project. This includes those who exhibit or are at risk of exhibiting violent behaviors, as evidenced by referral partners indicating one or more of the following behaviors: displaying physical and verbal aggression, committing violent acts (against property, themselves, or others), or using violent /aggressive communication strategies. Participants must reside in Cardiff, Swansea, or Merthyr Tydfil. Additionally, they must voluntarily engage with and complete Cerridwen, as demonstrated by consenting to referral and confirming their willingness to participate after receiving a detailed explanation of the project during an initial meeting.

What does the study involve?
The Efficacy Trial is a two-arm, parallel randomised control trial (RCT). All young people referred into the project, who meet the eligibility criteria and who consent to be part of the evaluation complete a baseline questionnaire before being allocated at random to a treatment or control group on a 1:1 basis.

Young people who are allocated to the treatment group will be paired with a Cerridwen case manager. They will receive an engagement and assessment planning meeting and two 8-week

blocks of two to three-hour, one-to-one case management sessions (with a one-week review period in between). At exit from the project (after an average of 5 months) young people complete a Time 2 (T2) questionnaire.

Young people who are allocated to the control group will receive light-touch, structured signposting and safeguarding support, provided by MAC. This support will be referred to as 'safety and wellbeing support'. This will involve young people in the control group being offered a maximum of eight one-to-one one-hour check-in meetings with one MAC case manager, which will take place over the same five-month period as the Cerridwen programme.

The first four meetings will take place weekly and the final four will take place monthly. Young people will complete baseline measures prior to randomisation and attending the first meeting in the control group pathway.
The first meeting after obtaining consent, baseline questionnaire completion and randomisation (Session 1) will involve an assessment of needs and risks, which will identify immediate safeguarding concerns and determine the activity and focus of the remaining meetings.
As the sessions offered are determined by individual assessments with young people, the content will vary depending on severity and urgency of any identified risks. Because all young people have been referred to Cerridwen due to a concern around violence and/or offending behaviour, MAC will provide basic information around the law, the consequences of a criminal record, and information on how to keep safe in Session 2. Sessions 3-7 will be delivered if required, and may include:
• Referral to/information sharing with Children's Services in relation to immediate safeguarding concerns.
• Referral into other service to meet other identified support needs, e.g. Education and Employment.
• Direct support around other identified support needs e.g. assistance to engage with positive activities.
• Informal check-ins about current wellbeing and goal setting.

The last meeting (at five months) will include completing the T2 outcome measures and any onward referrals where appropriate.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?
The possible benefit for participants is receiving support which improves their outcomes related to involvement in serious youth violence or offending.

Risks include:
1. Participants could be triggered or upset by topics in questionnaires. Mitigations against this include (a) MAC practitioners receive training in how to support participants who may be affected in this way and direct them to further safeguarding or other appropriate support services (e.g. Mental Health services) and (b) Practitioners are trained youth workers who have extensive experience of supporting vulnerable young people, and they receive additional training from the experienced research team before tools are rolled out.
2. Young people in the control group might not receive the support needed which could lead to adverse consequences. The mitigation is they will be offered a maximum of eight one-to-one one-hour check-in meetings with a MAC case manager, during which they will be safeguarded and may also be signposted to "business as usual" services depending on ongoing identified risks and needs.

Where is the study run from?
Cerridwen is being delivered by Media Academy Cymru (MAC), located in Cardiff, Wales. The evaluation team is Cordis Bright, based in London, England.

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?
February 2024 to April 2026

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

Who is the main contact?
Matt Irani, Principal Investigator and Project Director. Principal Consultant at Cordis Bright.
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Additional identifiers

Protocol serial number
YEF Cerridwen

Study information

Scientific Title
An efficacy randomised controlled trial with internal pilot of Media Academy Cymru's (MAC) Cerridwen Project, a dedicated case/management/mentoring programme.

Study objectives
A dedicated case management/mentoring programme delivered with children and young people involved in (or at risk of involvement in) youth violence and offending behaviours, focused on understanding and managing emotions, reduces children and young people's future engagement in youth violence and offending behaviours compared to light-touch young person-led wellbeing and safety support.

Ethics approval required
Ethics approval required

Ethics approval(s)
Approved 19/02/2024, Royal Holloway, University of London Research Ethics Committee (Royal Holloway, University of London, Egham Hill, Egham, TW20 0EX, United Kingdom; +44 (0)1784 434 455; ethics@rhul.ac.uk), ref: 4052

Primary study design
Interventional

Study design
Interventional two-arm parallel randomized controlled trial

Study type(s)
Efficacy

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied
Reduction in future engagement in youth violence and offending behaviours for young people aged 10-17 years involved in (or at risk of involvement in) youth violence and offending behaviours.

Interventions

Cerridwen is a 5-month dedicated case management/mentoring project for young people aged 10-17 years who are involved in or at risk of involvement in youth violence and offending behaviour. Participants take part on a voluntary basis. The project is delivered in 3 phases:

1. Stage 1: Engagement and assessment planning (3 weeks). A meeting between the Cerridwen case manager, the young person and the family will take place in the most appropriate venue (i. e., school, home, or in the community). This meeting will include an assessment to identify the outcomes that the young person wants to achieve, goal setting, discussing the young person's hobbies and interests to build activities around, and establishing a safety plan if necessary. This will be the basis of the work that takes place in Stage 2, ensuring that young people play an active role in the development of intervention plans. Stage 1 will also include an initial introductory meeting to achieve consent and complete baseline questionnaires prior to randomisation as well as this stage 1 assessment meeting. Stage 1 will take around three weeks in total.

2. Stage 2a: Block 1 of weekly, 2- to 3-hour, one-to-one case management sessions (8 weeks). The case manager will work with the young person on core components that look at reducing violence through understanding their own feelings and how they relate to behaviours, moving the young person towards positive activity. Sessions will take place in the most appropriate venue for the young person (i.e., school, home, or in the community). Sessions also act as a review of previous sessions and a wellbeing check-in about how their life is going. The core components in one-to-one case management sessions are:
• Communication: aggressive/passive/assertive – how to identify and overcome flight/freeze /fight.
• Consequential thinking: importance of 'I' messages and neutralising language and behaviours.
• Thoughts/feelings/behaviours: how thoughts, feelings and behaviours are linked, and recognising negative thinking ideas and flipping them.
• Empathy: awareness of impact on self, others and both short- and long-term repercussions.
• Identity: recognising who you are, role models, how you can be a role mode, discussing labels and code switching.
• Reflection: discuss what aspects of the course they have most identified with, what they will take responsibility for moving forward, what positive changes they will make.

3. 3-month review (1 week). After 3 months, the case manager and the young person will review the successes and prioritise the next three months.

4. Stage 2b: Block 2 of weekly, 2- to 3-hour, one-to-one case management sessions (8 weeks). These sessions are a continuation of the one-to-one case management sessions in stage 2a, with a heightened lens on transition strategies.

All young people who are referred to the programme, meet the eligibility criteria, consent to be part of the evaluation and complete a baseline questionnaire are allocated at random to the treatment or control group on a 1:1 basis. Randomisation is done using randomly varying blocks of four, six and eight young people, in which the numbers of young people allocated to the treatment and control group is the same. The process follows a digitally generated randomisation sequence.

Intervention Type
Behavioural

Primary outcome(s)

Offending, measured using Self Reported Delinquency Scale (SRDS) volume score at baseline and 5 months post-randomisation

Key secondary outcome(s)
1. Relationship between young person and Cerridwen caseworker (treatment group) or young person and significant adult (control group), measured by the Social Support and Rejection Scale (SSRS) at 5 months post-randomisation
2. Empathy, measured by the Basic Empathy Scale (BES) at baseline and 5 months post-randomisation
3. Pro-social values and behaviours measured by the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire pro-social behaviour subscale (SDQ) at baseline and 5 months post-randomisation
4. Behavioural difficulties, measured by the Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire conduct problems subscale (SDQ) at baseline and and 5 months post-randomisation

Completion date
28/04/2026

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria
1. Young people who are aged 10-17 years
2. Young people who are exhibiting, or are at risk of exhibiting violent behaviours, as demonstrated by evidence from referral partners that they have presented with one or more of the following behaviours: (a) Displaying physical and verbal aggression, for example, making verbal threats of physical violence, (b) Committing violent behaviours (this can include on property, self and/or others), (c) Using violent/aggressive communication strategies
3. Young people who are living in Cardiff, Swansea, or Merthyr Tydfil
4. Young people who are willing to voluntarily engage with and complete Cerridwen, as demonstrated through: (a) Consenting to referral, (b) confirming willingness to engage following initial meeting and detailed explanation of the project

Participant type(s)
Other

Healthy volunteers allowed
No

Age group
Child

Lower age limit
10 Years

Upper age limit
17 Years

Sex
All

Total final enrolment
292

Key exclusion criteria
1. Young people will not be eligible if they are currently in prison.

Date of first enrolment
01/04/2024

Date of final enrolment
28/10/2025

Locations

Countries of recruitment
United Kingdom

Wales

Study participating centre
Media Academy Cymru
3-7 Columbus Walk, Brigantine Place
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Sponsor information

Organisation
Youth Endowment Fund

Funder(s)

Funder type
Charity

Funder Name
Youth Endowment Fund

Alternative Name(s)
YouthEndowFund, YEF

Funding Body Type
Private sector organisation

Funding Body Subtype
Trusts, charities, foundations (both public and private)

Location
United Kingdom

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan
The datasets generated during and/or analysed during the current study will be archived after the study in the YEF data archive and will be available to researchers on request.

Two datasets will be transferred to the YEF archive. The first dataset will contain identifying data and a unique project specific reference number for each participant. This will be transferred to the Department for Education, who will pseudonymise the data (replacing all identifying information with an identification number) before transferring to the Office of National Statistics (ONS) for storage in the YEF archive. The second dataset will contain all the evaluation data and the project specific reference numbers. This will be anonymised and is submitted directly to the ONS where it's stored in the YEF archive.

The archiving process is likely to take place around August - October 2026. The YEF have not set a specific time limit on how long they will store data for, but will carry out a review every five years to see whether there is a continued benefit to storing the data and its potential use in future research. The YEF will only allow information in the archive to be accessed and used for research in accordance with the ONS's 'Five Safes' framework and via the ONS-SRS. The 'Five Safes' framework makes sure that:

1. Only researchers with the skills and expertise to analysis the data are able to access it.
2. Only approved projects that are being conducted for the benefit of society and have been approved by ethics committees can go ahead.
3. Technology will make sure that the data is kept safe, by tracking and monitoring researchers' activity will be tracked and monitored.
4. All the data will be checked to make sure no one can be identified from the data.
5. Only data that uses references (and does not contain identifying information) can be analysed.

Participants and their parents/carers have the right to ask the research team during the evaluation, and the YEF after data has been transferred for archiving:

• for access to the personal information held about them;
• to correct any personal information held about them which is incorrect, incomplete or inaccurate.
In certain circumstances, they also have the right to:
•ask for their personal information to be erased where there is no good reason for continuing to hold it
• object to their personal information being used for public task purposes;
• ask for the use of their personal information to be restricted or suspended

All young people and their parents/carers will be giving a privacy notice and information sheets about the use of their personal data, the archiving process, and their data protection rights before consenting to be involved in the study. They have the right to withdraw from the study (and not have their information sent to the YEF archive) at any time before the study comes to an end in April 2026. Once information goes into the YEF archive it can no longer be deleted because that would affect the quality of the archived data for use in future research. They will however have the right to apply to the YEF who will review applications for deletion on an individual basis.

IPD sharing plan summary

Available on request

Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
Other publications	Internal pilot results conducted to assess the feasibility of the programme before progressing to an efficacy study evaluation	01/07/2025	11/08/2025	Yes	No
Participant information sheet	parent carer info sheet and consent form (evaluation)		31/05/2024	No	Yes
Participant information sheet	young person info sheet and consent form (evaluation)		31/05/2024	No	Yes
Protocol (other)			20/02/2025	No	No
Protocol file	version 1.2		11/08/2025	No	No
Statistical Analysis Plan		01/07/2025	11/08/2025	No	No