The Reach Project – Teachable Moments

Sheffield Hallam University

Principal investigators: Anna Stevens and Charlotte Coleman

Feasibility study plan: The Reach Project – Teachable Moments

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Project title	The Reach Project – Teachable Moments
Developer (Institution)	VRN for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland, Leicester City Council, Leicestershire County Council
Evaluator (Institution)	Sheffield Hallam University
Principal investigator(s)	Anna Stevens and Charlotte Coleman
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Intervention

The development of The Reach Programme has been led by the Violence Reduction Network (VRN) for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland in collaboration with the Leicester City Council and Leicestershire County Council who are the delivery partners for this project. Its design has been informed by the VRN's Strategic Needs Assessment which revealed that 15-19 year olds followed by 10-15 year olds commit the highest rates of serious violence locally. Furthermore, it shows that young people involved in serious violence are most likely to reside in the East and West of Leicester, and Charnwood in the County. Local data shows that the schools with the highest rates of fixed and permanent exclusions are also based in the same 'hotspot' areas. Currently, there is no local provision which provides intensive, responsive and contextually tailored support to at-risk young people in an upstream environment.

The Reach Programme is a six-month, evidence-informed intervention for young people who are at risk of exclusion or who receive a fixed term exclusion – a context which has the potential to be a 'teachable moment'. It incorporates intensive and flexible mentoring, offers opportunities for prosocial activity, and addresses individual, relationship and community risk factors through structured learning components such as social skills training.

While the programme has not yet been evaluated, the intervention's core components have been identified as showing promise in preventing involvement in crime and violence (YEF Toolkit, 2021; YEF What Works Review, 2020). Mentoring is effective in both reducing crime and the behaviours associated with crime and violence. Research suggests that, on average, mentoring reduces crime by 26% (YEF Toolkit, 2021). There is also strong evidence that mentoring can reduce behavioural difficulties and substance use and improve self-regulation – three important predictors of violence. However, impact varies widely depending on the approach taken. Additionally, evidence indicates that combining mentoring with recreational activity is an enabling factor that can increase participation.

There is also a growing evidence base demonstrating positive outcomes for teachable moment interventions, subsequently reducing involvement in violence. This programme provides an opportunity to explore the 'teachable moment' component in a school context. Furthermore, research on social skills training suggests that its impact on preventing violence is likely to be high. On average social skills training programmes have reduced the number of children involved in crime by 32%. Targeted programmes working with children who were already demonstrating a need for more intensive support have achieved greater impacts than universal programmes focused on primary prevention.

The development of The Reach Programme has been led by the Violence Reduction Network for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland in collaboration with the Leicester City Council and Leicestershire County Council who are the delivery partners for this project. They have been involved in co-designing this intervention, utilising their data and expertise to ensure the intervention is targeted in the right places and at the right young people. They will deliver the intervention through the recruitment, onboarding and training of:

- 8 FTE Youth Workers who will provide intensive one-to-one support to at-risk young people

- 1.5 FTE Team Managers who will be responsible for the line management of the Youth Workers

- 1 FTE Project Coordinator to lead on mobilising the intervention and overseeing delivery across city and county

- 1.5 FTE Project Officers to provide administrative support to the delivery team and to gather data/information for the evaluation.

In terms of the referral pathway, young people who are at risk of exclusion or who receive a fixed-term exclusion will be referred to this six-month intensive mentoring intervention by schools using an online referral form. Within 24 hours, the referral will be triaged to assess eligibility and eligible young person and their parents/carers will be contacted to arrange an assessment as soon as practicable. The assessment will explore the strengths, needs, risks and interests of the young person. This information will be used to match the young person to the most suitable Youth Worker who will act as a mentor throughout the duration of the intervention.

As mentioned, the intervention consists of core components which are tailored to the needs and learning styles of the young person. The following provides an overview of the core components and the structure of the programme as a whole:

LEVEL OF INTENSITY	HIGH									LOW														
CORE COMPONENTS	WEEKS																							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
1: Intesive, flexible and responsive mentoring support	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
2: Relationship Building	■	■	■																					
3: Understanding Behaviours				■	■																			
4: Social Skills Training						■	■																	
5: Confidence, Wellbeing and Resilience										■	■													
6: Positive Relationships														■	■									
7: Aspirations																	■	■						
8: Recreational Activities				■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■

• **Relationship Building**: The Youth Worker will arrange sessions at times and in places that work for the young person. Adopting a contextual safeguarding approach, the Youth Worker will spend time with the young person in the spaces that they occupy including their school, street-based environments and at home. This will enable the Youth Worker to develop a comprehensive understanding of the young person's lived reality and collect further information about their strengths and needs. The Youth Worker will engage in activities with the young person that he/she enjoys doing such as cooking, gaming or going to the gym. During this phase of the intervention, the Youth Worker is expected to meet with a young person at least twice a week. The sessions are designed to be unstructured and fun with the aim of developing a positive and trusting relationship between the young person and the Youth Worker.

• **Understanding Behaviour**: Once a trusting relationship has developed, the sessions will shift from an unstructured format to focusing on problem behaviours and emotional management. This phase will begin with setting a number of goals and short-term milestones which link to the behaviours of concern identified by the referrer and those revealed as part of the assessment and relationship-building phase. The young person and the Youth Worker will agree an intervention plan which sets out the goals, milestones and planned activities. Through the use of motivational interviewing, the Youth Worker will ask the young person open questions to draw out their experiences of and perspectives on the drivers/causes of their behaviour. The Youth Worker will provide emotional and practical support during these sessions as required.

• **Social Skills Training:** Youth Workers will deliver six sessions focusing on Social Skills Training. These sessions will involve recapping the situations and experiences which lead to negative displays of behaviour (as identified in the core activity 'Understanding Behaviour). To begin with, sessions will focus on the feelings that young people feel, identifying the intensity of these feelings and understanding the difference between feelings and behaviours. Attention will turn to discussing the feelings and perspectives of others such as family members, peers and teachers, including reading and interpreting social cues. These sessions will include role play and perspective-taking. The remaining sessions will focus on tools to help manage feelings including relaxation and breathing exercises and communication skills.

• **Confidence, Wellbeing and Resilience:** Within these interactive sessions, the Youth Worker gets the young person to reflect on their confidence and wellbeing. They will talk about particular activities or situations which make them feel anxious and fearful. The young person will have the opportunity to identify the activities that they are good at, while talking about the aspects that they want to improve on. The Youth Worker will explain a range of helpful strategies for overcoming fears and facing challenges confidently. Towards the end of this phase, they will also work on how to build resilience.

• **Positive Family, Peer and Community Relationships:** The Youth Worker will discuss positive relationships with the young person. They will explore positive and negative relationships in each domain:

- Within the family – at home and extended family
- Positive and negative peers – what makes a positive/ negative peer? How to resist negative peer influences
- Community – who is in their local community?
- Formal/informal relationships

The Youth Worker will also speak to the young person's family, and spend time with their friends to gain a contextual understanding of their family and peer relationships. If the Youth Worker perceives that the parents/carers would benefit from additional support - e.g. with housing, employment, communication skills - they will be referred to relevant services.

• **Identifying and Achieving Aspirations:** The Youth Worker will work with the young person to identify what they would like to achieve for themselves in the future, including discussing different roles and sectors. Key activities include listing what they would like to achieve in the next 3, 6 and 12 months and beyond, the steps to achieve that aspiration, and 'who' would help them achieve their aspirations.

• **Recreational Activity:** During the relationship-building phase, the Youth Worker will identify purposeful recreational activities that interest the young person. These sessions will take place alongside the more structured sessions outlined above. Where appropriate family members and positive peers will be encouraged to also participate in these activities. The Youth Worker will facilitate access to these opportunities and attend/participate if necessary to encourage participation. While at the beginning, recreational activities might include fun activities such as bowling, the Youth Worker will aim to identify more sustainable activities that the young person can continue beyond the project, such as football, youth groups, music clubs, or cooking/baking.

Following completion of the core components, the frequency of sessions between the young person and the Youth Worker reduces to once a week. If a young person sustains positive behaviour for an additional 4-6 weeks, the Youth Worker discusses closing the case with their Team Manager initially, and then with the young person and their parents/carer. If in agreement, and if sustainability plans are in place which ensures that the young person and their family have formal and informal support networks in place if issues do occur in the future, the case is closed.

For further detail please see the attached theory of change, logic model and blueprint which have been developed during the scoping phase.

Research questions and/or objectives

The intervention is currently relatively small scale and a new programme, thus we feel a feasibility study is most appropriate at this point to further develop and refine the theory of change and logic model, to explore the implementation of the programme in depth through an Implementation and Process Evaluation (IPE) and to explore the practical and ethical issues surrounding randomisation methods to take forward to a pilot study.

The objectives of the **feasibility study** are as follows:

• To develop, refine and finalise the theory of change and logic model by undertaking further literature reviews around mentoring and teachable moments, drawing upon the YEF Toolkit particularly around navigating and mentoring interventions, and holding 3 workshops with the deliverer and other relevant stakeholders. A key component of this process will be reaching an agreement on the primary outcome measure and a small number of secondary outcome measures that will be taken

through to the pilot phase. Further components of the workshops will be to draw upon the local expertise and evidence to inform outcome measures.

- To investigate whether the key components of the logic model and implementation plan are practical and achievable and whether the programme can achieve its intended outputs in this context
- To further explore the eligibility criteria, so that we can understand who the intervention is aimed at and who it benefits, and examine any criteria that would lead to ineligibility for the programme
- To inform the pilot study by exploring with stakeholders the feasibility of individual randomisation and to consider what an acceptable control condition could look like
- To inform the pilot study by considering how baseline/outcome data could be collected and how randomisation could be conducted in practical terms given the variability of start points for individuals and variability of the length of the programme, and the hard-to-reach nature of participants
- To conduct an IPE involving fieldwork with deliverers, youth workers, school leads and young people participating in the programme to investigate areas such as adaptation to context, organisational capacity, implementation support systems/barriers to implementation, fidelity, dosage, quality and reach. Monitoring data collected by the deliverer will also be brought in here and linked in with the IPE data to inform these research questions.
- As indicated below in the section on racial diversity and inclusion, there is variation between the level of deprivation and ethnic makeup of Leicester, Leicestershire, and Rutland. The feasibility study will include a total of 6 schools, 4 in Leicester and 2 in Leicestershire. We propose to sample (purposively) 2 of the schools in Leicester and include both schools in Leicestershire, to allow us to compare these two areas in terms of implementation of delivery and perceived value of the intervention. Findings here can be used to inform the recruitment of additional schools for the pilot phase in terms of area. Given the diverse make-up of participants in terms of ethnicity, the evaluator will work closely with the deliverer and schools when conducting the interviews/focus groups with young people to ensure representativeness. The deliverer will be collecting detailed data on participants including ethnicity, and this will be used to inform the focus groups/interviews for the evaluation.

The feasibility study will include a total of 6 schools and approximately 60 pupils during the 6-month feasibility fieldwork period. The evaluation will pause during the YEF 3-month transition period and delivery will continue during this so within a year it is expected that around 100 young people will participate in the programme at the feasibility stage. At this feasibility stage, predominately qualitative work will be conducted (along with a census survey of all 8 youth workers) due to the smaller sample size, and to allow for an in-depth

exploration of programme implementation and to achieve all the objectives highlighted above.

During the feasibility phase, the outcome measures would be fully explored with the delivery partner and other key stakeholders in terms of appropriateness for the demographic, convenience of collection, burden on participants and deliverers and validation for use. These would be examined alongside the theory of change and logic model.

Outcome measures

At the pilot stage we intend to use YEF's core measures as the primary outcome measures; the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) and Self Report Delinquency Scale (SRDS). At the feasibility stage the additional measures noted below will be explored, and carefully considered in terms of the burden of data collection and only taken through to the pilot stage if they are considered to add to the analysis of impact above and beyond YEF's core measures. The list of measures below is provisional and they will be initially considered alongside the theory of change and logic model. The qualitative work during the feasibility stage will be used to explore these measures with the deliverers and youth workers in terms of their usefulness and suitability. These measures could also be explored during the interviews/focus groups with young people in terms of appropriateness and time taken to complete to gain an idea of the burden.

Demkowicz et al. (2020) illustrates the importance of not assuming (due to validated age appropriateness) that questions are understood. It is possible with different cohorts that there may be a gap in understanding. We suggest piloting a mixture of youth worker and mentee reports to give a less biased picture than mentee self-reports alone would do. Other measures could be considered such as:

- Mental toughness questionnaire
- Personal wellbeing index - school children ++
- The EPOCH measure of adolescent wellbeing
- Mentor Alliance Scale (mentor/mentee relationship)
- Strength of Relationship scale (mentor/mentee relationship)

Racial and cultural sensitivity

Leicestershire and Rutland are counties within the East Midlands region of England, which serve a resident population of approximately 1.1 million people. The main urban area in Leicestershire is the City of Leicester, which is a separate unitary authority area from the county. Approximately 355,000 people reside in Leicester and 698,000 in Leicestershire. By contrast, Rutland is the smallest county in England in both population and geographical size, with approximately 37,000 residents. The disparity between the rurality of Leicestershire and Rutland and the urban more densely populated area of Leicester are further apparent in the

demographics and cultural make-up of the areas. Significantly in terms of indices of multiple deprivation, out of 152 upper-tier local authorities in England, Leicester is ranked 14, Leicestershire is 136 and Rutland is 148. Leicester is therefore one of the most deprived areas and in the bottom decile nationally in contrast to Leicestershire and Rutland being two of the more affluent counties in England. Leicester is also unique in terms of the proportion of its residents under the age of 25 years being much larger than the East Midlands and England averages. When looking at ethnic diversity, Leicester has a significantly higher proportion of its resident population from ethnic minority backgrounds, compared to the national average. Leicester has the largest Asian/Asian British population of any local authority area in England, totalling 37.13% and 50.52% of its overall resident population are from BAME backgrounds. In contrast, both Leicestershire and Rutland have significantly lower proportions of their respective resident populations from ethnic minority backgrounds when compared against the England average.

At all points of the study, we will take every step to ensure that we are being inclusive and representative in terms of racial diversity. At the outset, a full profile of the schools in the study will be produced including data on the ethnicity of pupils. The deliverer also collects data on the ethnicity of participants which we will use to inform representativeness in terms of fieldwork with young people and to produce materials and measures that are accessible in terms of language including offering translation if appropriate. Providing the baseline/outcome measures in different languages will also be explored. If possible, data on ethnicity will be shared with the evaluation team so that in quantitative terms we can explore the intended population versus the achieved population, and assess the representativeness of the achieved sample in terms of baseline/outcome measure completion and in terms of balance in the intervention and control group. Reach of the intervention in terms of racial diversity will be explored in the qualitative fieldwork, is the intervention accessible for all groups considered to be in need of the intervention? The deliverer aims to recruit a diverse workforce, has this been successful? This will be explored in relation to the youth worker/mentee relationship.

Success criteria and/or targets

Success criteria have been co-developed with the project team and YEF. These criteria will be used to guide whether the feasibility study should progress to a pilot trial. A RAG system has been used to categorise targets: Green (Go), Amber (Pause and think), and Red (Stop).

Project implementation

- Attendance of young people at planned sessions (Green = 80%, Amber = 50%, Red = below 50%)

Recruitment and retention

- Young people who are referred and are eligible are successfully recruited to the programme (Green = 75%, Amber = 50%, Red = below 50%)
- Of those 75% that are recruited, the percentage that will go on to complete the full programme (Green = 75%, Amber = 50%, Red = below 50%)
- Retaining youth workers (Green = 75%, Amber = 50%, Red = below 50%)

Measurement and findings

The following are measured by the youth worker and recorded on the monitoring data as a yes/no response:

- Improved emotional regulation and behaviour management
- Increased self-esteem and emotional wellbeing
- Improved relationships with family
- Increased uptake of positive recreational activities

For each of these, the following targets of the % recorded as "yes" will be as follows: Green = 70%, Amber = 50%, Red = below 50%.

Methods

Methods and data collection

The proposed fieldwork and methods for the IPE is set out below. In total 6 schools will be included at the feasibility stage, 4 in Leicester and 2 in Leicestershire. We propose to sample (purposively) 2 of the schools in Leicester and include both schools in Leicestershire, to allow us to compare these two areas in terms of implementation of delivery and perceived value of the intervention.

Online or telephone interviews with strategic leads, core delivery leads and youth workers

Given the small sample size, SHU will use purposive sampling for the qualitative work, and an online census survey of all 8 youth workers. The qualitative work with the deliverers and stakeholders will for the most part be online or by telephone, and the work with the young people will be face-to-face where possible. SHU will also conduct face-to-face observations of delivery where the activity is based outside of the home, linked in with conducting a face-to-face interview with the young person and youth worker subsequent to the observation if that is possible.

The deliverer has helpfully shared with SHU an organogram of the delivery team, and SHU will use this to frame the sample of interviews with staff from the delivery team. SHU will take guidance from the delivery team in terms of providing contacts and appropriate individuals to interview. At the outset (Jan 22) SHU will conduct **2 interviews with strategic delivery leads,** to explore factors such as:

- Rationale for the project
- Barriers/challenges to project development and workforce recruitment
- Relationships with schools
- Eligibility criteria and ineligibility for the programme
- Early stage implementation issues
- Understanding of the key issues in the local schools, communities and the wider local context around exclusion, disadvantage, racial diversity etc
- Evidence to inform the intervention (this will also be explored in the theory of change workshops)
-

SHU will also conduct **2 interviews with project co-ordinators/officers** at a later stage to explore areas such as:

- Implementation support system – strategies and practices used to support implementation, training and ongoing support and resources
- Fidelity/adherence – to gain a sense of how closely the intended delivery model is being followed
- Dosage – how much of the intervention has been delivered
- Reach of the intervention, numbers participating in the programme
- Perceptions on quality of delivery
- Any barriers to delivery
- Exploring how randomisation and baseline/outcome data collection could work in the pilot including the suitability of measures
- Exploring if a control condition is possible and ethical issues surrounding this

An early stage census survey of all 8 youth workers is proposed earlier on in the study (Feb 22). This will collect data on the personal characteristics of youth workers (e.g. age/gender/ethnicity), and explore a range of issues such as motivation for taking up the role and their perceived strengths/competencies they bring to the role including experience of working with young people. This survey will also explore relationship building with young people and the youth worker/mentee relationship as the programme commences. The survey will be comprised of a set of closed questions, and given the small sample size a set of open questions for more in-depth analysis.

The survey will be used to inform **4 interviews with youth workers** (later stage) further on in the programme (later stage), 2 of these 4 interviews are proposed to be conducted following observation visits (see further down). The areas to explore will be:

- Caseload to date
- Fidelity of implementation
- Attendance of participants at sessions, range and length of sessions
- Facilitators and barriers to implementation and intended outcomes
- Perceived engagement of young people in the programme
- Perceived impact on the young person

Given the intervention is multifaceted and designed to be flexible to the individual receiving the programme, an examination of fidelity to the programme across youth workers is a key issue to explore here. These interviews with youth workers at the feasibility stage will be used to provide in-depth insight into this, and to inform the measurement of this or any issues that need to be addressed going forward into the pilot stage.

Interviews with key stakeholders in schools and gathering initial school context data

A profile of the schools will be conducted using publicly available data on pupil characteristics, ethnicity profile of the school, size of the school, attainment data and other factors to provide further information on context. School-level data on exclusions will also be explored. SHU will conduct **4 interviews with key school stakeholders** (1 in each of the schools), at mid-stage in the feasibility study to map out:

- Policies and practices around behaviour and school exclusions (request copies of documents)
- Patterns of fixed term and permanent exclusions, reasons/thresholds for exclusions, factors affecting this and reflections on the underlying issues
- Usual support for pupils with behavioural issues, excluded pupils (in and out of school)
- Their initial response and readiness for the intervention
- What they see as desired outcomes from the project for their pupils
- Implementation support system – school leadership support for the intervention and strategies/practices to support implementation
- Experience of referrals to the intervention, ongoing communication with deliverers/youth workers
- Awareness and views on the intervention's support of their pupils to date
- any impacts of the intervention on pupils and school
- capacity for the intervention change in school practice

Interviews/focus groups with young people

SHU will conduct a series of one-to-one or small group interviews with the young people participating in the programme, these will take place at the early stage of the intervention and then again with a different cohort towards the end of the fieldwork period (appropriate timings will depend on when cohorts start, so will be negotiated with deliverers). We will

recruit a maximum of 10 young people for the interviews/small groups and they will last around 20 minutes each. As discussed above we will use demographic information on the young people collected by the deliverer to ensure the sample of young people is representative. SHU will also interview 2 young people during observation visits (see further down). SHU will access these young people through the youth workers given they may be absent from school and will consider a safe setting as to where to conduct these interviews/focus groups where the young people will feel comfortable. The areas to explore will be:

- Experience of the referral process to intervention – are they happy to be recruited to the programme?
- Engagement with the intervention – relationship with their youth worker, types of activities, frequency of contact, young person's responsiveness
- Experiences and views of the intervention (quality)
- Barriers and enablers of their engagement
- Identity – including ethnicity – the extent to which this is an issue in their experience before and during the intervention
- Any outcomes, impact to-date
- Any changes or improvements to intervention (adaptation)

Full consideration will be given to the most appropriate methods to conduct fieldwork with the young people taking into account their at-risk nature, and ensuring full inclusion in terms of racial diversity and language. Possible methods which could be used are:

- Semi-structured questions
- Drawing current self, and future self (baseline and/or endpoint) – as a stimulus for discussion/interview
- 'Diamond 9' ranking activity e.g. factors/activities/qualities they found helpful or not helpful regarding interventions
- Card sorting – with descriptor words or images to name or depict their experiences, feelings, views, preferences etc for discussion
- Storytelling cards – visual images as stimuli for discussion
- Images of scenarios (e.g. youth worker talking to young person) young person asked to add speech bubbles
- Friends/paired participants' from youth worker groups journey through the intervention, using an egg timer, recorder, cue cards, no explicit questions or wrong answers
- Outdoors – walking interviews or group/paired activities

Observations of delivery (plus interview with mentee/youth worker)

A total of 2 observations of delivery are proposed, and if possible taking the opportunity to conduct a further interview with the youth worker and young person subsequent to the

observation. The observations will be conducted in a setting where it is appropriate to have a researcher present, e.g. an outdoor recreational activity.

Collation of administrative and secondary data: The deliverer is collecting detailed monitoring data on participants as detailed below:

- Gender
- Age
- Ethnicity
- Disability
- Living arrangements
- Residency
- Risk factors
- Date of referral
- Source of referral
- Did the YP agree to engage with your service?
- Did the parent(s)/carer(s) agree to engage with your service?
- Any other services currently supporting the YP?
- Did the YP proceed to assessment? (if not reasons)
- Start and finish date of intervention
- Total number of sessions
- The average length of session
- Referrals made
- Up to 3 goals achieved with YP
- Development of a trusting relationship with the Youth Worker
- Improved emotional regulation and behaviour management
- Reduction in exclusions or problem behaviours at school
- Increased self-esteem and emotional wellbeing
- Improved attendance at school
- Improved relationships with family and reduction in conflict in the home
- Increased aspirations
- Increased uptake of positive recreational activities

The deliverer also collects information on fidelity. SHU will work closely alongside the deliverer to fully understand the data that is being collected and suggest additions or refinements to data collection so that this can be used to further inform the evaluation. Data sharing agreements will be put in place prior to any data transfer. Please see the qualitative

research questions and methods table attached for further information on the areas which this information might be used for.

Please see table 1 in the attached document for an overview of research questions, methods, and their relevance to the logic model and implementation.

Table 1: Methods overview

Research questions addressed	Implementation/ ToC/logic model relevance	Participants/ data sources (type, number)	Research methods	Data collection methods
Organisational factors: Has the programme been able to recruit suitable youth workers with relevant experience? Is there diversity among the youth worker team?	Assess whether programme is reaching target criteria re-experience/skills and diversity to support youth worker/young person relationship building and skills development of young person. "Development of positive and trusting relationship with Youth Worker - ToC". " Retain Youth Workers throughout feasibility period - LM".	Early stage deliverer interviews x 2, YW survey	Qualitative and quantitative	Interviews, survey
Have young people been allocated to a suitable youth worker? Is the relationship-building phase successful?	Assess allocation and matching process assesses need and mentor skill/experience to enable youth worker/young person relationship building. "Development of positive and trusting relationship with Youth Worker - ToC/LM". "Youth workers and young	Later stage deliverer interviews x 2, YW survey and YW interviews x4, focus groups with YP, observations of delivery	Qualitative and quantitative	Interviews, surveys, interviews/focus groups, observations

	people meet two to three times a week during the relationship building stage - LM".			
Organisational factors: What are the key issues facing the schools/communities around exclusion/disadvantage/crime?	Explore and understand the causes/drivers for problem behaviours (e.g. individual, familial, school, peer, and contextual factors). "Improved understanding of the causes/drivers for problem behaviours - ToC". "Six schools (four in the city and two in the County) with the highest rates of fixed term exclusions agree to participate - LM". "120 referrals received during feasibility period - LM".	Early stage deliverer interviews x 2, mid-stage key school contact interviews x 4	Qualitative	Interviews
Community level factors: What is the level of need and readiness for change in the context where the intervention will	Assess improvements in school attendance, reduction in family conflicts, and increases in the aspirations of young people to understand any reductions in community support resources needed,	Early stage deliverer interviews x 2, mid-stage key school contact interviews x 4	Qualitative	Interviews

take place? Including, the policy, practice and funding context**.**	and increases in what resource/benefit young people can bring to the community. "Improved attendance at school - ToC". Improved relationships with family and reduction in conflict in the home - ToC". "Increased aspirations - ToC". "Young people aged 10-17 years old are at risk of or have received a fixed term exclusion and have three indicators of vulnerability - LM".			
Organisational capacity: What is the readiness and capacity for change in the settings in which the intervention will take place? Is the culture, coordination,	Assess the extent to which staff make appropriate referrals and provide additional support to young people when at school. "Reduction in exclusions or problem behaviours - ToC". "Improved attendance at school - ToC". "120 referrals received during feasibility period - LM". "Six schools (four in the city and two in the County) with the	Later stage delivery interviews x 2, mid-stage key school contact interviews x4	Qualitative	Interviews

communication and leadership sufficient to enable implementation? How do schools/delivery leads perceive the sustainability of the intervention looking ahead?	highest rates of fixed term exclusions agree to participate - LM"			
Are the level of referrals as anticipated? Is the eligibility criteria successful in accessing the intended population? What are the criteria that would make a YP potentially ineligible for the programme?	Refinement and standardisation of eligibility criteria to ensure appropriate inclusion of young people. "120 referrals received during feasibility period - LM". "75% (n = 90) of young people referred are recruited onto programme -LM".	Later stage delivery interviews x2, monitoring data	Qualitative, secondary data	Interviews

Intervention characteristics: What form does it take? Is it compatible with the context in which it is intended to be delivered? Can it be modified or adapted sufficiently to the intended context?	Compatibility shown by number and willingness of schools agreeing to take part. "Six schools (four in the City and two in the County) with the highest rates of fixed term exclusions in Leicester and Leicestershire agree to participate - LM"	Later stage interviews with lead delivery team x2 YW interviews x 4, monitoring data	Qualitative and quantitative	Interviews, secondary data
Implementation support system: What strategies and practices are used to support high-quality implementation? What training and ongoing support or	Hiring staff and training Youth Workers to ensure that they're highly skilled and culturally competent - LM. Assessment of relationship outcomes between young people and Youth Workers. "Development of positive and trusting relationship with Youth Worker"	Later stage interviews with lead delivery team x 2 and key contacts in schools x 4, YW interviews x 4	Qualitative and quantitative	Interviews

technical assistance is available?				
Fidelity/adherence: To what extent do implementers adhere to the intended delivery model?	To gain an overview of fidelity to the programme across the 8 youth workers. "Prompt response (within 24rhs) from Youth Worker after 'critical moment' to arrange assessment - LM". Comprehensive and contextual assessment of the young person to match the young person to Youth Worker - LM". "Youth Workers and young people to meet two to three times a week during the relationship building stage - LM". Extensive relationship building phase (4-6 weeks) to include recreational activities - LM". Facilitating access and encouraging participation in purposeful and sustainable activity - LM".	Later stage interviews with lead delivery team x2, YW interviews x 4, observations of delivery x 2, monitoring data	Qualitative and quantitative	Interviews, observations, secondary data

Dosage: How much of the intended intervention has been delivered? (e.g. number of sessions delivered/length of sessions)	Assess ongoing delivery and make estimates of future expected delivery. "75% (n = 67) young people are recruited onto the programme - LM". "75% of young people complete the programme - LM". "Young people complete 80% of core component sessions - LM"	Later stage interviews with lead delivery team x 2, YW interviews x 4, monitoring data	Qualitative and quantitative	Interviews, secondary data
Quality: How well are the different components of the intervention being delivered? (e.g. interest and enthusiasm, preparedness, clarity of expression, and	Assess experiences of delivery and participation of each element of intervention to refine processes to improve likely outcomes. "Young people complete 80% of core component sessions - LM". "75% (n = 67) complete the programme - LM".	Later stage interviews with delivery team x 2, YW interviews x 4, interviews/focus groups with YP, observations of delivery	Qualitative	Interviews, observations

responsiveness during delivery.)				
Reach: What is the rate of participation by intended recipients? (e.g. comparing the demographics of those recruited to that of the intended population.)	Assess rate and demographics of referrals, recruitment and participation. "120 referrals received during feasibility period - LM". 75% (90) of young people referred are recruited -LM".	Later stage interviews with lead delivery team x 2, interviews with key school staff x 4, YW interviews x 4, interviews/focus groups with YP x 2, monitoring data	Qualitative and quantitative	Interviews, secondary data
Responsiveness: To what extent do the participants engage with the intervention? (e.g. retention, the enthusiasm of participants). Young	Assessment of engagement with intervention, mentor, and peers. "High rates of attendance and participation in sessions". "Increased and sustained engagement in prosocial recreational activities". "Increased network of positive peers and trusted adults".	Later stage interviews with lead delivery team x 2, YW interviews x4, interviews/focus groups with YP x2, observations of delivery x2	Qualitative	Interviews, observations

people's awareness of intervention and any stigmatisation experienced.				
Peer relationships: Has peer engagement work been undertaken as expected? Have young people received and engaged with appropriate activities to develop social awareness and skills?	"Increased network of positive peers and trusted adults – LM". "Improved social skills – LM". "Improved understanding of negative peer influences – LM"	Later stage interviews with lead delivery team x 2, interviews with key school staff x 4, YW interviews x 4, later stage focus group with YP	Qualitative	Interviews, focus group
Intervention differentiation:	To inform "business as usual" case and potential control condition	Interviews with lead delivery team x 4 (early and later stage), interviews with key contacts in schools x4	Qualitative	Interviews

To what extent are the intervention activities sufficiently different from existing practices?				
Adaptation: What changes are needed to accommodate context and population need?		Later stage interviews with lead delivery team x2, interviews with key contacts in schools x4, YW interviews x4, observations of delivery x2, interviews/focus groups with YP x 2	Qualitative	Interviews, interviews/focus groups, observations
Feasibility and appropriateness of the **resources** required to deliver the intervention	Clear and accessible intervention materials. Good understanding and use of learning outcomes for activities	Later stage interviews with lead delivery team x2, YW interviews x4, interviews/focus groups with YP x2, observations of delivery x2	Qualitative	Interviews, interviews/focus groups, observations
Exploring the **barriers** to implementation, for example, school		Interviews with lead delivery team x 4 (early and late stage), interviews with key contacts in schools x4, YW interviews x4,	Qualitative	Interviews, interviews/focus

		interviews/focus groups of YP x2, observations of delivery x2		groups, observations
senior leader support and school staff time, stigmatisation of young people referred, retention of YW.				
Practical and ethical issues surrounding **randomisation** leading to a pilot study	To inform pilot trial	Early and later stage interviews with lead delivery team x4, interviews with key contacts in schools x 4, YW interviews x4	Qualitative	Interviews
Exploring the possibility of an **active control condition** leading to a pilot study	To inform pilot trial	Early and later stage interviews with lead delivery team x4, interviews with key contacts in schools x4, YW interviews x4	Qualitative	Interviews

Exploring how we could collect **baseline/pilot measures** in practice leading to a pilot study	To inform pilot trial	Early and later stage interviews with lead delivery team x4, interviews with key contacts in schools x4, YW interviews x4, interviews/focus groups with YP x2	Qualitative	Interviews, interviews/focus groups

Data analysis

Qualitative data will be fully transcribed and securely stored for analysis. Thematic analysis will be deployed, using coding themes drawing from the research questions and theory of change, entering data into an excel spreadsheet as a case-by-theme matrix, allowing both qualitative and quantitative analysis where this is appropriate. The thematic analysis will utilise a Framework Analysis (Smith and Davies, 2010) approach - involving gaining an initial overview of the data, building an initial framework drawing again on research questions, theory of change and success criteria. Following this, a detailed coding plan will be devised, charting the data according to themes and subthemes from the framework and finally interpreting the data within the framework. We will also undertake a number of IPE, full team analysis and synthesis meetings. We may also wish to utilise NVIVO for the overarching analysis (when we will have all the transcriptions) to ensure the full range of themes and subthemes have been fully identified and triangulated (see below).

The youth worker survey will be conducted using the online survey tool Qualtrics, and a descriptive analysis from this small-scale survey will be conducted using SPSS. This will give an overview of the profile of the 8 youth workers and a summary of perception-based questions. Findings from this survey will be linked in with the qualitative data and monitoring data captured by the deliverer.

As part of the final stage of team analysis and synthesis meetings, the key headline findings from all analyses (described above) will be triangulated. The findings from deliverers, school leads, youth workers young people will be re-analysed together, alongside the monitoring data to further interrogate the themes and subthemes in relation to each research question and the success criteria. The key findings from each data source will be compared and cross-referenced to identify convergences, similarities and differences – with explanations for differences explored by further interrogation of the data. The reporting of the findings will draw out and exemplify these similarities and differences, assessing how and why these may have arisen and the implications of this for the pilot study.

Once this is complete the team will use the findings to develop a revised theory of change to illustrate, where possible, the implementation pathways and causal mechanisms. The revised theory of change will also illustrate how the different school contexts and moderating variables individually and together interact and influence the inputs, outputs, causal processes and outcomes of the intervention. At the feasibility stage, this process will also provide an opportunity to inform the development of the theory of change for the pilot stage.

Outputs

Upon completion of the fieldwork, all data collected from the study including qualitative data, survey data, secondary data and monitoring data will be brought together for analysis as

described above. A full report of findings from the feasibility study will be produced using these data sources and focussing on the research questions set out in table 1 (attached). The report will include:

- Whether/to what extent the success criteria set out at the beginning of the feasibility study have been met
- Whether/to what extent the intervention has achieved its intended outputs in the given context
- Whether the eligibility criteria set have been successful in accessing all those deemed in need of support and whether there are any criteria that would make a young person ineligible
- Implementation – how successful this has been, whether this has happened as intended, and whether there are any refinements needed ahead of the pilot phase
- Recommendations for proceeding to a pilot study including the precise details of how randomisation could be implemented into the process in practical and ethical terms and any adaptations that need to be made to accommodate this
- Recommendations for a control condition

The logic model, theory of change and blueprint documents will be further refined and developed during the feasibility study and final versions of these will be included in the report. These findings will be fully presented to YEF to inform their transition to the pilot phase.

Ethics and registration

Ethical approval has provisionally been granted by SHU for the feasibility part of the evaluation, the evaluation team will upload the consent forms and information sheets to the ethics application once they have been finalised.

SHU has established research ethics procedures in place to ensure research is undertaken in accordance with commonly agreed standards of good practice and academic integrity. It aims to promote good practice throughout the assessment of ethical issues and compliance with legal requirements. This can be found https://www.shu.ac.uk/research/quality/ethics-and-integrity. These processes align with BERA and BSA guidelines and operate through the University Research Ethics Committee (SHU REC) and Faculty Research Ethics Committees (FREC). The project team will always follow these procedures, including operating to standardised protocols concerning anonymity, confidentiality, informed consent, rights to withdraw, and secure (electronic and physical) data storage. The research team is

experienced and committed to working in an ethically appropriate and sensitive way and are familiar with the ethical issues arising when working with diverse groups of participants. Copies of our ethics policy, principles and procedures are available http://www.shu.ac.uk/research/ethics-integrity-and-practice. SIoE ensures that professional standards and the well-being of research participants are protected and always maintained. We do not anticipate that this project will need to go through the NHS ethics process.

Data protection

The processing of personal data through the evaluation is defined under GDPR as a specific task in the public interest. The legal basis for processing personal data will be 'Public Task' (Article 6 (1) (a & e)). Sheffield Hallam University (SHU) has established data protection (https://www.shu.ac.uk/about-this-website/privacy-policy/information-governance-policy) and research ethics (https://www.shu.ac.uk/research/quality/ethics-and-integrity) policies and procedures aligned with legal requirements and research society's standards of good practice. The project team will always follow these procedures, including operating to standardised protocols concerning anonymity, confidentiality, informed consent, rights to withdraw, and secure data privacy, security, storage, transfer and processing.

A Data Management Plan will be developed during the inception phase and adhered to by all team members. A data sharing agreement will be agreed with the delivery organisations. Only data required for analysis will be transferred, and the secure SHU Zendto will be used for transfer. SHU would act as Data Processor for the evaluation. Our research centre consults with the SHU Data Protection Officer and Information Governance lead on all matters regarding data security. All staff receive Data Protection training, and all projects are conducted in compliance with legislation including GDPR. The SHU Data protection policy statement can be found https://www.shu.ac.uk/about-this-website/privacy-policy/privacy-notices/privacy-notice-for-research.

Data protection policy statement https://www.shu.ac.uk/about-this-website/privacy-policy/privacy-notices/privacy-notice-for-research Legal bases for processing personal data and any special categories of personal data Please also see the section on data protection above. The processing of personal data through the evaluation is defined under UK GDPR as a specific task in the public interest. Therefore, the legal basis for processing personal data will be 'Public Task' (Article 6 (1) (a & e)).

Personnel

Delivery team

Dr Stevie-Jade Hardy - Evidence and Evaluation Lead at the Violence Reduction Network. Stevie-Jade Hardy is the main point of contact for the delivery team and will work closely with SHU to facilitate the evaluation.

The Team Leaders and Project Coordinator have now been recruited and will be finalising the referral system and programme documents. It is anticipated that the full workforce of youth workers will be in place in early January.

Evaluation team

Dr Charlotte Coleman (PI), Deputy Head of Psychology, Sociology and Politics and **Dr Kate Whitfield** (Theory of Change, Qualitative design and fieldwork), Senior lecturer & chartered psychologist Dr Charlotte Coleman and Dr Kate Whitfield have extensive experience in crime reduction and mentoring programme evaluation. They are experienced in working with young people, vulnerable groups, and working with schools. Charlotte and Kate have recently completed process and impact evaluations of two Violence Reduction Units (South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire), which included evaluating fifteen of the violence reduction programmes delivered by external partners. Many of these programmes include mentoring in schools and the 'teachable moments' approach [P1] to support young people to avoid involvement in crime.

Anna Stevens, Research Fellow (Co-PI/PM) 10 years' experience of educational trials for the EEF, part of the YEF cross-team working group at SHU with knowledge of the YEF data archive. Anna has extensive experience of educational research projects and is particularly skilled in trial management, quantitative data collection, amalgamation and statistical analysis.

Bernadette Stiell, Senior Research Fellow (IPE lead) extensive qualitative methods and IPE expertise, experienced in project and programme evaluation for DfE, EEF and YEF, including the current ROE trial.

Sean Demack, Principal Research Fellow (Statistical advisor) Sean has led the design and analysis of numerous large-scale/national RCT-centred evaluations. He also has published on the methodology of educational RCT designs; and is working with Durham University to provide accurate, up-to-date, statistical detail for designers of educational trials in England.

Amanda Wilcox, **Researcher (Theory of Change, Qualitative design and fieldwork)** Mandy has experience of both qualitative and quantitative research. She has previously conducted research including interviews and focus groups as well as designing interview/focus group schedules and different forms of analysis including thematic analysis. This has included interviews with vulnerable people who have committed crimes. She has experience of designing and implementing surveys. In addition, she has a wealth of experience working with vulnerable young people in education settings from diverse backgrounds.

In addition to the named team members outlined above, we have a YEF cross-team working group within SHU which meets to discuss and share advice on YEF-funded projects, including on documentation to schools, outcome measures and on the YEF data archive. Furthermore, we have professional services staff for administrative support. The team is supplemented by 15 researchers and 30+ other academics in SIOE providing capacity to deliver on time and to budget. We have consistently demonstrated our ability to work to tight schedules for evaluations for the YEF, EEF, DfE and other clients.

Risks

Overall SHU have a series of well-established processes in place to reduce the likelihood of risks coming to fruition. We initially provide a brief overview of these before going on to specify the key project-specific risks identified at this point in the table 2. Risk management will occur through:

- systematic and regular risk management processes
- a comprehensive risk register
- supplementary analysis and mitigation of project critical risks

The key approach to risk management is through compiling a detailed register that identifies potential risks, classified as high, medium, or low in terms of likelihood and level of impact, leading to an overall risk grading. For all medium and high risks, design and processes are included to mitigate the risk and reduce the likelihood and impact. Consideration of risk is a standing item for internal project management meetings between the PIs/senior advisers. If a project critical risk is identified, the YEF project manager will be informed and steps agreed to address the issues.

As part of our usual monitoring process, progress will be subject to internal review to ensure progress is proceeding to plan and risks reviewed. These established processes have

permitted us to respond proactively to match programme shifts due to Covid, with our approach drawing praise from What works centres EEF and YEF, for our responsiveness and capacity to keep projects on track.

The project will be subject to internal ethical review and be fully GDPR compliant. Please see table 2 below for an assessment of the risks to the evaluation. Some of the key issues are also discussed below: The deliverer has indicated that there is likely to be a high numbers of referrals to the programme, therefore recruitment is anticipated to be low risk. In terms of attrition, a higher sample of young people will be recruited at the pilot stage to account for dropout and attrition in terms of completing the quantitative measures.

A key unknown is how young people will respond to finding out that they have not been allocated to receive the programme; therefore, a close examination of the control condition will be important in the feasibility year. It seems likely that attrition would be a particular problem for the control group and so some consideration of incentives for engagement with data collection activities may be needed. Because of the proximity of the intervention and control group, individual randomisation also brings the methodological risk of spillover. Spill-over relates to when the control condition is contaminated by aspects of the intervention. Positive spill-over occurs when members of the control group indirectly benefit from the programme (e.g. through peer group/sibling interactions or sharing resources). This can result in underestimating the impact of a programme (because it has had an impact in both intervention and control group conditions). Negative spill-over occurs when control group members react adversely to finding out about their allocation. This can result in over-estimating the impact of a programme (due to control group members becoming disengaged because of their allocation). In summary, spill-over brings the risk of bias in the impact evaluation.

Gathering detail on how control group members felt/reacted to their allocation during the pilot year will be key detail to inform whether individual randomisation is feasible going forward.

Table 2: Risks

Potential Risk Identification	Initial potential risk status			Preventative measures	Reducing the impact	Revised risk status		
	Likelihood	Impact	Risk			Revised Likelihood	Revised Impact	Revised Risk
Project specific risks								
Low recruitment	low	medium	medium	Deliverers can build positive relationships with schools to encourage participation, the deliverer has indicated the likelihood of this is low given the likely high number of referrals	Trial design can be adapted as necessary	low	low	**low**
Attrition	medium	medium	medium	Encouraging compliance through strong rapport, advance notice and clear communication. Full consideration of how to facilitate completion of these during the feasibility stage.	SHU has a strong track record of retaining schools and participants to minimise attrition. We use a dedicated project management/administrative support team to ensure a close positive working relationship with all stakeholders in the trial. Any attrition will be recorded using a consort flow diagram and taken into account at the analysis stage.	low	low	**low**
Deliverer staffing difficulties	medium	high	medium	The deliverer should ensure that cover is available in the event of staff absence or departure	Young people could have an additional point of contact within the delivery team	low	medium	**low**
Generic risks								
Covid 19 related disruption	High	medium	high	The team will closely monitor and follow government guidelines around safe working. Staff are able to work remotely, offering flexible remote fieldwork options where possible.	The team are used to working flexibly and responsively to changes to projects, timescales and participant needs. In consultation with YEF, the team can put forward revised evaluation plans based on various future scenarios	low	low	**low**
Staff absence/departure (e.g. due to long-term illness)	low	high	medium	The team is of sufficient size, with any staff absences handled by colleagues who are highly experienced researchers. The Centre has very low staff turnover and the same team see projects through from inception to completion in almost every instance, when this is not possible we have the capacity to meet our commitments.	We have a large number of experienced research staff within the SIOE, who can be brought into the project with short notice if necessary. We feel this offers good contingency for unexpected staff absence.	low	low	**low**
Slippage and deadlines not met	low	high	medium	All team members experienced working on projects with tight deadlines. A well-developed and agreed project plan would be followed. Robust and dedicated project management and progress monitoring plans mean that timelines are clearly understood with agreed responsibilities and deadlines. Regular team meetings will review progress and plan forward.	Projects are assessed continuously so potential problems are quickly identified. Regular contact will be maintained between SIOE and YEF project managers to quickly anticipate and address emerging problems. Where a deadline is seen to be problematic this would be discussed at the first instance with YEF.	low	medium	**low**

Timeline

The below timetable (table 3) shows tasks from January 2022 onwards, the following tasks have been completed thus far: Set up meetings with VRU, scoping phase and the first workshop on the theory of change and logic model development; feasibility study plan; SHU ethics application and approval.

Table 3: Timeline for feasibility study (blue shade denotes school holidays)

Month	w/c	Task	Staff responsible/ leading
Jan	03/01/22	Design of youth worker survey	AS, CC
	10/01/22	Completion of interview schedule for early stage delivery lead interviews	CC, BS, AS
		Meet with SJH to discuss control condition and randomisation process	AS, SD, SJH
		Refine success criteria/targets and fidelity targets	AS, CC, SJH
	17/01/22	Finalise data management plan and data sharing agreements for receipt of monitoring data, finalise information sheets and consent forms	AS
	24/01/22	Delivery lead interviews x 2	CC, BS, AS
	31/01/22	Make contact with schools to discuss arranging interviews/focus groups and school lead interviews, design school interview and YP focus group schedules/materials	AS, BS
Feb	07/02/22	Distribute youth worker survey	AS
	14/02/22		
	21/02/22	Early stage focus group with YP x 1	BS, RA
	28/02/22	Interviews with key school contacts x 4 in total to confirm dates over Feb/March	BS, AS, CC
March	07/03/22	Close youth worker survey and initial analysis to inform YW interviews	AS
	14/03/22	Design YW interview schedule	BS, CC, AS
	21/03/22	Mid-stage workshop to refine Theory of Change and Logic Model	CC, AS, SJH
	28/03/22	Initial transfer of monitoring data/other school data with updates to come further down the line	AS
April	04/04/22	Design observation materials and firm up dates with schools/YW/YP for fieldwork	CC, BS, AS
	11/04/22	Design focus group schedules and materials	CC, BS, AS
	18/04/22	Design later stage delivery lead interview schedules	CC, BS, AS
	25/04/22	Confirm details for interviews, observations and focus group	AS
May	02/05/22	Observations of delivery x 2 including 2 x YW interview and 2 x YP interview	BS, RA
	09/05/22	Remote interviews with YW x 2 (2 to be done in person with observation)	AS, CC, BS
	16/05/22	Later stage focus group with YP x 1	BS, RA
	23/05/22		
	30/05/22		
June	06/06/22	Later stage interviews with delivery leads x 2	BS, CC, AS
	13/06/22	Completion of any outstanding fieldwork and collation of all data collected	BS, CC, AS
	20/06/22	Start report write up	CC, AS
	27/06/22	Final Theory of Change and Logic Model workshop	
July	04/07/22	Close fieldwork	
	11/07/22	Analysis of qualitative and quantitative data collected and monitoring data	All
	18/07/22	Report writing and prepare for presentation to YEF	All
	25/07/22		
Aug		Continue report writing	All
Sept		16/09/22 Submission of draft report to YEF	AS, CC
Oct		10/10/22 YEF decision on whether to progress to pilot, 25/10/22 Submission of final ToC/Logic Model	YEF, CC, SJH, AS
Dec		15/12/22 Final peer-reviewed report submission	All

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