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An efficacy randomised controlled trial of Salford Foundation's STEER programme (a mentoring, coaching, family support and case management programme)

Submission date
15/11/2023

Recruitment status
No longer recruiting

Registration date
12/12/2023

Overall study status
Completed

Last Edited
08/04/2026

Condition category
Other

[_] Prospectively registered
[X] Protocol
[X] Statistical analysis plan
[X] Results
[_] Individual participant data

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims
Salford Foundation's STEER programme is a six-month intensive mentoring, coaching, family support and case management programme. It aims to reduce young people's risk of involvement in serious youth violence and future offending or reoffending. Conducting an Efficacy Study of STEER will add to the limited robust evidence base for what works to reduce offending among young people in the UK.
STEER was developed in response to:
1. A recognition in the Government's Serious Violence Strategy (2018) that tackling serious violence "requires a multiple strand approach involving a range of partners.
2. A need for evidence about "what works" in preventing and/or reducing young people's involvement in offending and violence.
3. An increase in the number of children and young people involved in serious youth violence, organised crime and gangs in Greater Manchester (Gray, Smithson, and Jump, 2021).
4. An increased recognition among professionals in Greater Manchester of the complexity of issues displayed by children and young people involved in serious youth violence, organised crime and gangs.
5. Local stakeholders reported that the available statutory responses on their own were not working effectively to reduce young peoples' involvement in serious youth violence, organised crime and gangs in Greater Manchester.
6. An understanding that progress for young people in desisting from serious youth violence, organised gangs and crime is not a linear process (Phillips, 2017, and Edward et al., 2004).
STEER aims to address the risk factors associated with involvement in serious youth violence, organised crime, violence and gangs via intensive mentoring, case management, coaching and family support. The programme has a focus on mentoring because mentoring, especially if frequent and intensive, has been shown to reduce the propensity to offend (College of Policing What Works Toolkit). STEER takes a trauma-informed and voluntary approach because evidence suggests these encourage better engagement by young people with services than statutory interventions for this cohort (National Lottery Fund, 2018).

The STEER Family Support offer was developed in recognition that providing parents and carers with skills and understanding to manage risk factors and enhance protective factors can reduce serious violence and involvement in gangs (Wikstrom and Butterworth, 2006, Boxford, 2006, National Lottery Fund, 2018, and H.M. Government, 2010).
The STEER programme was evaluated through an internal pilot RCT which started in January 2022 and concluded in May 2023. Based on evidence from the evaluation, STEER was deemed ready to move to an Efficacy Study; the Pilot Trial scored well against its progression criteria and all aspects of evaluation feasibility were of required levels for the project to scale up.

Who can participate?
Young people referred to STEER who are aged 10-17 years who have an association with peers or family member(s) involved in serious violence, organised crime or gangs and who consent to participate in the programme.

What does the study involve?
The Efficacy Trial is a two-arm, parallel randomised controlled 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 in the treatment group are paired with a mentor. The mentor delivers weekly face-to-face sessions which follow a toolkit of mandatory and optional themed interventions. STEER also provides weekly wrap-around case work and support for young people and offers their parents/carers a total of 14 hours of family support. At exit from the programme (after an average of 6 months) young people complete a Time 2 (T2) questionnaire.
Young people in the control group attend a meeting with a STEER practitioner after randomisation where they receive signposting to existing services and have any safeguarding needs identified and addressed. They receive appropriate support which would normally be offered under 'business as usual' (i.e., that they would have likely received anyway, without STEER being present).
Those in the control group attend a meeting after six months during which they complete a T2 questionnaire. The STEER practitioner assesses need, signposts the young person to existing services and identifies any safeguarding concerns. If any safeguarding needs are identified, STEER practitioners refer to the relevant authorities.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?
The possible benefit for participants is recieving 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) STEER 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 experienced youth practitioners who have extensive experience of conducting studies with vulnerable participants, 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 safeguarded and signposted to "business as usual" services.
Where is the study run from?
STEER is being delivered by Salford Foundation, located in Salford, Greater Manchester. The evaluation team is Cordis Bright, based in London.

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?
January 2022 to March 2025

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

Who is the main contact?
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Study information

Scientific Title
Does a co-designed mentoring, coaching, family support, and case management programme delivered to children and young people with known criminal associates, reduce the likelihood of participant involvement in serious youth violence and future offending or reoffending in comparison to receiving business as usual?

Acronym
YEF STEER

Study objectives
Does a co-designed mentoring, coaching, family support, and case management programme delivered to children and young people with known criminal associates, reduce the likelihood of participant involvement in serious youth violence and future offending or reoffending in comparison to receiving business as usual?

Ethics approval required
Ethics approval required

Ethics approval(s)
Approved 03/05/2022, The University of Greenwich Research Ethics Committee (The University of Greenwich, Old Royal Naval College, Park Row, Greenwich, London, SE10 9LS, United Kingdom; +44 20 8331 8860; researchethics@gre.ac.uk), ref: UREC/21.3.7.4

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 the likelihood of involvement in serious youth violence and future offending or reoffending for children and young people with known family members of peers involved in offending behaviour.

Interventions
Salford Foundation’s STEER programme (STEER) is a six-month intensive mentoring, coaching, family support and case management programme. It pairs young people who are at risk of serious youth violence and child criminal exploitation with a youth worker (mentor). Participants take part in STEER on a voluntary basis. It takes place at school, home, in the community or in

Salford Foundation offices. The mentor follows a toolkit which sets out the activities that the programme delivers to achieve its intended outcomes. The key activities are:

1. Familiarisation and assessment planning. Initial interactions over four weeks allow youth workers to assess and build understanding of the young person's strengths and needs. Youth workers also use this time to carry out full risk assessments, using conversations to build a picture of family context, supplemented by information shared between agencies. Co-design is a fundamental part of this process, taking on board the young person's thoughts, ideas, hopes and concerns - in particular, to inform the optional and diversionary activities (see below).
2. Weekly one-hour, one-to-one mentoring sessions plus an additional one hour a week support over a period of 24 weeks (six months) on average. The young person agrees an individual action plan (IAP) with their youth worker based around their needs/risk assessments. They then receive weekly one-to-one sessions including one-to-one activities and opportunities, signposting, and information-sharing plus an additional hour of wraparound support each week for young people. This support aims to give young people access to a positive role model with whom they can identify and who can model positive behaviour. This is the key mechanism of change. As part of this, the mentor:

• Helps the young person understand the level and dynamics of risk associated with their behaviours.
• Provides sessions on social and emotional learning.
• Gives young people knowledge about how to understand and control their emotions.
• Gives young people knowledge of the implications of committing crime for their lives.
• Encourages young people to consider options for their future and supports them to make informed, positive choices.
• Helps young people develop skills to sustain healthy, positive relationships.
• Gives young people strategies to disengage from contextual factors that might carry risk (such as spending time with peers engaging in criminal activity, or peer pressure to miss school or stay out late).
• Encourages young people to access positive activities that divert young people from offending and from high-risk peers and associates.

The face-to-face sessions follow a toolkit of mandatory and optional themed interventions. Mandatory interventions include sessions on: aspirations and goal setting; relationship mapping; safety planning; thinking, attitudes and behaviours; criminal exploitation, and; emotional control and anger management. Young people undertake around three hours of work on each topic. Young people also have additional unit options dependent on their needs (including additional support) if progress in any of the above areas is slow, such as drug use; family relationships; emotional literacy and support. These sessions focus on developing the pro-social behaviours of children to build protective factors and reduce risk factors, adopting a strengths-based approach. This includes signposting and referral to mainstream providers to support diversionary activities. This helps participants prepare for the end of the programme and builds their capacity to take part in positive activities independently.

3. 14 hours of Family Support Work spread across the duration of the six-month intervention. Recognising that young people on STEER live in a wide variety of family and care-giving models, the youth worker helps the young person to identify which adult or adults are most significant to their nurturing and flourishing. The family support is then targeted and offered to this individual or individuals. This is a voluntary offer. In line with recent NICE guidance (see NICE 2021), this support is also be offered to those undertaking care-giving roles for STEER young people who are looked after children and care experienced. The Family Support Worker element aims to:

• Improve parenting skills of parent(s)/carer(s) of the participants.
• Give parent(s)/carer(s) strategies to manage boundaries with young people.
• Give parent(s)/carer(s) and young people strategies to communicate more effectively with each other.

• Help parents/carers interact more effectively with professionals.

Those in the control group attend a meeting with a STEER practitioner after randomisation where they receive signposting to existing services and have any safeguarding needs identified and addressed by a STEER practitioner. Young people in the control group receive appropriate support which would normally be offered under 'business as usual' (i.e., that they would have likely received anyway, without STEER being present).
As part of the evaluation, those in the control group attend a meeting after six months at which time they complete a T2 questionnaire. The STEER practitioner assesses need, signposts the young person to existing services and identifies any safeguarding concerns. If any safeguarding needs are identified during these meetings, STEER practitioners refer on to the relevant authorities.

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 by the Self Reported Delinquency Scale at baseline and six months

Key secondary outcome(s)
1. Relationship between young person and mentor (treatment group) or young person and significant adult (control group) measured by the Social Support and Rejection Scale at six months post randomisation.
2. Pro-social values and behaviours measured by the pro-social Behaviour sub-scale in the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire at baseline and six months post-randomisation.
3. Emotional problems measured by the SDQ emotional symptoms sub-scale in the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire at baseline and six months post-randomisation.
4. Relationships/role models measured by the peer relationships problem sub-scale in the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire at baseline and six months post-randomisation.

Completion date
31/03/2025

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria
1. Young people aged 10 - 17 years who are at risk of involvement in violent crime because they have an association with peers or family member(s) involved in serious violence, organised crime or gangs and who consent to participate in the programme.
2. Young people must also meet one of the following criteria which evidence shows are risk factors for involvement in serious violence organised crimes and/or gangs:
2.1. Experiencing violence in the family
2.2. Exhibits overt coercion or violent behaviour
2.3. Regularly carry weapons such as knives

2.4. Disengaged from mainstream education
2.5. Missing from home or staying out unusually late or on a regular basis
3. All young people's most significant primary care givers (i.e. those who are most significant to the young person's nurturing and flourishing) will be offered Family Support.

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
689

Key exclusion criteria
1. Young people will not be eligible if they already have interventions from multiple other services
2. Young people will not be eligible if they have received multiple custodial sentences.

Date of first enrolment
25/05/2022

Date of final enrolment
30/09/2024

Locations

Countries of recruitment
United Kingdom

England

Study participating centre
Salford Foundation
3 Jo Street

Salford
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M5 4BD

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 a unique project specific 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 October 2025. 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 January 2025. Once information goes into the YEF archive after January 2025 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?
Funder report results		01/01/2026	08/04/2026	No	No
Protocol file	version 1.0	01/10/2023	12/12/2023	No	No
Statistical Analysis Plan			03/03/2026	No	No