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# Spark2Life Meaningful Mentoring Programme

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| **Submission date**<br>22/08/2024 | **Recruitment status**<br>Recruiting | [X] Prospectively registered<br>[X] Protocol<br>[_] Statistical analysis plan<br>[_] Results<br>[_] Individual participant data<br>[X] Record updated in last year |
| **Registration date**<br>06/09/2024 | **Overall study status**<br>Ongoing | |
| **Last Edited**<br>17/09/2026 | **Condition category**<br>Other | |

## Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims
The Youth Endowment Foundation (YEF) has funded a study to evaluate a program called Meaningful Mentoring, which is designed to help children and young people who are involved in or at risk of getting involved in violent crime. YEF is a charity focused on finding out what works to prevent young people from becoming involved in violence and helping to put this knowledge into practice. The Meaningful Mentoring program is run by Spark2Life, a community-based organization that aims to reduce the risk of offending among young people. Trained mentors work with young people, aged 11-18 years, in weekly one-on-one sessions to help them make positive life choices and stay away from crime. This study will assess how well the program works and how it is being delivered.

Who can participate?
Young people aged 11-18 years who have been involved in crime or are at risk of becoming involved can participate in the study. Participants will be chosen randomly to either take part in the Meaningful Mentoring program or continue receiving the usual support from youth offending services, children's social care, or alternative schools.

What does the study involve?
Participants in the study will either join the Meaningful Mentoring program or continue with the regular support they already receive. Those in the mentoring program will have weekly sessions with a mentor who will help them challenge their thinking and support them in making positive choices. All participants will be asked to fill out questionnaires at the beginning of the study and again after 12 months to see how the program has affected their behavior and choices. Some participants and service providers will also be invited to take part in interviews and surveys to provide more in-depth feedback.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?
The key benefit for participants is that they will receive the intervention Meaningful Mentoring. This provides participants with tailored mentoring support over a 12-month period delivered by a trained mentor matched to each individual. The intervention is designed to support participants to take control over a number of areas of their lives encouraging desistance from crime and positive life choices. There is a low risk that some of the questions asked as part of the study are experienced as upsetting. The study team has a safeguarding protocol in place to mitigate this and all members of the team are trained in trauma-informed research.

Where is the study run from?
The study is being carried out by ICF, an organization that specializes in research and evaluation. The mentoring program itself is delivered by Spark2Life, a community-based group that works directly with young people.

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?
November 2023 to July 2027

Who is funding the study?
Youth Endowment Foundation (YEF) (UK)

Who is the main contact?
Dr Matt Barnard Matt.Barnard@icf.com

# Contact information

### Type(s)
Public, Scientific, Principal investigator

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# Additional identifiers

# Study information

### Scientific Title
Spark2Life Meaningful Mentoring Programme: a randomised controlled trial efficacy study with an internal pilot

### Acronym
S2L MMP: RCT

### Study objectives
In recent years, there has been a mixed picture in terms of trends relating to crime. According to the YEF's latest review of the data (YEF, 2023), although there have been reductions in levels of crime in general since the end of lockdown restrictions, violent crime has returned to and in fact exceeded levels previously recorded. This has included homicides increasing by 2%, violence with injury increasing by 4%, and violence without injury increasing by 11%. Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), such as exposure to violence, come with an increased risk of (CYP) being

involved with crime, both as offenders and victims, as the result of trauma-induced changes to both brain and body. The potential for CYP involved in violence to suffer lasting damage is heightened by the fact that Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services are reportedly unable to cope with the current level of demand . Within this context, trusted adult interventions are being looked at as one approach to supporting CYP and preventing them becoming involved in violence. However, there is a lack of rigorous evidence on interventions supported by trauma-informed practice and delivered through a mentoring approach. Meaningful mentoring (the intervention implemented by the organisation Spark2Life and the subject of this study), offers a competent, person-centred and trauma informed approach to mentoring that aims to overcome the challenges in engaging and supporting CYP. This study aims to evaluate meaningful mentoring through a two-armed randomised controlled trial (RCT), randomised at the individual level and with the control group receiving business-as-usual support.

## Ethics approval required
Ethics approval required

## Ethics approval(s)
Approved 14/08/2024, ICF PRES UK Research Ethics Committee (62 Threadneedle Street, London, EC2R 8HP, United Kingdom; +44 2030 964800; matt.barnard@icf.com), ref: 30303276

## Primary study design
Interventional

## Study design
Multicentre interventional two-armed randomized controlled trial

## Study type(s)
Efficacy

## Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied
Involvement in youth violence, gang activity and/or crime as a perpetrator or victim.

## Interventions
The intervention is 'Meaningful Mentoring' delivered by Spark2Life a community-inspired black-led initiative that works with young people to reduce and prevent the risk of offending. Meaningful Mentoring provides consistent, person-centred mentoring to participants aged 11-18. Mentoring is provided for up to 12 months through weekly 1:1 meetings. Mentors are trained to support mentees to work towards desistance from offending using a flexible, dynamic action plan that reflects CYPs' needs and responds to their changing circumstances. Mentors aim to challenge and encourage CYPs to take control and build stability across all areas of life including, for example, well-being, attitudes and behaviour, relationships and family, interactions with the criminal justice system and education and training. As well as mentoring participants are supported across a range of other domains such as with attending appointments, advocacy within the criminal justice system and support in accessing education, training and employment.

Participants are recruited via referral to participating youth offending services (YOS) and pupil referral units (PRUs).
The study will be an efficacy trial run as a two-armed randomised controlled trial. Randomisation will occur at the level of the individual CYP and allocation to intervention and control arms will be in the ratio of 50:50. At the start of the trial, the trial statistician will create a random order,

stratified by YOS team and with random block length. When a CYP completes baseline data collection, an ICF researcher will randomise them into the intervention or control group within their YOS team strata based on the chronological order in which their baseline data collection is complete. CYP allocated to the control (non-intervention) group will receive a range of support services as part of business-as-usual (BAU), including for example: supervision by a YOS caseworker, family functional therapy sessions, children's social care services.

Once consent/assent for participation is received participants will be asked to complete a baseline questionnaire with a follow-up questionnaire administered 12 months later. The primary outcome for the trial will be self-reported offending as measured by the Self Report Delinquency Scale (SRDS), a self-administered measure of offending behaviour. The first secondary outcome measure will be the behavioural and emotional difficulties of the CYP as measured by the self-report Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) using the total difficulties score. The second, secondary outcome measure will be the prosocial subscale of the SDQ.

### Intervention Type
Behavioural

### Primary outcome(s)
Self-reported offending (measured by the volume score on the Self-Report Delinquency Scale) measured at baseline and after 12 months

### Key secondary outcome(s)
1. Behavioural and emotional difficulties (measured by the total difficulties score on the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire) measured at baseline and after 12 months
2. Prosocial behaviour (measured by the prosocial subscale of the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire) measured at baseline and after 12 months

### Completion date
31/07/2027

## Eligibility

### Key inclusion criteria
Children and Young People (CYP) aged 11 to 18 years old who are involved in youth violence, gang activity, and/or crime as a perpetrator or victim, referred via youth offending services or a PRU. CYP must meet at least one of the following criteria:
1. Be known group/gang offender
2. Be known violent offender (violence linked to group/gang activity; carries weapon)
3. Have a history of violent behaviour
4. Have convictions for violent offences

### Participant type(s)
Learner/student, Service user

### Healthy volunteers allowed
No

### Age group

Mixed

**Lower age limit**
11 Years

**Upper age limit**
18 Years

**Sex**
All

**Total final enrolment**
750

**Key exclusion criteria**
CYP without capacity to consent

**Date of first enrolment**
01/10/2024

**Date of final enrolment**
30/06/2027

# Locations

**Countries of recruitment**
United Kingdom

England

**Study participating centre**
**Spark2Life**
The Outset Centre 2A Grange Road Walthamstow
London
England
E17 8AH

# 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
Anonymised data sets generated during the study will be stored in the YEF archive on the YEF's website: https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/faqs-the-youth-endowment-fund-data-archive

### IPD sharing plan summary
Available on request, Stored in publicly available repository

### Study outputs

| Output type | Details | Date created | Date added | Peer reviewed? | Patient-facing? |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Protocol file | | | 17/09/2026 | No | No |