United Borders music mentoring programme; Building an Understanding of Self

University of Birmingham

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YOUTH ENDOWMENT FUND

Feasibility study plan template

University of Birmingham

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Project title	*Feasibility study of the United Borders music mentoring programme; Building an Understanding of Self, B.U.S.*
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Intervention

Detailed description of the intervention

A series of co-design workshops that were held between the research and UB teams at the start of the study enabled the research team to complete a Template for Intervention Description and Replication (TIDieR) Checklist for the music mentoring intervention. This details the key elements of the intervention and underpins further investigation of it. The information gathered has been used to complete this section.

Rationale

The intervention and the creation of United Borders (UB) as a whole was prompted by significant levels of violent behaviours and violent crime committed by children and young people (CYP) in London including the areas covered by UB in North-West London. This violence is characterised by territorial disputes making it difficult to bring CYP together in one physical location.

These CYP are frequently at high risk of being involved in violence either as a perpetrator or victim or both, and may have experienced domestic violence, gang exploitation, county lines, and/or PTSD as a result of knife crime.

Intervention Outline

United Borders (UB) deliver a trauma-informed music mentoring programme called Building and Understanding of Self or B.U.S centred around producing music. This is delivered weekly over a two-month period, primarily on a specially equipped bus, containing recording studio space, which is parked in neutral settings. At the end of the programme, they hold a graduation event for the CYP supported by family, teachers, and friends.

UB take a holistic, strengths-based, person-centred and trauma-responsive approach. Their work focuses on empowering CYP and helping them to understand the impact past and current experiences have on their well-being. This leads to identifying how CYP can transform their own opportunities. UB provide music mentoring including experiences in music production, pathways into creative industries and employment, physical training, and education about knife crime and staying safe.

The CYP are referred by a youth offending service (YOS), the police or other relevant agency or can self-refer. They then complete a baseline survey assessing their mood, self-esteem, confidence, and engagement with education. This helps to identify areas of support, unlock their passions, and confirm pathways to higher learning or employment whilst also aiming to

understand the needs and desires of the CYP. The CYP also complete a '16 personalities test'[1] to gauge what personality traits they have, this is based on the Myers-Briggs personality assessment. This is used as an ice-breaker exercise and to understand how this can impact communication with CYP and their perception of themselves.

The first session (Engage through arts) entails mentors exchanging musical tastes with mentees. This helps mentors to understand what the CYP values musically. UB have developed and use a 'trauma within music' (T.I.M) scale. The scale is used to measure if trauma can be identified throughout the songs which CYP identify with, on a scale from 0-10. e.g., interest in 'drill' music artists from specific postcodes can allude to postcode wars. This helps to create a conversation with CYP around trauma and its impacts.

Following this induction session, CYP determine if they would like to do the music programme[2]. The programme runs for two months and capture, challenge and change fixed beliefs CYP may have regarding their environment, education and mental health. It pairs budding artists (CYP) with mentors who are also music producers and writers. CYP are challenged to express authentically and work with other CYP throughout music sessions from different postcodes. This unified approach helps to connect CYP who reside in areas with existing tension.

The music mentoring programme has the following core aspects:

- Young people will be put into small groups and will work through the 10-stop music programme composed of several modules. Each module covers specific themes, such as empathy.
- Through group discussion and 1:1, a mentor will support the CYP by taking a trauma-informed approach – for example, the Trauma in Music (TIM) approach asks CYP to explore the trauma within songs (i.e., the song creates a point for discussion, helps the CYP identify their own trauma, and provides a space to introduce the idea of therapy).
- Creative work is the way to build the relationship, this can then start working to move towards education, employment etc.

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[1] https://www.16personalities.com/free-personality-test

[2] There is also a podcasting programme which does not form part of this study as it is a newer programme.

- At the end of the programme, a CYP will have recorded 4-5 songs to reflect on the journey they have been on.
- Throughout this process, CYP complete a baseline, mid-point, and final survey to assess the impact of the intervention.
- The information from the final survey is used to signpost young people to further opportunities and/or support – e.g., Brent MIND, employability people, housing, therapeutic services (Ongoing support).

In addition, UB provide wraparound support and signposting including providing in-house tutors for Maths and English, introducing CYP to other initiatives, excursions, or trips and remaining engaged following graduation if wanted. Some CYP return to UB as peer mentors, with the potential to progress into an employed staff member.

Intervention Providers

Mentors have worked in a variety of areas including the music industry and some have lived experience of living in violent areas / being involved in violence. This helps CYP and mentors find common ground and build a trusting relationship. The skills and qualities specified in the job description for the UB mentors are as follows:

- Ability to empathise
- Create optimism and clear pathways for young people to succeed
- Come from a background of lived experience
- Have experience connecting and supporting marginalised young people
- Experience with caseload management, 1:1 mentoring and goal setting
- Strong social skills, effective communicator, ready to right wrongs and be wrong
- Understanding local complex challenges
- Have experience in creative skills and a passion for music
- Very inquisitive and ready to share new thinking via popular social media platforms
- Write and share an honest account of who you are and how you became the person you are today

UB use trained facilitators to deliver some training, as well as conducting internal training on the programme and procedures. Topics covered include:

- Safeguarding
- Contextual safeguarding
- Understanding youth violence
- Introduction to conflict triggers and de-escalation
- Primary care and mental health

Throughout the whole process, UB support families by providing weekly updates on the efforts of their CYP to encourage open communication between parents, mentors, schools and agencies. Additionally, CYP engage in at least 2 hours of group mentoring a week alongside their selected programme, which covers a series of themes e.g., empathy. One-to-one mentoring is available if the YP is not ready to integrate into a group setting.

UB have the following short-, medium- and long-term outcomes for their music mentoring programme:

Short Term Outcomes	- Improve wellbeing - Improve self-esteem - Improve confidence
Medium Term Outcomes	- Young people take ownership of their own positive pathways - Built trust between young people from different areas
Long Term Outcomes	- Improve CYP safety - Reduce gang involvement - Reduce violent crime - Reduce offending - A reduction in harm caused by and experienced by the CYP

Under this YEF grant round UB would use the following eligibility criteria for the CYP they work with:

- Children/young people aged 10-17
- Who live in London
- Who have witnessed, experienced or perpetrated violence, including domestic violence
- Who have yet to be through a court process
- Who have been identified by police or other statutory bodies as at high risk of becoming involved in crime or who have been arrested or received an out-of-court disposal.

During the co-design phase to develop this study we worked with United Borders to produce an initial theory of change and logic model for the B.U.S intervention, these are presented below.

United Borders Draft Theory of Change

WHY	**Problem Observation**	There are significant levels of violent behaviours and violent crime committed by children and young people (CYP) in London including the areas covered by UB – Brent and Westminster. This violence is characterised by territorial disputes making it difficult to bring CYP together in one physical location.
	Need	A number of these CYP are frequently high risk and may have experienced domestic violence, gang exploitation, county lines, and/or PTSD as a result of knife crime.
WHO	**Target Population**	CYP (male and female) aged 10-17 who are referred typically through the Metropolitan Police, Youth Offending Teams, schools, or via social services. In addition, CYP can self-refer into the programme. To meet YEF criteria for this funding round the CYP would need to be pre-sentence – so have received no sanction beyond an out-of-court disposal. Planned scale: approximately 50 people in a six-month period.
HOW	**Intervention Activities**	A 10-week music and mentoring programme aimed at diverting CYP away from offending. It offers a safe space to talk and focuses on empowering young people, helping them to understand the impact the past and current experiences have on their well-being, and identifying how they can transform their own opportunities. Creative work is the way to build the relationship, this can then start working to move towards education, employment etc. • Programme delivery mainly takes place on the United Borders bus which provides a neutral space for the intervention activities. The programme is centred on producing music • Once referred, the young person comes to the bus and completes a baseline survey. The UB leaders use this to identify the needs of the young person and match them to the most appropriate mentor. There are numerous considerations, including understanding whether a young person can join a group (and not feel conflicted across borders) and safeguarding assessments. The match will depend on what a young person hopes to cover (e.g., skillset), where they are in their life stage, and other needs. • Mentors have worked in the music industry and have lived experience of living in violent areas / being involved in violence. This helps CYP and mentors find common ground and build a trusting relationship. • During the induction, the assigned mentor to explain what UB is, what it does, and how it can help. There is also an assessment of the suitability of group placement. Young people will be put into small groups and will work through a number of modules over the weeks. Each module covers specific themes, such as empathy. After each session, they have a session called rhyme and reason which offers reflective practice. • Through group discussion and 1:1, a mentor will support the young person by taking a trauma-informed approach – for example, the Trauma in Music (TIM) approach asks CYP to explore the trauma within songs (i.e., the song creates a point for discussion, helps the CYP identify their own trauma, and provides a space to introduce the idea of therapy). • In-house tutors for Maths and English.

			• There is also an option to introduce young people to other initiatives, excursions, or trips. • At the end of the programme, a young person will have recorded 4-5 songs to reflect on the journey they have been on. • There is a graduation ceremony which takes place with family and friends. • Throughout this process, young people complete a baseline, mid-point, and final survey to assess the impact of the intervention. The information from the final survey is used to signpost young people to further opportunities and/or support • CYP can continue to remain engaged following graduation. Some CYP return as peer mentors.
WHAT	*Short Term Outcomes*		• Improve wellbeing, self-esteem, and confidence
	Medium Term Outcomes		• For young people to take ownership of their own positive pathways moving forwards • Build trust between CYP from different areas
	Long Term Outcomes		• Improve CYP safety • Reduce gang involvement, violent crime, and offending • A reduction in harm caused by and experienced by the CYP

United Border Draft Logic Model

INPUTS	*What resources are needed?*	Provision of a dedicated, trained team of mentors: Currently 6x mentors – one full-time and five part-time Mentors have worked in a variety of areas including the music industry and some have lived experience of living in violent areas / being involved in violence. This helps CYP and mentors find common ground and build a trusting relationship. Skills and qualities specified in the job description: • Ability to empathise • Create optimism and clear pathways for Young People to succeed • Come from a background of lived experience • Have experience connecting and supporting marginalised Young People • Experience with caseload management, 1:1 mentoring and goal setting • Strong social skills, effective communicator, ready to right wrongs and be wrong • Understanding local complexed challenges • Have experience in creative skills and a passion for music • Very inquisitive and ready to share new thinking via popular social media platforms • Write and share an honest account of who you are and how you became the person you are today The mentor team will collaborate with partner agencies. Provision: • Bus - provides a neutral space for intervention activities. • Recording equipment • Separate vehicle to transport young people to/from the bus
OUTPUTS	*Activities* *What needs to take place for CYP to accomplish the*	Referral • Once referred, the young person comes to the bus and completes a baseline survey. The UB leaders use this to identify the needs of the young person and match them to the most appropriate mentor. There are numerous considerations, including understanding whether a young person can join a group (and not feel conflicted across borders) and safeguarding assessments. The match will depend on what a young person hopes to cover (e.g., skillset), where they are in their life stage, and other needs.

| | *short-term outcomes* | Induction
• During the induction, the assigned mentor explains what UB is, what it does, and how it can help. There is also an assessment of the suitability of group placement.

Music Programme and Mentoring
• Core diversion programme centres around Producing Music.
• Young people will be put into small groups and will work through the 10-stop Music programme composed of a number of modules. Each module covers specific themes, such as empathy.
• Through group discussion and 1:1, a mentor will support the young person by taking a trauma-informed approach – for example, the Trauma in Music (TIM) approach asks CYP to explore the trauma within songs (i.e., the song creates a point for discussion, helps the CYP identify their own trauma, and provides a space to introduce the idea of therapy).
• Creative work is the way to build the relationship, this can then start working to move towards education, employment etc. Uses a B.U.S (Better Understanding of Self) model
• At the end of the programme, a young person will have recorded 4-5 songs to reflect on the journey they have been on.
• Throughout this process, young people complete a baseline, mid-point, and final survey to assess the impact of the intervention.
• The information from the final survey is used to signpost young people to further opportunities and/or support – e.g., Brent MIND, employability people, housing, therapeutic services. [Ongoing support]
• There is a graduation ceremony which takes place with family and friends.
• Face-to-face delivery (in non-Covid times) – helps build trust more quickly than online delivery, particularly between CYP themselves.

Wraparound support and signposting
• In-house tutors for Maths and English.
• There is also an option to introduce young people to other initiatives, excursions, or trips.
• CYP can continue to remain engaged following graduation. Some CYP return as peer mentors.

The vast majority of service delivery takes place face to face with service users. However, given Covid 19, United Borders have developed virtual methods of service delivery. |
| | *Participation*
What outputs must be achieved | A number of these CYP are frequently high risk and may have experienced domestic violence, gang exploitation, county lines, and/or PTSD/I as a result of knife crime. Referred via:
• Youth Offending Teams |

	for the short-term outcomes to be achieved.	• Metropolitan Police • Schools • Pupil Referral Units • Social Services Planned scale: 50 CYP engaged with the service
OUTCOMES	*Short Term Outcomes*	• Improve wellbeing • Improve self-esteem • Improve confidence
	Medium Term Outcomes	• Young people take ownership of their own positive pathways • Built trust between young people from different areas
	Long Term Outcomes	• Improve CYP safety • Reduce gang involvement • Reduce violent crime • Reduce offending • A reduction in harm caused by and experienced by the CYP

UNDERPINNING ASPECTS

Assumptions	*External Factors*
There are significant levels of violent behaviours and violent crime committed by children and young people (CYP) in London including the areas covered by UB – Brent and Westminster. This violence is characterised by territorial disputes making it difficult to bring CYP together in one physical location. A number of these CYP are frequently high risk and may have experienced domestic violence, gang exploitation, county lines, and/or PTSD/I as a result of knife crime Referral pathways operate effectively – i.e., United Borders can expect to receive referrals from partner agencies listed above	The family, social and community circumstances of the CYP using the United Borders service Availability of specialist services for mentors to refer on to and thresholds of these organisations

Prior evidence and context

The core of the programme is the provision of mentoring, delivered through a music-making programme.

The mentoring process matches children who are at risk of involvement in crime and violence with a mentor. It aims to help children form a good relationship with a positive role model. This may help children develop important skills like self-regulation, form positive relationships with others, and develop positive behaviours and aspirations. Research has found that it can significantly reduce delinquency outcomes, considering both administrative and self-report data (Blattman et al., 2017; Heller et al., 2017). Two meta-analyses reported a moderate effect of mentoring interventions (0.21) on 'delinquency outcomes' using data from over 70 evaluations (Christensen et al., 2020; Raposa et al., 2019). However, there was significant variation in findings across studies, with some studies reporting a negative effect.

In addition, mentoring can support better academic outcomes (Falk et al., 2020; Rodriguez-Planas, 2012), with more limited evidence for reductions in aggression and drug use (Tolan et al., 2013). Tolan et al. also found evidence that the motivation of the mentors can moderate the effect of the intervention and only limited detailed evidence of what the mentoring programmes actually consisted of and how they were implemented. The study found stronger effects when the mentoring offered emotional support and advocacy. However, the authors stated that further studies were required to understand which components of mentoring are having the observed effects. This will be important to consider in the current study.

Regarding music, which is the main focus of UB, music mentoring aims to improve self-esteem and self-regulation by allowing CYP to reflect, and act, on their emotions in a positive and creative way. This in turn may support positive strategies that lead away from offending behaviour.

Music may be particularly well suited to addressing risk factors in young people given the special place music and musical subcultures occupy in adolescence regarding the development of identity and values.

There is only limited good quality evidence base for this type of intervention. One systematic review of 11 international studies (from the UK, Canada, Australia, South Africa and the USA) has been published on this type of programme (Daykin et al., 2013). Sample sizes were often small (36 people on average, range 4-150) and included programmes run in the community and custodial or other residential facilities. As such it is difficult to generalise the findings, however, the review found evidence that music-making programmes can support intermediate outcomes for CYP, which may in turn support a reduction in involvement in offending. These outcomes included social skills and self-efficacy. Successful interventions

may allow young people to safely express their hopes, dreams and frustrations, and thereby offer a means of coping and asserting control over life (Daykin et al., 2013: 207).

Participation in such programmes is particularly supported through the use of a culturally relevant music genre and allowing CYP to have ownership of the programme. However, there is currently no evidence of a direct link between such programmes and crime reduction. In addition, to date, there has been no formal internal or external evaluation of UB. Whilst UB do review their work and gather feedback from CYP clients, this study will be the first formal study.

Given the availability and state of the evidence so far, this project provides an opportunity to examine the effect of music mentoring in the UK and specifically examining the impact on violence and offending.

Research questions and/or objectives

Feasibility studies are used to assess whether the intervention can be evaluated through a pilot study and to pinpoint the robustness of a future study. This helps to avoid the potential waste of resources and effort where this was not useful or appropriate. The overarching research objective of the feasibility study is, therefore, to determine if it is possible to evaluate UB through a pilot study. In addition, it will provide a robust understanding of the operation of the intervention based on a Theory of Change and logic model. This would allow some assessment of whether music mentoring leads to a positive change in CYP at a high risk of being involved in violence. Our approach to the feasibility study is based on the dimensions of implementation and factors affecting implementation outlined in YEF's feasibility study guidelines (2021, see Table 1, p.6).

The specific research objectives for the feasibility study are:

- Test and refine a theory of change/logic model working with UB, YEF, and relevant stakeholders. Primarily this will involve clarifying what the different components of the programme are and the presumed channels by which these produce outcomes for CYP. As part of this we will consider the following dimensions of implementation:
  - o Fidelity/ Adherence – is there consistency in programme delivery?
  - o Dosage – level of attendance at sessions and topics covered;
  - o Quality - how well the different components of the intervention are being delivered;

- Reach – the size of the target group and how many received the intervention, broken down by demographics, and offending history; and whether there is a sufficient enrolment of the target population to run a pilot and their referral routes;
- Responsiveness – completion of the programme by CYP and outcome measures;
- Intervention Differentiation – the extent to which the intervention activities sufficiently differ from existing practices;
- Adaptation – whether changes are needed to accommodate context and population needs.

In addition, we would consider the following factors affecting implementation:

- Community level factors - the level of need and readiness for change in the local area UB operates in, including, the policy, practice, and funding context;
- Provider factors - the perceived need for and benefit of the intervention amongst UB staff. Whether they have the necessary skills, experience, attitudes, and psychological characteristics;
- Intervention characteristics - form the intervention takes. Whether it is compatible with the context in which it is delivered. Whether it requires modification or adaptation;
- Organisational capacity - the readiness and capacity for change in the settings where UB operates. Whether the culture, coordination, communication, and leadership are sufficient to enable implementation;
- Implementation support system – Whether strategies and practices are used to support high-quality implementation. Whether training and ongoing support or technical assistance are available.

- Clarify the expected short, medium and long-term outcomes. Identify one primary outcome of the intervention and a small number of secondary outcomes.
  - Establish a feasible way to measure the outcomes of interest or their proxies. Explore with UB, YEF, referring and other relevant agencies whether data are available to the research team to measure the outcomes identified.
  - Establish the feasibility of using the YEF mandated outcomes, the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ-a behavioural screening questionnaire, see https://www.sdqinfo.org/a0.html) and the Self-Report Delinquency Scale (SRDS, see Huizinga and Elliott, 1986) for CYP taking part in the UB programme, both at the start and end of the intervention.

- Confirm with UB, referring and other relevant agencies the feasibility of identifying and constructing a control group for the pilot study.

- Test information sheets and consent statements developed with CYP and their families to assess their suitability for the study.

- Decide on the basis of the pre-determined progression criteria whether the feasibility phase can proceed to a pilot trial.

We will ensure that each phase is delivered in a culturally competent way and does not exclude people for cultural and linguistic reasons. A key part of this will be in our use of peer researchers for this project (outlined below). While we recognise that the sample is likely to have more than 75% representation from BAME groups, we will consider how representative of the target population that is in the areas being served.

Success criteria and/or targets

We have agreed on the feasibility study assessment criteria to move to a pilot trial with the YEF and UB. These will measure the extent of project implementation and recruitment of CYP into the programme. We suggest the following measures are included, with the indicative percentages where appropriate:

1. Project implementation
   a) Baseline (Getting to Know You) survey of all involved CYP has at least a 60% response rate; anything below that is cause for concern (Yellow) with a need to review (Red) if the response is below 40%.
   b) Case management system (CMS) indicates that staff implemented the intervention as planned (e.g., number and type of sessions, the timeline of delivery); this will be reviewed by UoB team and significant divergence will be reviewed with UB and YEF.
   c) Personnel records show mentors received agreed supervision and support outlined in the logic model (e.g., records of case supervision meetings, staff reviews and training); this will be reviewed by UoB team and significant divergence will be reviewed with UB and YEF.
   d) There is an understanding of the referral routes into UB – organisations and teams within organisations (referral form).

e) CYP referred to and accepted on to the UB programme meet the eligibility criteria (referral form). We would expect the majority of CYP accepted on to the programme to meet these criteria, anything below 90% would prompt a need to discuss with UB.

2. Recruitment and retention
   a) Recruitment on to the intervention is at least 60% (green) of planned numbers within the feasibility period. Anything below this (50% amber, 40% red) will be reviewed with UB and YEF to understand what the causes may be.
   b) There is an understanding of the extent to which CYP complete and graduate from the UB programme. A completion/graduation rate of below 60% is a case for concern (Yellow) with a need to review (Red) if the rate is below 40%.

3. Measurement
   a) Provision of administrative police/youth justice contact information has been agreed with relevant referring organisations for the CYP taking part. It will be important to see how easily data can be matched between referring organisations and UB records.
   b) Provision of administrative police/youth justice contact information has been agreed with relevant referring organisations for a control group.
   c) Results of the piloting of the SDQ/SRDS measures allow a decision to be made on their use. Anything below 60% completion of the SDQ and SRDS is cause for concern (Yellow) and below 40% (Red) implies the viability of capturing such data needs to be discussed with the funder and UB.

These ratings relate to the feasibility of the methods of data collection for the pilot. Failure to meet success criteria does not necessarily mean that the main evaluation should be abandoned but will suggest that the proposed design or methods require revision. Provided the above are met or feasible alternatives can be found, UoB will recommend that we proceed to a pilot trial. YEF will then reflect on the evidence the evaluation provides before a decision is made about the transition to the pilot study.

At the conclusion of this stage, we will provide the draft interim study report. We usually recommend holding an event where we present findings to key stakeholders and then, taking account of their comments, produce the written report.

Methods

Methods and data collection

The feasibility study will test whether the intervention can be evaluated via a pilot study. The methods employed to test this are detailed below.

Qualitative data

The qualitative research will investigate the implementation processes and quality of the interventions and consider CYP's responses to the interventions.

Initially, we will speak with UB staff to fully understand its aims and design. We will speak to key stakeholders about the implementation plans, predicted difficulties and thoughts on evaluation, to identify any issues. This work will allow a decision on what core measures to include that have been validated, are feasible and practical to collect i.e., is not unduly burdensome on the provider to collect.

Two phases of data collection will be completed approximately 4-6 months apart. The first phase will aim to elaborate on the ToC and related overall approaches, and the second phase will aim to understand the actual pathways being delivered. Data will include:

- Interviews/focus groups with local delivery staff and leaders on the implementation and delivery of the project. The topics will cover the ToC and operational processes such as intervention delivery and ongoing support, understanding of the project fidelity, and session quality, facilitators and barriers/challenges to delivery;
- Interviews with referring organisations. Topics will include views of the intervention, expected benefits as well as any barriers or areas for improvement.
- Interviews/group interviews with CYPs who experienced UB's music mentoring programme to document what difference it made to them. We will explore their perception of their mentor, barriers and enablers to their participation, and ways in which the intervention could be improved. A purposive sample of CYP will be made to represent the breadth of those supported. Participation incentives (£20 vouchers) will be offered to participating CYPs.
- In addition, we will conduct a series of focus groups with the parents/carers of CYP to test the information sheets developed for the study to assess their suitability and consider amendments to them. These would be held with the parents/carers of the first cohort of CYP to confirm the information sheets as early as possible. This will be separate from the consenting process for the United Borders programme undertaken with CYP and their families.

- Observations of the operation of the programme, including programme sessions and the graduation ceremony to allow a fuller understanding of the intervention.

We would consider here the effect that the programme has on the trauma that CYP taking part have experienced. For example, ways in which the CYP feel the programme has helped them to process trauma (or not), requirements of programme staff in this regard and whether any improvements are needed.

Engaging with Peer-researchers

During the co-design phase with UB, the potential to engage peer-researchers for data collection with the CYP using the programme and observations of its operation were discussed and advised. United Borders noted that interviews with, and observations of, the CYP would be much more successful and useful if conducted by peer researchers (i.e., those who have been through UB programme themselves). As such, we recommend a peer-research design for the feasibility study and subsequent pilot study (if it were to go ahead).

We have already worked with UB to select two peer researchers to work with the team on the study[3]. The peer researchers are both graduates of UB and are still in touch with the programme. It is the responsibility of the University of Birmingham to provide training to the peer-researchers and this covers ethical and safety considerations and methods for data collection and analysis (attached is an example training outline). This training template has been used by the team in previous work and is being modified with the input of the peer researchers, to meet the specific needs of the study where required. Regular supervision and support will be provided by Professor Bradbury-Jones who is an expert in participatory research and working with peer researchers. She will be supported by Lorraine Khan who has recently completed projects involving peer researchers, regarding CYP at risk of offending in London and Birmingham[4].

The intention is for the peer researchers to be involved with all aspects of the qualitative data gathering with the CYP taking part in the United Borders programme, including developing the research tools, conducting interviews and observations, analysing data and writing up the findings. Our aim is that this role is as useful to the peer researchers as possible, as such we have discussed with United Borders providing a summary of the work they will have done to be useful for their CVs.

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[3] United Borders will ensure the peer researchers have a DBS check in advance of the start of their work on the project.

[4] Please refer to the UoB team details below.

Peer research has become a well-established and valuable part of the research landscape investigating people's lives, views and needs and the associated literature is plentiful (Bradbury-Jones, Isham & Taylor, 2018). Peer researchers are purposively recruited to work as part of a research team because they share similar demographic characteristics and/or experiences as the study participants. In research with CYP, adopting a peer-research methodology can help overcome the problem of protectionism whereby CYP are regarded as being too vulnerable to participate in research and are therefore excluded. This can make CYP more vulnerable by their exclusion, and co-research is one way to bring about meaningful participation for them. Members of the research team have undertaken a number of studies with child and adult peer-researchers and published widely on the issue (Bradbury-Jones & Taylor, 2015; Bradbury-Jones, 2014; Taylor, Bradbury-Jones et al., 2014). Benefits of such research can include: voices of CYP are heard; rich insights are gained; and empowerment and development of new skills among peer researchers. Peer researchers have helped us navigate the cultural and ethical terrain (particularly relevant to the UB project), providing solutions to ethical dilemmas and helping us respond to and, at times, transform understandings of what it means to be ethical and safe in their context.

A fundamental advantage of engaging with CYP as peer researchers is the insider perspectives that they bring to the research. Peer research encourages closer intimacy and fuller discussion between researchers and those researched because of the mutual understanding of their worlds and sub-cultures (Bradbury-Jones and Taylor, 2015).

However, the risk of bias that the use of peer-researchers can bring is a noted issue in the literature. There is a need for peer researchers to balance their insider peer knowledge along with the need to have the enquiring nature of an outsider or researcher.

These are issues that will be covered in the training and form part of the ongoing support and guidance we will provide during the period of the study. Regular de-brief and reflexive sessions with peer-researchers during data collection and analysis will help mitigate any potential unchecked bias and assumptions that can be an inherent part of qualitative research per se and with peer research specifically.

To be eligible to take part as a peer-researcher for the UB study, the peer-researchers must meet the following criteria: have in the past been eligible to be part of the met criteria to be United Borders programme; adult aged 18+; understand the implications of taking part; mentally and physically safe and able to participate. There are ethical issues associated with all research, particularly when it involves CYP. We have designed the study to meet the ethical imperative that peer researchers are adequately trained, supported and remunerated and not over-burdened. Payment for the peer-researchers is informed by the INVOLVE guidelines (2016) and for the young people who engage as peer-researchers, a daily rate of £125 is deemed an appropriate remuneration. Peer-researcher involvement in the project will be

reviewed regularly to ensure it meets best practice guidance in line with GRIPP2 guidelines (Staniszewska, Brett, Mockford & Barber, 2011).

Quantitative data

The study's quantitative data will measure how well the programme is being delivered. As much as possible, available administration databases will be used.

Based on previous experience and the literature, the types of data will include:

- Availability – number of sessions offered to CYP;
- Dosage – attendance at sessions and topics covered;
- Adherence – consistency in programme delivery (assessed through CMS data and supported by staff interviews);
- Reach – the size of the target group and how many CYP received the intervention, broken down by demographics (sex, age, and ethnicity), and offending history;
- Response – completion of the programme (documenting those who do not complete and why) and outcomes
- Engagement - with support services, including education and social care (as documented on the CMS);
- Contamination – whether CYP also took part in another intervention which is similar to the UB intervention which can make distinguishing the effect of the UB programme difficult (as documented on the referral form).

It is expected that three cohorts of 15-20 CYP will go through the UB music mentoring programme during the feasibility study period.

The feasibility study will also assess the availability and suitability of data to assess change in the identified outcomes of the intervention. This will include:

- Programme monitoring data provided to YEF
- Case management system (CMS) data – including:
  - referral forms – includes reasons for referral, engagement in other programmes and with other professionals,
  - responses to the Getting to Know You questionnaire that UB complete with CYP at the start of their work. Gathers demographic and other background information as well as an assessment of how the CYP see themselves, and their expectations of the programme
  - Mid and end of programme survey – covers their assessment of the effect of the programme and changes from the Getting to Know You survey regarding how they see themselves.

- YEF selected outcome measures - SDQ and SRDS. These will be trialled during the feasibility study to assess their suitability for use as outcome measures in the pilot study. We will aim to do this with the first cohort of CYP to enter the programme during the feasibility study period to allow the maximum opportunity for learning around the use of these measures.
- Official offence records – we will explore with referring or other relevant agencies the possibility of accessing administrative records on the participating CYP regarding their contact with the police or youth justice services, including reoffending, rearrest or involvement as a perpetrator, victim or witness.

Building on the work done in the co-design phase, we will design new data collection tools and processes with UB and other stakeholders (if required).

Methods overview

Research methods	Data collection methods	Participants/ data sources (type, number)	Data analysis methods	Research questions addressed
Quantitative	Provision by Metropolitan Police/local youth justice services Questionnaires (SDQ/SRDS) UB case management system/monitoring returns to YEF	Feasibility of gathering administrative data on outcomes of CYP (N=50) CYP (N=50) Monitoring data on intervention take-up and operation (N=50)	Descriptive	Feasibility of: 1. Measuring the outcomes of interest or their proxies. 2. Constructing a control group 3. Progressing to a pilot study. Understanding the operation of the United Borders programme (e.g., reach, retention, dosage).
Qualitative	Observations Interviews / Focus groups	CYP (N=5, peer researcher) CYP (N=10-15, peer researcher) UB staff, mentors (N=10-12) Referring organisations (N=3-5) Families/carers (N=5)	Thematic	Understand dimensions of implementation and factors affecting implementation Clarify programme outcomes Revise information sheet Revise ToC/LM

Data analysis

The feasibility study is primarily concerned with assessing the current state of project implementation and delivery to inform a decision about a future pilot study. As such the data gathered, both qualitative and quantitative will be used to inform this assessment, as opposed to assessing the effect of outcomes of the intervention.

Quantitative data analysis

As outlined above, data will be gathered from the UB case management system, monitoring returns to YEF and other records maintained. These will be analysed primarily using descriptive statistics to understand the dimensions of and factors affecting implementation outlined above. In addition, the completed SDQ and SRDS surveys will be analysed primarily to assess levels and fullness of completion. This will inform whether they are suitable measures for use in any follow-up pilot study.

Qualitative data analysis

All interviews and focus groups (including those led by peer researchers) will be digitally recorded, transcribed and analysed using Framework Analysis (FA)[5] This is a qualitative method where data is sifted, charted and sorted in accordance with key issues and themes supported by using Nvivo software (Nvivo aids the organisation and analysis of unstructured qualitative data such as interviews). We recognise that some individuals may be reluctant to be recorded and, in those cases, a written record will be made. Informed consent (preferably written, but in cases where that is not possible, oral consent will be recorded) will be sought from each participant following a briefing that will explain the aims of the research, the terms of participation, reassurances around confidentiality and the process for managing their data.

Outputs

The output of the feasibility study will be an evaluation report fully summarising the findings of the study. It will include details on CYP referral and recruitment, the experience of delivering and participating in the UB programme, information on the feasibility of gathering outcome data on the intervention and a control group in line with the success criteria outlined above. In addition, as necessary, an updated theory of change and logic model will be provided.

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[5] Srivastava, A. & Thomson, S. B. (2009). Framework Analysis: A Qualitative Methodology for Applied Policy Research. Journal of Administration and Governance. 4(2), 72-79

The report will also provide options for the pilot study if it was to proceed. We will use the findings regarding the current state of intervention implementation and provision as well as those relating to data quality and availability to provide options for the design of any follow-up pilot study. In particular, we will identify at least one feasible control group which can be used for comparison.

This report will follow the YEF peer review process and allow the decision of whether to progress to a pilot study to be made by YEF.

Ethics and registration

The University of Birmingham has an overarching Code of Ethics and ethical approval is a requirement of the University of Birmingham's Code of Practice for Research. All research projects go through the ethical review and approval process which includes the completion of a self-assessment form. For studies involving human participants, stage 2 is to secure ethical approval via the central research ethics committee. The self-assessment stage can occur before funding is finalised, but funding needs to be in place for stage 2. Application to securing approval typically takes between 3 and 10 weeks. If amendments are needed (e.g., further development of an interview schedule or the addition of another organization/group of participants to the project) then these can be submitted and processed quickly by the ethics committee. The ethics committee has overseen a large number of evaluation projects from our team including those involving CYP, ensuring robust but timely review will occur.

Data protection

The six lawful bases for processing are set out in Article 6 of the UK GDPR (one of which must apply when data is processed). A relevant basis for processing personal data here is the 'public task' basis.

For qualitative data, the most relevant principle/basis is **consent**; the individual has given clear consent for you to process their personal data for a specific purpose. Informed Consent will be obtained – this is where participants receive information outlining the nature of the research, what they are being asked to do, their right to refuse to take part without negative consequences and their right to withdraw from the research during the fieldwork and up to two weeks afterwards.

Regarding **confidentiality**, participants will be informed prior to and post the interview process that the information they provide will be kept strictly confidential and that no identifying information will be available to anyone external to the research team.

Confidentiality will be preserved (for quantitative and qualitative data) through steps such as (1) assignment of participant numbers/pseudonyms, (2) deletion of audio files post-transcription, (3) transcripts/consent forms stored in a locked cabinet at the University, and (4) electronic data held on password protected spaces only accessible to researchers.

Data Management Plan

Assessment and use of existing data and creating new data

We will analyse existing routinely collected police data and may produce new quantitative and qualitative data alongside the more sensitive individual-level data. Ethics approvals will be obtained from the University of Birmingham where needed which will set out the usage, storage, and governance of data. The research team will respect any conditions of usage set forward by the data owners and the informed consent sheets will set out how the data that is collected will be used.

For interviews, when prior consent is received, all interviews will be digitally recorded. The recorded data will be saved on password-protected computers of the research co-ordinator (EE) and leads for the qualitative work (EK and CB-J) and will be either transcribed in-house or sent electronically to a transcription agency that complies with the University's data protection policy and agreed security standards set by the funder. The transcripts will be thematically analysed.

Quantitative data will be stored anonymously. If any individual data is collected, participant names will be allocated a research ID number. A separate list detailing the participant's name and research ID code will be stored in an encrypted file on the research coordinator's laptop, separate from the rest of the project files. All UOB laptops have secure encryption which satisfies the requirements of the Data Protection Act 2018. All work involving matching using names will be on UOB encrypted machines by researchers under SB's supervision.

All data collected will be for the specific purpose of carrying out the different phases of the feasibility studies and will be GDPR compliant.

Quality assurance of data

Data collection will be designed and reviewed to ensure integrity and quality. This will be achieved by having regular project team meetings and consulting research participants on an ongoing basis. Quality assurance of data will form a standing agenda item at all team meetings.

The PI/project manager will have ultimate accountability and oversight for the quality assurance of data; however, it will be emphasised to all team members that they have a

personal responsibility to produce high-quality data. In order to ensure 360-degree oversight, a selection of each piece of work will also be peer-reviewed by another member of the research team.

Quality assurance in the merged and linked data files will be ensured via the use of clear, consistent coding that will be crosschecked by members of the research team. All provided coding will be clearly annotated so that the purpose of the code is understood by any potential user. Data will also be manually examined by more than one person, either using subsets of the data for complete examination against the original data or running frequencies of the original and newly created data, for inconsistencies and errors.

Back-up and security of data

The research team will store the data on their password-protected laptops. Further data backup will be provided by using the University of Birmingham's secure network. Backup copies of data are taken at least on a daily basis or immediately if needed.

The University of Birmingham's Information Security document can be provided upon request. The project team will be mindful of not carrying/ using devices that contain sensitive data (such as personal details of participants) in 'risky' situations (e.g., all members of the project team will be made aware of the issues posed by the theft of laptops etc.).

This study will comply with YEF's Data Archive guidance, including the collection and long-term archiving of personal data. We have considered YEF's guidance on this and will abide by it.

Personnel

- The United Borders team and their roles in this project are as follows:

  - Justin Finlayson - Programme Management and deputy safeguarding lead
  - Ceri Finlayson - Strategy Development, reporting, safeguarding lead
  - Stephen Graham - Lead Facilitator / Mentor team lead
  - Mentors – support for CYP
  - Administrator – administrative support

- Research team:

  - Professor Siddhartha Bandyopadhyay (SB) will be the Principal investigator and overall Project Manager and would co-lead the impact study.

- The quantitative data gathering and analysis will be co-led by Dr Ioannis Karavias (IK).

- The process work will be led by Professor Eddie Kane (EK) from the University of Nottingham.

- Professor Caroline Bradbury-Jones (CB-J) is a Professor of Gender Based Violence and Health at the University of Birmingham. She will support the ToC work and process work.

Two UoB research fellows will support project co-ordination, theory of change, process and impact study:

- Dr Emily Evans (EE) will support the process, implementation and ToC work. Emily can also support SB in project management as needed.
- Dr Juste Abramovaite (JA) will be the research fellow supporting the impact work from design, data collection and analysis.

We have the flexibility to recruit additional research support and have had excellent candidates from open recruitment in the past and a pool of PhD students and early career researchers from within the centre.

The team will have a small group of experts who will advise the team and provide quality assurance;

- Professor Paul Montgomery (PM) is a Professor of Social Intervention at the University of Birmingham. He will provide expert inputs into the overall research design, PM has significant experience in complex interventions in the context of children/young people.
- Dr Mel Jordan (MJ) is an interdisciplinary criminologist at the University of Nottingham who undertakes research that spans health humanities, prisons, music and movement (e.g., capoeira), forensic mental health, and trauma-informed care and practice. Context is crucial to care and custody within prisons, and the aural environment is part of a prison's context, hence its importance within prison planning.
- Lorraine Khan (LK) has been the Associate Director for Children and Young People at the Centre for Mental Health since 2007. She has written extensively on 'what works' to support children on the edges of and in the justice system and has a demonstrable

track record delivering multi-site mixed methods evaluations of interventions supporting improved outcomes for children at risk of contact with the youth justice system, or involvement in serious violence and gang activity.

- o <u>Dr. Kausik Chaudhuri</u> (KC) is an economic statistician and senior lecturer at Leeds University Business School who is highly experienced in statistical analysis of complex data in social science settings and will provide quality assurance of the statistical analysis.
- o <u>Professor Anindya Banerjee</u> (AB), Professor of Econometrics at the University of Birmingham and a senior econometrician.

Risks

In order to manage risk and issues, we use a risk register and maintain an issues log which will be contained within our regular monthly update report. In addition, we will maintain and update YEF's change log for the project. These include project-specific risks such as engagement with stakeholders, unavailability of data, and other risks in terms of mitigating factors such as pre-existing workload.

We are particularly aware of risks related to Covid-19; the team and the university have become proficient with secure online working, including online meetings, webinars and workshops. The team has access to standard software such as Microsoft Teams for this purpose if needed.

Additionally, given the increased possibility of illness or care duties, a resilient team has been created. We have a small cohort of experienced persons who have an advisory role who can step in for a team member should there be an unexpected contingency that will make them unavailable. All the senior researchers supporting the PI/project manager have the ability and experience in this area to step in to become the overall lead in case of anything unexpected happening that makes the PI/ project manager unable to carry on leading the project. Most of the personnel have not only led or co-led complex projects, but they also have a history of co-working, minimising the risk of any difficulties of a multi-disciplinary team working together.

Our issues log will be used to collate key questions/issues and target the appropriate individual for a response which will be recorded in the log. Our risk register will identify, assess, and control risks and uncertainties enabling us to improve the ability of the project to succeed. Our risk management technique, based on PRINCE2 principles, involves:

- A clear understanding of the project context

- Establishing clear project objectives
- Regularly assessing and reporting risks
- Defining clear roles/responsibilities
- Establishing a support structure for risk management
- Monitoring for early warning indicators
- Establishing a review cycle, aiming for continual improvement.

We believe this is a low to medium risk project and have identified (and mitigated for) a range of potential risks. The issues log and risk register will be reviewed weekly by the research team. Any issues and/or risks will be shared at the earliest possible opportunity internally for mitigation and where necessary, if these are viewed as major risks, these will be escalated to 'named' project contacts within the Youth Endowment Fund.

Risk Title	Risk Description and Impact	Date Identified	Risk Category	Impact Level	Probability Level	Priority Level / Risk Rating	Mitigations
Recruitment of staff to UOB	Delay to project start	11/10/2021	Recruitment	3	1	3	Timely exchange of contracts. UOB have a pool of staff who can contribute to the early stages of the study until the Research Fellow is recruited.
Recruitment of UB staff for an interview	Delay/prevent data gathering	11/10/2021	Recruitment	5	1	5	Work with YEF, UB, and partners to encourage participation. For example, explaining the value of taking part (opportunity to share your views, help to understand how UB is supporting CYP)
Recruitment of CYP for interview	Delay/prevent data gathering	11/10/2021	Recruitment	5	3	15	Work with YEF, UB, and partners to encourage participation. For example, explaining the value of taking part (opportunity to share your views, help to understand how UB is supporting you etc.); recruit researchers who share key characteristics with CYP - the commonality (e.g., age, ethnicity) would help to build trust (training can be provided for peer mentors to take on a researcher role); neutral space for interviews to give CYP more confidence to talk openly

Recruitment of non-UB staff for interview	Non-UB stakeholders difficult to engage in study and/or find time to participate in interviews	11/10/2021	Recruitment	5	2	10	Work with police and partners to devise a communication/ engagement strategy directed at relevant stakeholders
Loss of key research staff	e.g., due to isolation because of covid	11/10/2021	Loss of staff	3	2	6	Use of backup researchers to strengthen resilience.
Data access	Access - e.g., unable to access relevant data or data is not available, incomplete, inaccessible or not produced in a timely way. Could	11/10/2021	Data	4	3	12	Work with the police and stakeholders to identify relevant data and agree on data-sharing protocols. Consider alternative data sources.

	impact on quality of the study (e.g., what can be measured) and/or delay delivery of data analysis.						
Data quality	Quality - data quality too low to meet research requirement	11/10/2021	Data	4	2	8	Data checks and cleaning techniques are applied as standard. Potential use of missing data modelling if required.
Data security	Breach of confidentiality and/or data agreements	11/10/2021	Data	5	2	10	Data protection guidance in place outlines how we will collect, store, use, and share data. This will be shared with stakeholders. For qualitative data collection (e.g., interviews) we will provide confidentiality statements to make sure participants feel safe sharing views and information.
Participants unavailable due to time pressure	Delay/prevent data gathering	11/10/2021	Practical issues	3	2	6	Opportunities to participate would be provided to a large number of CYP.

Not being able to gather data face to face (e.g., due to covid restrictions)	Delay/prevent data gathering; could impact data quality if CYP don't feel comfortable being interviewed online	11/10/2021	Practical issues	4	3	12	Use phone or video teleconferencing. The team has familiarity with online working (including small and large workshops). The university has software (e.g., Teams) to facilitate safe online data collection. UB have laptops available on the bus to allow YP to take part remotely.
A breakdown in communication	Inhibits the ability for the study to run smoothly	11/10/2021	Communication	4	1	4	All partners are to have single points of contact.

Timeline

Dates	Activity	Staff responsible/ leading
Jan–Mar 2022	Project set up – staff recruitment, training, define referral pathways, record management processes Evaluation set up – information sharing agreements, develop evaluation materials, gain ethics approval, train peer researchers	UB: JF/CF UoB: SB/EE
April 2022	Project goes live – recruitment of CYP into intervention, begin collecting case monitoring data Begin collecting data, working with peer researchers	UB: JF/CF UoB: SB (lead) and UoB team.
April-August 2022	Project operation Explore and gather quantitative data sources (outcome measures, case monitoring data, administrative data, control group) Gather qualitative data (interviews with staff, referrers and CYP, observations of the programme)	UB: JF/CF UoB: SB (lead) and IK and JA UoB: JT (lead), EK, EE and SR
September 2022	Draft interim report	UoB team
October 2022	YEF decide whether to progress to pilot study	YEF
December 2022 / January 20223	Submit final study report/support YEF publication process	UoB team

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