Branching Out

Feasibility and pilot study

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YOUTH ENDOWMENT FUND

Sheffield Hallam University | Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research

About the Youth Endowment Fund

The Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) is a charity with a mission that matters. We exist to prevent children and young people becoming involved in violence. We do this by finding out what works and building a movement to put this knowledge into practice.

Children and young people at risk of becoming involved in violence deserve services that give them the best chance of a positive future. To make sure that happens, we'll fund promising projects and then use the very best evaluation to find out what works. Just as we benefit from robust trials in medicine, young people deserve support grounded in the evidence. We'll build that knowledge through our various grant rounds and funding activity.

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About the Evaluator

The evaluation has been carried out by a team at the Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research (CRESR) at Sheffield Hallam University. The evaluation team included Professor Sarah Pearson, Elaine Batty, Dr Richard McHugh, Dr Sadie Parr and Elizabeth Sanderson.

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Executive Summary

The project

Branching Out is a three-pronged programme that aims to use school-based social and emotional development classes, detached youth work and targeted activities to reduce antisocial behaviour (ASB) and children's risk of offending. In this programme, delivered by Wakefield Youth Services, Branching Out was targeted at 10-14 year olds in three areas of Wakefield. The intervention intends to offer 36 social and emotional skills development sessions (each lasting 45 minutes) to whole Year 6 and 7 classes, as part of the Lions Quest Skills for Adolescence curriculum. In this project, the sessions were attempted to be delivered in three partner schools by youth workers (supported by school staff). Detached youth work was also delivered, where youth workers aimed to engage with young people in ASB 'hotspots'. They aimed to be visible in local communities and engage young people in parks, schools, bus stations and other locations for two evenings every week. They also provided home visits to vulnerable young people during the COVID-19 pandemic. A targeted 12-week element of the programme then offered individual and group activities to children identified as vulnerable during school-based sessions and detached youth work. This included an outdoor adventure week, the planning and delivery of a social action project, and informal mentoring.

The YEF funded a feasibility and pilot study of Branching Out. The feasibility study aimed to ascertain the core elements of the programme and explore factors that supported or hindered delivery, the programme's referral routes, young people's experiences, perceived benefits and whether the programme achieved its recruitment and delivery targets. These questions were explored by analysing the questionnaire responses of 26 young people, organising focus groups with young people and project staff, and conducting interviews with project staff and partners. The pilot study then explored which measures could be used to evaluate the impact of Branching Out, how useful these measures were and perceptions of the programme. It also examined whether the project could be scaled up and evaluated in a trial. To tackle these questions, the pilot study analysed the questionnaire responses of 108 young people, interviewed 28 young people and conducted additional interviews with project partners and staff. The project was conducted between November 2019 and May 2022. Both delivery and evaluation therefore took place during the COVID-19 pandemic, requiring both the evaluators and delivery team to adapt.

Key conclusions
The feasibility study identified several factors that facilitated successful implementation of Branching Out, including consistent engagement with young people, responding to local need and providing agile responses to changing circumstances (such as COVID-19 restrictions). The evaluator identified four referral routes into the programme but found no evidence to suggest which route was most successful for reaching the target group.
Young people who participated in the feasibility study summarised their involvement in the project as positive. They particularly enjoyed memorable activities of a practical nature. Young people also identified several programme benefits, including becoming more active, building confidence and developing new skills. The project had an original target of engaging 600 young people, 360 of whom would participate in the targeted activity. Overall, the project had 1,231 contacts with young people (which included contacts with the same individuals on multiple occasions), 78 individual young people completed Skills for Adolescence and 204 completed an activity week.
The pilot study surveyed programme participants with pre- and post-questionnaires that used the Problem Behaviour Frequency Scale (PBFS) and the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ). Project staff also administered a resilience questionnaire, and contextual data were collected. Additional measures could be included to adequately measure the outcomes of the intervention, such as willingness to engage in new activities, improved relationships with families, improved school attendance and desistance from anti-social behaviour.
There is insufficient data to draw robust conclusions about Branching Out's impact on young people's outcomes. Participants and staff did perceive the programme to support the development of confidence, social skills, relationships and behaviour regulation.
The intervention is not ready for trial. Given the disruption caused to the pilot evaluation by COVID-19, any future evaluation should focus on examining consistent delivery for at least 12 months and ensuring that consistent data collection is undertaken to make robust assessments of impact.

Interpretation

The feasibility study identified several factors that facilitated successful implementation of Branching Out, including maintaining consistent engagement with young people, responding to local need and providing flexible and agile responses to changing circumstances (such as COVID-19 restrictions). Good referral pathways, effective partnership working with other agencies (such as the police) and effective use of social media to engage young people were also noted as facilitators. The evaluators also found COVID-19 restrictions to hamper the delivery of the intervention. These restrictions restrained the development of relationships between the delivery team and schools and prevented the delivery of the full social and emotional skills development curriculum. The evaluator identified four referral routes into the programme: selection during social and emotional skills development classes; referrals from partner agencies; identification of young people during detached youth work; or self-referral from young people or their families. There was no evidence to suggest which route was most successful for reaching the target group.

Young people who participated in the feasibility study focus groups summarised their overall involvement in the project as positive. They particularly enjoyed memorable activities of a practical nature such as building bird boxes. Young people also noted that they enjoyed the small group sizes deployed in the intervention. In addition, participants identified several programme benefits, including becoming more active, building confidence and developing new skills. Other key benefits noted by young people included meeting new people and participating in new things. The project had an original target of engaging 600 young people, 360 of whom would participate in the targeted activity. Overall, the project had 1,231 contacts with young people (which included contacts with the same individuals on multiple occasions), 78 young people completed Skills for Adolescence, and 204 completed an activity week. However, due to the impact of COVID-19 restrictions, it was not possible to draw robust conclusions in relation to whether the project achieved its initial targets.

The pilot study surveyed programme participants with pre- and post-questionnaires that used the Problem Behaviour Frequency Scale (PBFS) and the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) (86% of those who completed the pre-questionnaire also completed the post-questionnaire). Project staff also administered a resilience questionnaire, and contextual data (such as whether children had been excluded or whether they were in care) were collected. However, additional measures could be included to adequately measure the outcomes of the intervention, such as willingness to engage in new activities, improved relationships with families, improved school attendance and desistance from ASB.

There is insufficient data to draw robust conclusions about Branching Out's impact on young people's outcomes. In terms of participant and project staff perceptions, qualitative data did suggest that both the delivery team and young people believed the programme had a positive impact. Those who participated in focus groups and interviews reflected that Branching Out supported the development of confidence, encouraging children to step outside of their 'comfort zone' and develop social skills and relationships. A number of young people also spoke about being able to control their emotions better, citing benefits such as improved communication with friends, being more patient with younger children, being more helpful and becoming more mature. However, there were also some misgivings noted about the potential for Branching Out to have a measurable impact on local crime and ASB.

The intervention is not ready for trial. Much of the qualitative data in the pilot study reflected participants' and the delivery team's positive perceptions of Branching Out. However, given the disruption caused to the pilot evaluation by COVID-19, we do not yet fully understand the promise associated with key elements of the intervention (such as the Lions Quest Skills for Adolescence programme, which was severely curtailed by the pandemic). Therefore, any future evaluation should focus on examining consistent delivery for at least 12 months and ensuring that consistent data collection is undertaken to make robust assessments of impact.

As a result of these limitations, the YEF has opted not to proceed to a trial.

Introduction

This evaluation report presents the findings of a feasibility and pilot evaluation of an integrated programme of support for young people at risk of crime and violence in Wakefield. The project was overseen by Wakefield Council's Youth Services and delivered by the Wakefield Council Youth Work team (referred to in this report as the project team), working in partnership with Wakefield Council Youth Offending Team, Wakefield Police, Wakefield Council Children's Service, local schools and third-sector organisations (referred to collectively as partner organisations). For simplicity, we refer to the project throughout this report as Branching Out; however, as outlined below, 'Branching Out' was also used by the project team to refer to a specific, targeted element of the intervention that involved young people's participation in individual and group work, activities and social action. In cases where 'Branching Out' is used to refer the specific element of the intervention, this is stated and quotation marks are used.

The evaluation was carried out between February 2020 and May 2022 by a team based at the Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research (CRESR) at Sheffield Hallam University. It is important to note that project implementation and associated evaluation activity was severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated public health rulings that placed restrictions on social mixing for much of the period from March 2020 until early 2022. We discuss the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the project and the evaluation throughout this report, but the analysis and findings presented here should be considered in relation to a context in which both the project and evaluation teams were required to respond flexibly to rapidly changing circumstances, resulting in some adaptations to both project and evaluation implementation.

A review of the evaluation, involving the evaluation and project teams and the evaluation lead at YEF, was conducted during summer 2020. The review concluded that the overall evaluation questions for the project remained valid, and data collection methods were adapted for remote working to include interviews and focus groups carried out via Zoom and fieldwork conducted in outdoor locations. Where possible, and where public health restrictions permitted, face-to-face data collection was carried out in accordance with the requirements in place at the time (for instance, social distancing, restrictions on group size, meeting outdoors and mask wearing).

Background

Prevention of young people's involvement in violence and violent crime is a longstanding issue that is well documented both in the academic literature and wider policy contexts (Walsh, 2021). Branching Out is a multi-strand intervention informed by evidence on three assumptions articulated in the project's Theory of Change (ToC; see Figure 1):

- That the delivery of skills-based programmes is an effective mechanism for early intervention and prevention for young people who are experiencing behavioural issues (which may affect engagement with school and/or family and social relationships) and are 'at risk' of being involved in violence by virtue of living in a low-income neighbourhood or through other family or contextual factors (such as parental engagement with the criminal justice system, being in the care of the local authority, or other individual or family risk factors)
- That the development of trusted relationships with adults is crucial in enabling young people to engage in skills-based learning and development activities. Many young people from non-disadvantaged backgrounds are routinely afforded opportunities to engage in these types of activities through school, family activities or engagement in formal programmes such as National Citizen's Service (NCS) and Duke of Edinburgh (DofE) schemes. The project team sought to build trusted relationships with young people in community contexts and utilise this opportunity to encourage and support the young people to participate in learning and development activities
- That mentoring is a crucial step towards improving outcomes for at-risk young people. The mentoring element of Branching Out is delivered informally through the relationships with youth workers, which are consistent throughout the 12-week programme and across home, school and community contexts.

The evidence on each of these assumptions is discussed below.

Skills-based programmes for 'at-risk' children and young adolescents experiencing early onset behavioural problems or who come from low-income backgrounds

The Lions Quest Skills for Adolescents (SFA) behaviour and attitudinal change programme was formed in its earliest iteration by Rick Little in 1975 (Lions Quest, 2022). Lions Quest SFA has been evaluated in the USA[1] (to EIF Level 3) and locally, suggesting some positive impacts for young people. The programme has developed into what is now a three-stage age group specific range of social and emotional learning (SEL) interventions, including Skills for Adolescents.

Across the academic literature, there are a range of perspectives regarding the efficacy and usefulness of SEL interventions. Some suggest significant efficacy of such interventions as being of importance to children and young people's development within and beyond

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[1] More information on the evidence available can be found here: https://guidebook.eif.org.uk/programme/lions-quest-skills-for-adolescents#about-the-evidence

education (Zins et al., 2007; Merrell et al., 2008). Others have provided critical insights into this range of interventions. Notable critiques include the rise in SEL-orientated interventions as establishing an orthodoxy of emotions and therefore behaviour (Gillies, 2011). Other perspectives on SEL-orientated interventions have levelled the accusation that they generate a *snowflake* generation that are trained to introspect to a debilitating point and that such skills-based approaches to developing emotional intelligence through SEL are dogmatically accepted as a 'panacea' for dealing with social problems (Craig, 2007; Ecclestone, 2007).

The implementation of SEL interventions into education signals a move towards the integration of neuroscience paradigms into the sector. Gagen (2013: 143) considers the shift towards neuroscience insights into education policy and practice as the 'emotionalisation of conduct', which aims to produce emotionally rational civic subjects. In addition, there is the often-overlooked issue of the social and emotional wellbeing and competency of teachers and other educators. Within many SEL programmes of intervention delivered as 'off the peg', there is no screening for those educators delivering the SEL interventions to children and young people. This would, in counselling practice, be dealt with through clinical supervision of practitioners. However, no such safeguards are in place in SEL programmes delivered by educators because such mitigating practices are not embedded in education practice.

Street-based youth work and trusted relationships are maintained. Such relationships are thought to be crucial in enabling learning and development experiences.

It is well documented in the youth, community and informal education literature that street-based (known as 'detached youth work' within the sector more commonly) youth work is a tried and tested method of engagement when working with young people who are often described as *hard to reach*. The approach developed from Goetschius and Tash's (1967) work is widely accepted as the standard for detached youth work within the youth and community work field. Central to this approach is the idea that detached youth work is founded on a developed and evolving relationship between the staff team and the young people. Along with this, other central features include that the sole focus of the work is on the social growth of the young people, the provision is offered on the basis of voluntary participation as and when/where required and accepted, and that this is primarily an educative action, albeit one that starts from the cultural/temporal stage of the young person rather than being predetermined by the worker, organisation or state (Goetschius and Tash, 1967).

In contemporary experiences of detached youth work, the success and potential of the approach is widely acknowledged in the sector (Davies, 2019). However, youth work, and in particular detached youth work, is founded on the central principle of establishing an authentic professional relationship with a trusted adult in which critical dialogue (cf. Freire, 2007) can be generated through a myriad of activity (Spence, 2004a). It has been suggested that the 'fruition' of detached and other youth work interventions are often only established long after in the young person's adulthood (Montagu, 1954 and Rose, 1998, cited in Spence,

2004). Beyond the uniqueness of the spaces in which detached youth work takes place, the other key aspect of detached youth work (but more fundamentally youth work in general) is the rapport and supportive anti-oppressive relationships that are progressively built by youth workers with young people (Batsleer, 2021). It is this dialogic and relational basis that has generated positive evaluation of detached youth work practice. In particular, detached youth work has been shown to be deemed by young people as highly valuable as it is able to meet them on their terms and in their spaces and does not require young people to scope and seek services (de St Croix, 2021). Likewise, detached youth work has been shown to enable young people to make better choices, in particular around avoiding becoming involved in dangerous and violent behaviour and generating increased sense of community and responsibility to community from young people (de St Croix, 2021).

Children receive mentoring – the evidence suggests mentoring can be an effective method for building trusted relationships with vulnerable young people that improves outcomes.

Mentoring is widely utilised as a means of behaviour change for 'disaffected' young people, and there is a body of research supporting the conclusion that when implemented to high standards, it has the capacity for effectiveness for some (Rhoades, 2008). More generally, metanalysis has demonstrated that mentoring interventions produce moderate benefits for young people (DuBois et al., 2002; Raposa et al., 2019). However, the impacts are not universal, with some distinct demographic groups having greater or lesser effective outcomes; for example, primary school ages (especially those at the latter stages) are more likely to have a positive outcome from mentoring (Raposa et al., 2019). Conversely, young people within the adolescent bracket have been shown to have a less durable and engaged mentoring relationship (Kupershmidt et al., 2017, cited in Raposa et al., 2019). It is important to note that despite the moderate effect demonstrated from mentoring programmes broadly, many of those young people referred to mentoring programmes often have complex challenges and barriers within their lives (Raposa et al., 2019). As such, it could be argued that mentoring programmes, if focused on a more general population of young people, may have greater impact than they do when predominantly targeted at the most disadvantaged young people within society.

Intervention

Branching Out is a complex, multi-strand project that brings together interventions to support young people in three targeted communities in Wakefield. The communities were the catchment communities for three secondary academies in Wakefield identified as being in areas of high deprivation where children were at risk of engagement in crime and antisocial behaviour (ASB). The communities were the target catchment areas of:

- Airedale Academy (Airedale target area)
- Cathedral Academy (Wakefield Central target area)

- Minsthorpe Community College (South East target area)

Young people at risk were identified using an assessment framework developed by Wakefield Youth Services that covers a range of factors, including engagement with school, home circumstances and involvement with youth offending or criminal justice services.

As discussed below, the intervention was significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, which limited both what was possible to offer to the young people and relationships with partner organisations. The project brought together both existing and new elements of youth work provision to test the theory that improved outcomes for young people are achieved through a combination of skills-based learning, social activities and mentoring and that engagement in these aspects of the project is facilitated and reinforced through the development of positive relationships with trusted adults (youth workers). The project included:

- **Delivery of a classroom-based social and emotional learning programme**. This was the SFA programme, which was intended to be delivered by youth workers to cohorts of young people in Years 6 and 7 in primary and secondary schools in the target areas. There is some existing evidence on the impact of the SFA Programme delivered as a whole-class intervention by teachers (and, in the UK, by youth workers). An innovation of the Branching Out project was for the SFA programme to be delivered in a classroom context by youth workers, working alongside school staff to integrate SFA into wider PHSE curricula. The SFA programme consists of 36 sessions, each lasting 45 minutes. Further information on programme content and delivery mode can be found here: https://guidebook.eif.org.uk/ programme/lions-quest-skills-for-adolescents.

- **Detached youth work in the target areas**. Detached youth work was carried out in the target areas and in response to priorities identified by Wakefield Youth Services staff and partner organisations. This work included delivery of 'street-based' youth work in the target communities, alongside collaboration with local agencies (including schools and police) to respond to crime or ASB 'hotspots' identified through place-based multi-agency meetings in target areas. The mode of delivery for this element was flexible and responsive. Youth workers were visible in local communities and engaged with young people in a variety of contexts, e.g. local parks, schools and bus stations, on a weekly basis for at least two evenings a week.

- **Targeted intervention: 'Branching Out'**. Vulnerable young people identified through classroom-based and outreach activities or identified by partner agencies were referred to 'Branching Out', a targeted 12-week intervention involving three phases:

  - A 'lead-in' period designed to involve young people in individual and small group activities to reinforce positive and prosocial behaviours promoted through SFA and outreach activity and to build skills and confidence to support

engagement in an activity week. These sessions were planned and led by youth workers both face to face and during periods of lockdown using digital engagement. They addressed a range of issues relevant to young people. Examples included developing social skills, tolerance (e.g. discussing bullying and use of abusive language) and the creation of social media content (young people made videos to upload to TikTok).

- o An activity week involving outdoor and adventure activities to challenge young people and build skills, confidence and social competencies. These included sessions with the Wakefield Council Ranger service in local country parks and visits to 'Go Ape' and a water park.

- o A five-to-six-week 'exit' period involving the design, planning and delivery of a social action project led by the young people and a 'celebration' event involving the young people and their carers. Examples of social action included the design and installation of birdboxes along a walking route planned in the local community and a football match to raise money for a local charity.

Mentoring was delivered by youth workers throughout the programme and, in some cases, beyond the period of intervention. Peer mentoring was also a feature of the programme. Although the specific 'Branching Out' intervention was a 12-week programme, a small number of young people returned to be programme 'Ambassadors' for later cohorts, acting as role models and advisors to other young people.

There were four potential referral routes for young people to participate in the targeted 'Branching Out' element of the project:

- Identification of individuals in classes participating in whole-class delivery of SFA in schools in target areas who teachers and youth workers identify as at risk and potentially benefitting from further intervention. These young people would progress from SFA to the targeted elements of the project.
- Referrals from partner agencies and place-based inter-agency groups, based on a risk assessment process adapted from Wakefield Council Troubled Families intervention. The project has a partnership approach bringing together the following organisations: Wakefield Council Youth Work Services, Lions Quest, local schools, Youth Offending Team, Wakefield Council Countryside Service, Wakefield Children's Services and West Yorkshire Police Force. Young people were referred to the targeted intervention.
- Young people identified by youth workers through the detached work were referred to the targeted intervention.
- Young people and families could self-refer to 'Branching Out'.

The Theory of Change (or logic model) for the intervention is outlined in Figure 1.

The project team continuously adapted the programme to accommodate changing public health restrictions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. At all stages, the project was delivered in accordance with National Youth Agency guidance on managing youth sector activities and spaces during COVID-19 (https://www.nya.org.uk/guidance/). Delivery adaptations included:

- Remote engagement with young people (using social media platforms such as WhatsApp and YouTube), as a supplement to – and at times a replacement for – face-to-face engagement. Project workers identified the pros and cons of this approach. While limiting the opportunity to support young people in interacting socially, remote engagement was also felt to be attractive to young people who would have struggled to engage in face-to-face social situations.

- The development of SFA-based videos for use in schools and on social media. The three lockdowns imposed over the period of implementation severely impacted on relationships with schools and made delivery of SFA in schools unfeasible until very late on in the programme. In early 2022, the project was able to deliver SFA in one primary school for a single cohort of young people. All the other cohorts were able to access on-line content, which the youth workers adapted themselves. It has not been possible to identify how many young people engaged with this content or to what extent.

- Restrictions on social mixing meant that the project worked with smaller group sizes for both indoor and outdoor activities and revised programmes for activity weeks, reducing the need for travel and allowing for social distancing. When the most severe restrictions were in place, young people participated in social activities in outdoor locations close to their homes, which were delivered in partnership with the Wakefield Council Ranger service. Cohorts who participated in the programme during periods in which restrictions were eased were able, to varying degrees, to participate in trips away from home. The project team introduced additional cohorts to Branching Out activities during summer 2021 to maximise the number of young people participating in outdoor and adventure-based activities.

- The project team provided home-based family activities supported by resources that were delivered to young people's homes during lockdown periods. Project staff ran sessions over Zoom, aimed at engaging young people and their carers in social and creative activities during isolation.

- The project team continued their presence in the community through street-based work; during periods of lockdown and restriction, they pivoted this work towards ensuring young people's safety and adherence to COVID-19 laws and guidance. Doorstep visits were also implemented during this period to maintain contact with

vulnerable young people and their families and to facilitate early intervention and signposting to other agencies for families that were struggling.

Figure 1: Branching Out model

Wakefield Youth Services   Logic Model for Branching Out, funded through Youth Endowment Fund
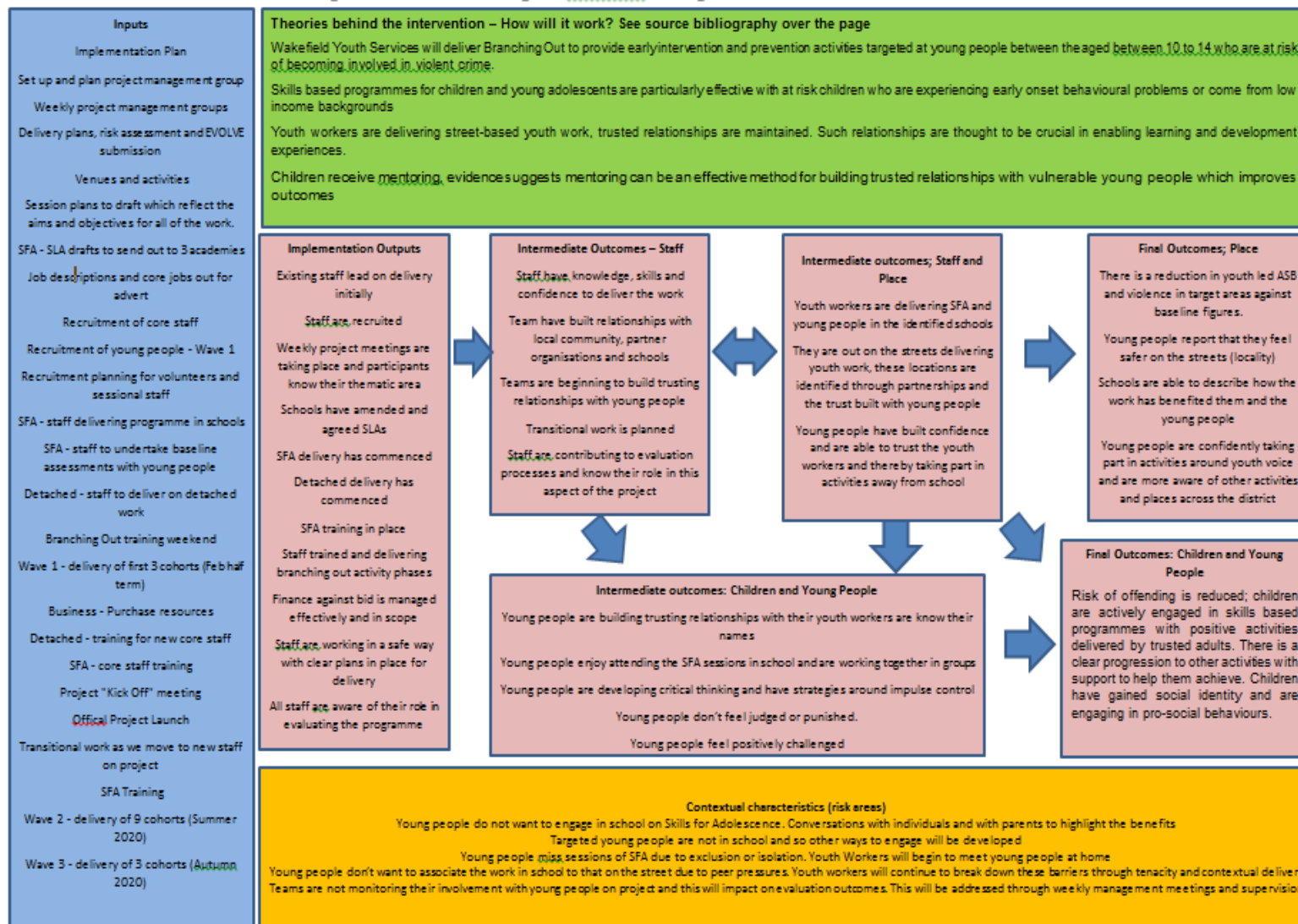
Ethical review

The study received overall ethical approval from Sheffield Hallam University Research Ethics Committee (SHUREC). An amendment was submitted to the ethics committee to account for proposed changes to data collection during the pilot phase (moving from face-to-face to online data collection methods), which was approved.

Sheffield Hallam University research ethics procedures ensure that research is undertaken in accordance with commonly agreed standards of good practice and academic integrity. These processes are in line with BERA and BSA guidelines.

The evaluation team followed these procedures at all times, including operating to standardised protocols concerning anonymity, confidentiality, informed consent, rights to withdraw and secure (electronic and physical) data storage. The research team were experienced and committed to working in an ethically appropriate and sensitive way and familiar with the ethical issues arising when working with diverse groups of participants. Copies of our ethics policy, principles and procedures are available at: www.shu.ac.uk/ research/ ethics-integrity-and-practice.

Sheffield Hallam University ensures that professional standards and the wellbeing of research participants are protected and maintained at all times. A strong emphasis is placed on the design and use of research instruments that are proportionate: we do not seek to place an undue burden on research participants. Informed consent was sought from all interviewees. Information about study purpose (including who the data are being collected for and on behalf of), data usage, consent and the right to withdraw from the study and have all information destroyed at any stage were given in a form appropriate to the participants' needs. The researchers were all highly experienced interviewers and ensured that no participant's involvement continued if negative effects of the study were identified for that individual. Ethics policies are renewed and monitored on an ongoing basis by the University Research Ethics Committee: project directors for all projects are responsible for monitoring ethical issues as part of normal project management processes.

Data protection

The processing of personal data through the evaluation is defined under GDPR as a specific task in the public interest. Therefore, the legal basis for processing personal data is 'Public Task' (Article 6(1)(e)).

The university has a detailed set of guidelines in place to enable staff to ensure that their work meets the requirements of the 2018 EU General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). Sheffield Hallam has worked closely with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) to ensure they are fully complaint – full details are available at https://www.shu.ac.uk/about-this-website/privacy-policy.

Sheffield Hallam University adhered to high standards with regard to all aspects of data privacy, security, storage, transfer and processing. No information about an identified individual was reported or made available beyond the project and evaluation teams, with the exception of sharing the final participant dataset with YEF at the end of the project for the purposes of archiving the data.

Established principles for managing data include: all staff who work on the project being aware of their responsibilities in terms of personal data; electronic data only accessible to the research team and their immediate line managers and stored in password-protected electronic files; personal data only stored on encrypted portable media in password-protected files (and only when absolutely necessary); hard copy data kept under lock and key; consent forms, digital recordings and transcripts/interview reports stored separately; secure access to premises, with two locks provided for public access; and buildings locked and alarmed out of office hours. In disseminating findings, names of respondents will appear as pseudonyms, and any other potentially identifying data will be anonymised to ensure confidentiality. Other safeguards will be put in place in accordance with University Guidance Notes.

Data protection policy statement:

https://www.shu.ac.uk/about-this-website/privacy-policy/privacy-notices/privacy-notice-for-research

Project team/stakeholders

The core delivery team for the project developed and delivered the intervention. The team consisted of the following members of staff from Wakefield Metropolitan Council Youth Services Team:

Andy Atkins: youth service team manager, responsible for the youth service in Wakefield.

Darrel Robinson: project manager, responsible for all aspects of project delivery and its overall direction.

Simran Jandu: youth and community development project worker, leading on delivery in the South East Wakefield target area.

Jane Russell: youth and community development project worker, leading on delivery in the Airedale target area.

Martin Andrew: youth and community development project worker, leading on delivery in the Wakefield Central target area.

Emily Deguil: youth and community development support worker, supporting delivery in the South East Wakefield target area.

Rosie Cooper: youth and community development support worker, supporting delivery in the Airedale target area. Later took over from Jane Russell leading on delivery in this area.

Jo Fascoine: youth and community development support worker, supporting delivery in the Airedale target area.

Rob Chadwick: youth and community development support worker, supporting delivery in the Wakefield Central target area.

Courtney Hughes: administration officer, supporting the smooth running of the project.

Three youth and community development workers (Simran Jandu, Jane Russell and Martin Andrew) and one youth and community development support worker (Rosie Cooper) assisted in the collection of data for the evaluation by undertaking responsibility for administration of the young people's survey pre- and post-intervention (the approach taken is discussed further in the feasibility study methods section below).

The evaluation team for the project consisted of the following members of staff, all from Sheffield Hallam University:

Prof Sarah Pearson: project director, responsible for all aspects of the study and its overall direction; lead on reporting.

Elizabeth Sanderson: project manager and quantitative lead, responsible for day-to-day management and communications with YEF, delivery partners and other stakeholders; quantitative research tool development; support for data gathering; quantitative and statistical data analysis.

Elaine Batty: qualitative researcher, responsible for remote, face-to-face and telephone interviews, focus groups, observations and initial analysis.

Dr Sadie Parr: qualitative researcher, responsible for remote, face-to-face and telephone interviews, focus groups, observations and initial analysis.

Dr Richard McHugh: qualitative researcher, responsible for remote, face-to-face and telephone interviews, focus groups, observations and initial analysis.

Melissa McGregor: project administrator, supporting the smooth running of the project, including recruitment and evaluation activities and supporting the project manager.

Prof Mike Coldwell: oversight of YEF evaluations undertaken by Sheffield Hallam University.

Sean Demack: statistical oversight of all YEF evaluations undertaken by Sheffield Hallam University.

Feasibility study

Overview

Research questions

The overall research question identified by the project was:

How does Branching Out achieve sustainable positive change for children and their communities by reducing the number likely to become involved in violent crime?

The research questions for the feasibility study were as follows:

a) What are the core elements of the intervention, and how are these working, in isolation and combination?

b) What are the factors that support or hinder the successful implementation of the different programme elements and of the programme as a whole?

c) How are young people referred to the programme, and is there any evidence to suggest that different referral routes are more or less successful in terms of reaching the target group and the sustained engagement of programme participants?

d) What are the factors that contribute to programme success from the perspective of those delivering it?

e) What are the experiences of the young people and families being supported by the programme, and what are their views on what contributes to its successful delivery?

f) What do the programme participants identify as the benefits of the programme?

g) Is the programme achieving its targets in terms of recruitment and delivery?

At the point of lockdown (March 2020), the evaluation was effectively paused (although the evaluation continued to engage with the project over the course of lockdown to capture evidence on the response to COVID-19 and implementation of COVID-19 adjustments). An evaluation review conducted in summer 2020 established that the feasibility study questions remained valid, and data collection methods were adapted to remote working.

Methods

Participant selection

The feasibility study aimed to collect outcomes data via the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) and the Problem Behaviour Frequency Scale (PBFS) on all participants engaged with the targeted intervention aspect of the project during this phase. Project staff

facilitated the collection of questionnaire responses across a range of settings (via detached/street-based youth work, mentoring, social activities and in schools). A combination of paper and online questionnaires were used during the feasibility phase. Only anonymised data were shared between Wakefield Youth Services Team and SHU during the feasibility stage, so a data sharing agreement was not required.

To help answer the research questions, four focus groups were also undertaken with young people (see Table 1 for how the methods chosen related to the research questions). The selection of groups of young people to interview was carried out in collaboration with the project team. Criteria included involvement of young people engaged across all three target areas and young people who were involved in the 'Branching Out' phase of the project and so had experienced more than one element of the intervention. Focus groups took place remotely via video call during the period of restrictions on social mixing. Between five and eight young people were present at each focus group. Project staff helped support the recruitment of young people to be interviewed by identifying groups of participants available and willing to participate and ensuring consent forms were completed by parents/guardians and young people before the sessions took place.

Three rounds of interviews and focus groups were also undertaken with project delivery staff (six to eight staff at each round, including project managers and youth workers, depending on availability), and one round of individual interviews was undertaken with project partners (eight interviewees in total). All core members of the staff project team were interviewed during the feasibility phase. Project partner selection was informed by discussion with project staff and driven by seeking interviewees who would be able to reflect on how the project had been implemented and had progressed and the effectiveness of delivery. This process was supported by project staff who provided contact details for partners who fit these criteria. All interviews were undertaken remotely, either over the phone or via video call.

Informed consent was sought from all interviewees and young people's parents/guardians. Information about the study purpose (including who the data were being collected for and on behalf of), data usage, consent and the right to withdraw from the study and have all information destroyed at any stage was given in a form appropriate to the participants' needs and in a separate consent form used to collect consent for participation.

Theory of change/logic model development

The project delivery team established the programme ToC illustrated in the logic model in Figure 1.

Data collection

Prior to the evaluation being paused, the evaluation team worked with the project team and YEF to develop quantitative data collection processes and carried out two rounds of

interviews with project staff to review early project set-up and implementation. The evaluation team also planned for interviews with partners in schools and agencies (originally scheduled for July 2020) and young people and families (scheduled for Easter and summer 2020). These did not take place due to changes to project delivery and social distancing requirements (which meant, for instance, that the project was not present in schools or working face to face with young people and families at that time).

The feasibility study was put on hold in March 2020 and resumed December 2020 to March 2021, although regular meetings (every two to three months) between project and evaluation teams took place to discuss how the project was responding to COVID-19 and identify what was working well, and not so well, in responding to changing public health restrictions and maintaining the support offer to young people.

The resumed feasibility study utilised the following methods:

Pre- and post-intervention outcomes data

Pre- and post-intervention data collection was attempted for all participants in the specific 12-week 'Branching Out' element of the intervention in the form of the SDQ and PBFS. Young people were asked to complete a questionnaire (featuring the SDQ and PBFS measures) when they first engaged with 'Branching Out' (this was intended to happen at the first meeting or as close to it as possible) and at the end of the 12-week intervention. These measures were used to help identify positive outcomes in terms of improved decision making and reduced engagement in risky behaviours over time.

Data collection was facilitated by staff, with young people provided questionnaires for self-completion. During December 2019 to March 2020, pre-intervention SDQ and PBFS data were collected from early participant cohorts via paper questionnaires. No post-intervention data were collected due to the onset of COVID-19 and associated restrictions. Pre- and post-data were then collected from the summer 2020 cohort. Online versions of the SDQ and PBFS questionnaires were provided to assist data collection towards the end of 2020, and data were collected from young people participating in the October 2020 and February 2021 phases of delivery via a combination of paper and online questionnaires. Only anonymous data were collected during the feasibility phase (i.e. no names, dates of birth or addresses were collected), and staff made it clear that data would be analysed by the evaluation team.

A number of issues with the completeness and quality of data provided were identified during the feasibility phase, which are detailed in the findings section below.

Focus groups with young people

Four focus groups were undertaken with young people during February 2021 via video call, each lasting around 25 minutes. Between six and eight young people were involved in each focus group, which were mixed-gender. Participants were identified and recruited by project

staff. One of these groups also included two parents and a foster carer who also participated in the discussion. The young people participating in the groups knew each other through their participation in Branching Out. Focus groups provided an opportunity for young people to discuss their experiences of the project and the support they had received and reflect on any positive changes.

Interviews and focus groups with project delivery staff

Individual interviews with project leads (the youth team manager and project manager) and two-group focus groups with youth workers took place via video call in January 2021. Interviews and focus groups lasted approximately one hour. Six participants were involved in each focus group, which were mixed-gender. The interviews and focus groups helped provide an assessment of the effectiveness of the process of delivery so far and an opportunity to gather views on the quality and impact of the support being delivered.

Interviews with project partners

A round of individual interviews was conducted with eight partners during January 2021 and March 2021. This included WDC, police, housing, third-sector organisations and one foster carer. Interviews provided an opportunity for project partners to reflect on how the project had been implemented and had progressed and the effectiveness of delivery. Participants were identified through discussion with the project team and based on the evaluation team's knowledge of the project implementation. Interviewees were selected for their ability to reflect on the successes and challenges of the project's early phases and comprised, in the main, practitioners in partner organisations who had worked directly with the project team or had referred young people to the project. Interviews were undertaken remotely, either over the phone or video call, and lasted around 45 minutes.

Table 1: Methods overview

Research questions	Data collection methods/analysis	Participants/data sources
What are the core elements of the intervention, and how are these working, in isolation and combination?	Interviews and focus groups with staff and partners to understand the extent to which the delivery model has been revised or maintained during the COVID-19 pandemic and how well the different elements of delivery have been working.	• Interviews with project managers •Focus groups with core staff delivery team • Interviews with project partners
What are the factors that support or hinder the successful implementation of the different programme elements and of the programme as a whole?	Interviews and focus groups with staff and partners to examine factors that have supported programme delivery, along with any challenges.	• Interviews with project managers •Focus groups with core staff delivery team • Interviews with project partners
How are young people referred to the programme, and is there any	Qualitative interviews with staff and partners to understand how	• Interviews with core staff delivery team

Research questions	Data collection methods/analysis	Participants/data sources
evidence to suggest that different referral routes are more or less successful in terms of reaching the target group and the sustained engagement of programme participants?	young people at risk are identified and to identify the different referral sources and explore if some routes are more successful than others in reaching the target group and sustaining engagement.	• Interviews with project managers •Focus groups with core staff delivery team • Interviews with project partners
What are the factors that contribute to programme success from the perspective of those delivering it?	Qualitative interviews with staff and partners to provide an opportunity to pick up on their perceptions of the various factors and key features of the programme that have contributed to success.	• Interviews with project managers •Focus groups with core staff delivery team • Interviews with project partners
What are the experiences of the young people and families being supported by the programme, and what are their views on what contributes to its successful delivery?	Groups interviews with young people (one group to include two parents and a foster carer) to explore their experiences of support and what they enjoyed most and least.	• Focus groups with young people
What do the programme participants identify as the benefits of the programme?	Group interviews with young people to examine positive changes experienced by participants. Pre- and post-intervention outcomes data examined to see if any positive changes have been captured.	• Focus groups with young people • Pre-and post-intervention questionnaires collecting data on all participants
Is the programme achieving its targets in terms of recruitment and delivery?	Qualitative interviews with staff to assess if targets are being met.	• Focus groups with core staff delivery team

Analysis

Quantitative data analysis

The data were used as indicated in the methods overview table above to help answer the research questions set out for the feasibility study. Analysis was undertaken on the pre- and post-intervention data collected towards the end of the feasibility phase and focused on the 26 individuals for whom the evaluation team were provided both pre- and post-intervention data. Data were examined to see if any positive changes were captured.

Qualitative data analysis

Qualitative interviews were undertaken as detailed in the timeline below. Initial analysis was undertaken during and shortly after the interviews and focus groups in the form of note-taking, writing-up, transcription, identifying themes and areas to follow-up. A more extensive period of thematic analysis was conducted following the end of the feasibility stage. Data were drawn on as indicated in the methods overview table above to help answer the research questions set out for the feasibility study.

Timeline

The table below shows the timeline of activities for both the programme and the evaluation.

Figure 2: Timeline

Date	Activity	Staff responsible/leading
Programme activities		
Nov 19–Mar 20	Pre-COVID-19 delivery phase, including SFA in schools	Wakefield
Mar 20–Dec 20	Delivery during evaluation pause	Wakefield
Jan 21–Mar 21	February 2021 delivery phase	Wakefield
Evaluation activities		
Nov 19–Mar 20	Quantitative data collection (SDQ and PBFS) with pre-COVID-19 cohorts (only pre-intervention)	Wakefield, with ongoing support from SHU
Nov 19–Mar 20	Two rounds of interviews and focus groups with project managers and staff	SHU, with Wakefield participating
Mar 20–Dec 20	Remote engagement with the project during evaluation pause	SHU, with Wakefield participating
Dec 20	Resumed feasibility study planning and design	SHU, with support from Wakefield
Summer 20–Mar 21	Quantitative data collection (SDQ and PBFS) **Note: only some data collected shared with evaluation team. See the 'Findings' section for more detail.**	Wakefield, with ongoing support from SHU
Feb 21	Focus groups with young people	SHU, with support from Wakefield
Jan 21	Interviews with project delivery staff	SHU, with Wakefield participating
Jan 21–Mar 21	Interviews with project partners	SHU, with support from Wakefield
Mar 21–Apr 21	Interim data analysis and reporting	SHU, with support from YEF

Findings

Participants

The feasibility study aimed to collect outcomes data via the SDQ and PBFS on all participants engaged with the programme during this phase. The evaluation team were provided with pre- and post-intervention data for 26 individuals from the October 2020 and February 2021 cohorts (26 completing the SDQ twice and 13 who also completed the PBFS twice; see Table 2). The quantitative analysis for the feasibility study focuses on these young people.

Issues with the completeness and quality of data provided were identified during the feasibility phase. It is, therefore, not clear how many young people participated in the programme during the feasibility phase or the extent of any attrition. Pre-intervention SDQ and PBFS data were collected on the early cohorts (December 2019 to March 2020), and pre- and post-SDQ and PBFS data were collected on the summer 2020 cohort, but none of these data were transferred to the evaluation team in time for analysis and reporting of the feasibility stage.

Table 2: Summary of questionnaire responses (SDQ and PBFS[2])

Stage	October 2020	February 2021*	Overall
SDQ pre-intervention	13	22	**35**
SDQ post-intervention	11	15	**26**
PBFS pre-intervention	6	14	**20**
PBFS post-intervention	4	9	**13**

Data were collected across a range of settings (via detached/street-based youth work, mentoring and social activities). It has not been possible to break down settings beyond target area. Of the participants who completed questionnaires both pre- and post-intervention and whose data were provided to the evaluation team in time for analysis and reporting from the feasibility stage, half were from the Southeast target area.

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[2] The February 2021 cohort from the Wakefield Central target area were migrating to either the Easter 2021 or summer 2021 phases so had yet to complete their post-intervention questionnaires as their engagement was ongoing.

Table 3: Questionnaire responses by target area

Target area	Count
Airedale	6
South East	13
Wakefield Central	7
Total	**26**

Age and gender were provided for 20 out of the 26 young people for whom outcomes data were provided. The majority of participants (15 out of 20) were aged between 12 and 14, while almost all participants were male (just two were female). The gender balance of the young people participating in the programme was not discussed specifically with the project team but may reflect perceptions of gender and risk among referring agencies, although the evidence of association between gender and risk of involvement in knife crime is inconclusive (Haylock et al., 2020).

Table 4: Age at start of intervention

Age	Count
10	2
11	2
12	4
13	5
14	6
15	1
Total	**20**

Table 5: Gender at start of intervention

Gender	Count
Male	18
Female	2
Total	**20**

Table 6 shows the research questions for the feasibility study and the number of participants included in each analyses.

Table 6: Number of participants included in analysis

Research questions	Participants/data sources	Number of participants included in analysis
What are the core elements of the intervention, and how are these working, in isolation and combination?	• Interviews with core staff delivery team	One youth team manager One project manager Three youth and community development project workers leading on delivery in each of the target areas Three youth and community development support workers supporting delivery in each of the target areas
	• Interviews with project partners	Eight partners
What are the factors that support or hinder the successful implementation of the different programme elements and of the programme as a whole?	• Interviews with core staff delivery team	One youth team manager One project manager Three youth and community development project workers leading on delivery in each of the target areas Three youth and community development support workers supporting delivery in each of the target areas
	• Interviews with project partners	Eight partners
How are young people referred to the programme, and is there any evidence to suggest that different referral routes are more or less successful in terms of reaching the target group and the sustained engagement of programme participants?	• Interviews with core staff delivery team	One youth team manager One project manager Three youth and community development project workers leading on delivery in each of the target areas Three youth and community development support workers supporting delivery in each of the target areas
	• Interviews with project partners	Eight partners
What are the factors that contribute to programme success from the perspective of those delivering it?	• Interviews with core staff delivery team	One youth team manager One project manager Three youth and community development project workers leading on delivery in each of the target areas Three youth and community development support workers supporting delivery in each of the target areas
	• Interviews with project partners	Eight partners
What are the experiences of the young people and families being supported by the programme, and what are their views on what contributes to its successful delivery?	• Group interviews with young people	Four focus groups, with eight young people in each group

Research questions	Participants/data sources	Number of participants included in analysis
What do the programme participants identify as the benefits of the programme?	• Group interviews with young people	Four focus groups
	• Pre-and post-intervention questionnaires collecting data on all participants	26 young people
Is the programme achieving its targets in terms of recruitment and delivery?	• Interviews with core staff delivery team	One youth team manager One project manager Three youth and community development project workers leading on delivery in each of the target areas Three youth and community development support workers supporting delivery in each of the target areas

Intervention feasibility

Research Question A: What are the core elements of the intervention, and how are these working, in isolation and combination?

The project team made extraordinary efforts to maintain delivery and continue to support vulnerable young people during the COVID-19 pandemic. This was acknowledged by everyone we spoke to in the local authority and in partner organisations. Young people and their families valued the support provided by the project at a time when many other agencies were absent.

All aspects of the programme delivery model were maintained in revised form during the pandemic. Most aspects of delivery adapted relatively well under COVID-19 restrictions:

- Remote engagement with young people combined diversionary activities (e.g. quizzes and virtual games) and forums for discussion and support around issues such as mental health and identity. The project workers believed that remote working enabled them to reach young people who would have been reluctant to engage in face-to-face group activity.

- Local activity weeks went well, despite COVID-19 restrictions. They provided distraction and routine and were enjoyed by young people.

- Detached work maintained presence and engagement for the project and reinforced trusted relationships. Youth workers helped to reinforce lockdown restrictions locally and monitored the activities of vulnerable young people on the streets. Detached work was an important opportunity for the delivery of advice and guidance in the absence of other face to face engagement:

'Going on detached on an evening, I think because we know that that is the only time now that we are going to get face-to-face contact, it's more meaningful … kind of catch them while we can as well. There is real emphasis that we think we have got to get in there and we have got to deliver. …. utilise that time that we are with them to educate them on different things; so, a lot of them smoke, they drink, taking drugs and things like that, so you know, it could be a simple as taking out a drug box with us, educating them on different types of drugs. We've had conversations about sexual health, [and] we've had conversations about relationships, so very, very important conversations that take place on the streets that potentially might not in a classroom.' (Project delivery staff focus group)

- Doorstep visits helped to build positive relationships with families, facilitated signposting and referrals for families in crisis and supported sustained participation for young people.

The logic model for the programme indicates that the different elements of the project were expected to combine to support young people participating to benefit from improved social and emotional skills, facilitated by guidance and mentoring from youth workers and peers. The context of COVID-19 compromised the degree to which these various elements of the programme worked together. In particular, during periods of restriction on social mixing, the delivery of in-classroom skills development programmes was severely curtailed, and the activity weeks were modified (reducing the element of challenge). This reduced the potential for transition from classroom-based activities to other elements of the programme, and the numbers of young people who joined Branching Out through schools' participation was lower than originally anticipated. Additional emphasis on outreach and remote delivery of activity sessions compensated to some extent and allowed for the focus on support and mentoring to be maintained. One interviewee reflected that not being involved in schools had, in fact, facilitated a more flexible approach to engaging the young people and the opportunity to provide guidance and mentoring away from peers:

'When we were in schools, I remember the young people saying, "We don't know why we've got to come here." … they felt as if they were being punished, and even though we explained, "No, it's not like that at all, you have been selected because we want you to be a part of the group, we want to see you out on detached [and] we want you to do well." When this time around, they are not ostracised from their friends, because now that we have got the lockdown, their friends have no idea that they have been on the programme. One young man, he didn't want to tell his friends that he'd been on [the programme], but he enjoyed it, and we gave him that space. Whereas if we'd have been in school, other children, new people, would have seen him talking to us. … we can steer that young person along a lot more than we would have been able to do in school because we would have had to pull that young person out of a class, go and talk to them at school on a one-to-one basis and try and convince them to come to our

sessions. Whereas, as I say, we gradually, gradually, we might go on detached, me and (youth worker) will say, "Right, we will try that young person again, contact Mum, whoever, the carer, foster carer, are they in, where are they, we're out tonight." We've got so much flexibility now.' (Project delivery staff focus group)

Research Question B: What are the factors that support or hinder the successful implementation of the different programme elements and of the programme as a whole?

Factors supporting successful programme delivery included:

- Providing a unique service, which complemented other provision available to support vulnerable young people locally through schools and agencies such as the Youth Offending Team.

- The enthusiasm and commitment of the project team and their skills in engaging young people. Stakeholders were all overwhelmingly positive about how the staff were able to successfully engage young people and encourage them to attend and keep attending activities, even those who had been less motivated at the outset.

- Adaptability, particularly in response to COVID-19 but also maintaining an overall focus on the project objectives.

- Good referral pathways, supported by the credibility of the youth work team and their active participation in relevant groups and networks.

- A holistic approach – offering a range of services and working with young people in different contexts.

- Partnership working, particularly with the police and rangers.

- Use of social media. The project team used a number of social media platforms including WhatsApp and TikTok to communicate with the young people, share resources and advice and showcase the work of young people participating in 'Branching Out'. During periods of lockdown, social media was also used to deliver the group sessions. Staff reported that use of social media was an effective means of communication with young people and allowed some young people who were particularly challenged in group situations to connect with the project in a way that appealed to them.

Key challenges were:

- The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic required constant adaptation and some shift away from the original delivery model, as outlined on pp.28 and 29.

- Some schools were slower to engage, and relationships with schools were interrupted by the pandemic. Original expectations for the delivery of SFA in three secondary academies were revised when the project struggled to engage with these schools. Relationships with primary feeder schools were developed, however, and it was possible to deliver SFA in one of these.

- It was not possible to deliver the full SFA course to as many young people as had been anticipated due to schools being closed or not accessible to visitors during periods of restrictions on social mixing as a result of COVID-19.

- Outdoor activity sessions were amended, meaning that not all cohorts were able to experience challenge activities away from their home environment. During periods when National Youth Agency guidance did not allow for travel, the activity sessions were held in the young people's homes or in locations close to the young people's homes. The latter included sessions in local country parks with the Wakefield Council Ranger service. These sessions were popular with the young people, but it did mean that some cohorts were not able to experience the 'challenge' of being away from home.

Research Question C: How are young people referred to the programme, and is there any evidence to suggest that different referral routes are more or less successful in terms of reaching the target group and the sustained engagement of programme participants?

There were four referral routes for young people to participate in the targeted 'Branching Out' element of the project:

- Identification of individuals in classes participating in whole-class delivery of classroom-based SFA in schools in target areas who teachers and youth workers identify as at risk and potentially benefitting from further intervention. These young people would progress from SFA to the targeted elements of the project.
- Referrals from partner agencies and place-based inter agency groups, based on a risk assessment process adapted from Wakefield Council Troubled Families intervention. The project has a partnership approach bringing together the following organisations: Wakefield Council Youth Work Services, Lions Quest, local schools, Youth Offending Team, Wakefield Council Countryside Service, Wakefield Children's Services and West Yorkshire Police Force. Young people were referred to the targeted intervention.
- Young people identified by youth workers through the detached work were referred to the targeted intervention.
- Young people and families could self-refer to 'Branching Out'.

The evaluation did not reveal any evidence to suggest that some referral routes were more successful than others in reaching the target group. As might be expected, referrals from

schools slowed as COVID-19 affected their delivery, but children's hubs, PCSOs, police officers and WDC intervention workers were important sources of referrals.

Cohorts of young people benefitting from targeted intervention comprised mixed groups drawn from different referral routes, but within target areas (youth workers worked in specific target areas in order to establish good relationships with the young people). The project expanded its target group in the early stages of implementation to include Year 6 primary pupils. In part, this was a response to some delays in developing relationships with secondary schools, which impacted on referral numbers. However, staff and stakeholders viewed this as a positive opportunity to support young people's transition into and through secondary school, which had the potential to prevent problems arising later.

Research Question D: What are the factors that contribute to programme success from the perspective of those delivering it?

Staff pointed to factors they had identified as contributing to the project's success:

- Providing a routine and diversionary activities for vulnerable young people.

- Good relationships with key local organisations, including the police and involving the PCSOs in programme delivery.

- Building relationships with families, thus helping to reinforce the impact of sessions with young people.

- Outreach and social media meant that youth workers were able to maintain their profile and reach out to young people.

Interviews with project partners highlighted key features of the programme they thought had the potential to bring about positive outcomes for young people:

- It pushes young people out of their comfort zone.

- It forces them to engage, interact and work with other young people outside their circle of friends (youth workers organise groups carefully so that peer networks do not impact negatively on participation and progress).

- It provides young people with access to fun and different experiences they wouldn't ordinarily be able to access (perhaps due to lack of affordability).

- It informally educates young people and reinforces messages from more formal interventions and authority figures.

- It gives young people the opportunity to try out or learn practical activities and skills (e.g. cooking and using a hammer).

'I think a lot of these young people that struggle at school enjoy it more because it's that hands-on, practical stuff with a bit of banter and conversation, and you can call a person by their first name – I always think that makes a massive difference.' (Project partner interview)

- It rewards young people for their engagement.

- It provides safe spaces for young people to learn, have fun and build a positive relationship with a youth worker.

Comments included:

'You've got to have the right staff running the right project. They've got the nous with young people, they know how to get them on board [and] they've got so much energy. These guys are bouncing from minute one till the end of the day. They're bonkers. The kids really relax, and it's fun.' (Project partner interview)

'I'm sure there are other things in their lives that would have to go right for it to make an overall massive difference, but this might be just that little, and it was with this girl, this was just that little spark that made her think I can achieve something.' (Project partner interview)

'Once over that threshold, the difference by Friday was massive. It creates friendships, it creates positive outlooks, it improves that mental health and wellbeing and it takes them out of their comfort zone as well.' (Project partner interview).

Research Question E: What are the experiences of the young people and families being supported by the programme, and what are their views on what contributes to its successful delivery?

We held four focus groups in February 2021 with young people who had participated in Branching Out. These took place via video call. One of these groups also included two parents and a foster carer.

- For many of the young people across the four focus groups, there was a clear indication that the activities, in particular those that involved making something or were of a recognisably practical or useful nature (such as building bird boxes), were deemed to be the most memorable and of interest. Challenge activities such as 'Go Ape' and the water park were also popular.

- Young people also explained that the small group sizes were favourable. Cohort sizes were limited by COVID-19 restrictions at points during the programme, varying from 18 to 36, and individual group sizes from six to 12. Data from interviews and group discussions indicate that young people and staff preferred smaller groups as it made it easier for young people to feel comfortable, staff got to know them well and group dynamics were generally easier to manage.

- Overall, participants summarised their involvement in the project as positive, often describing the experience as exciting, fun and 'better than school'.

- Some young people were involved in Branching Out more than once and had returned through the peer mentoring component of the project, and there was also an appetite for returning for this from others.

- Parents and the foster carer spoke about how the staff were extremely supportive and inclusive (for example, of younger siblings). One alluded to the Branching Out staff as almost extensions of parenting due to the close and regular contact and checking in with the family (in particular in relation to community issues).

Research Question F: What do the programme participants identify as the benefits of the programme?

Participants highlighted benefits in relation to learning, utility for life and engaging in meaningful activity. These included:

- getting out of the house;

- becoming more active;

- building confidence around people; and

- developing new skills and a sense of achievement through making things.

Other key points made by participants included the project enabling them to participate in new things and meet new people, despite previous anxieties about engaging prior to involvement.

Young people interviewed drew comparisons between Branching Out and school, alluding to Branching Out providing useful learning activities that have everyday life utility, such as *'what to do if someone is choking, so that's pretty useful'*. This was in contrast to the sentiment towards school: *'School gets you disliking it'* and *'School is boring unlike this […] instead of […] sitting in class doing nothing, learning about nonsense you're not going to be knowing about when you are older'*.

The project facilitated increased family time between parents/carers, young people and siblings through remote activities such as cooking.

Parents and carers saw value in the project's links with the police and how project staff would check up on young people via parents/carers at key points, such as evening and weekends.

Quantitative data collection

The feasibility study gathered preliminary pre- and post-Intervention data from participants in the form of the SDQ and PBFS to test the processes for data collection and the validity of the data tools. Several issues were identified in this phase (outlined below), resulting in a small and unreliable data sample. As such, analysis of outcomes for data gathered in the pilot phase only is included in this report.

Issues with quantitative data collection

Pre-intervention SDQ and PBFS data collected on the early cohorts (December 2019 to March 2020) and pre- and post-SDQ and PBFS data collected on the summer 2020 cohort were not transferred by the project team to the evaluation team in time for analysis and reporting. Data were provided for the October 2020 and February 2021 cohorts, although a number of issues were identified with data completeness and data quality:

- Pre- and post-intervention data were not provided for all young people from these cohorts. For example, no data were provided for the October 2020 cohort recruited in the Airedale target area. The reliance on data collection by project staff meant that some areas were better represented than others in the project sample.

- SDQ data were collected more frequently than PBFS data. There were notable gaps in the PBFS data collected (see Table 2 for a summary of SDQ and PBFS questionnaire responses, which illustrates the gaps in the PBFS data). The PBFS is frequently used in educational contexts, and project workers noted that the PBFS was less well received by the young people and that its focus on negative behaviours was counter to the youth work ethos of the project in reinforcing prosocial behaviours and attitudes. This may have contributed to less emphasis placed by the project workers on collecting PBFS data.

- A project plan provided by Wakefield Youth Services Team indicated that data would be collected during the initial and final weeks of engagement with each cohort. Where dates were provided on questionnaires, however, these suggest inconsistencies in collecting data at these points. Pre- and post-questionnaire completion dates were provided for just 10 young people and all indicated time periods of less than two months between pre- and post-intervention data collection, suggesting that data were not collected at the points indicated on the project plan.

- Some questionnaires collected via paper had SDQ responses or two or three options selected when only one was required per indicator, although it was unclear why. Replacement of missing SDQ data was undertaken using SDQ developer guidelines: if at least three of the five SDQ items in a scale were completed, the remaining two

scores were replaced by their mean. Where more than one option was selected on an item, these were treated as missing.

Research Question G: Is the programme achieving its targets in terms of recruitment and delivery?

The project had an original target of engaging 600 young people through Skills for Adolescence and outreach work, 360 of whom would go on the 'Branching Out' element of the intervention to participate in group activities and social action.

Data provided by the project indicated that, overall, the project reached over a thousand young people through detached work and that more than 200 completed the 'Branching Out' 12-week programme (see Table 7).

Table 7: Young people participating

	Airedale		South East		Wakefield		TOTAL	
	Started	Completed	Started	Completed	Started	Completed	**Started**	**Completed**
SFA	60	0	60	60	18	18	**138**	**78**
Activity Week	60	51	89	74	87	79	**236**	**204**
Detached	527		336		368		**1231**	

Note that these figures include young people who participated in different elements of the project and, as such, the totals are not mutually exclusive.

As discussed throughout this report, implementation of the project was severely impacted by COVID-19. It is therefore not possible to draw robust conclusions in relation to the degree to which the project achieved its targets.

Logic model development

No revisions to the logic model were made during the feasibility stage.

Conclusion

Figure 3: Summary of feasibility study findings

Research question	Finding
What are the core elements of the intervention, and how are these working, in isolation and combination?	The core elements of the project included Lion's Quest Skills for Adolescence, detached youth work and targeted individual and group work involving activities and social action. The project sought to engage with young people across home, school and community contexts to build trusted relationships between young people and youth workers that facilitated prevention and diversion from involvement in crime and violence. Core elements of the project were adapted for COVID-19 (including online engagement with young people, smaller groups and stakeholder relationships, which pivoted to focus on safeguarding young people during periods of lockdown). It was also not possible to work with schools to deliver SFA in classroom contexts over this period. Nevertheless, the project maintained other core elements of the intervention, which successfully engaged with and supported young people over a period of unprecedented disruption in services. The evidence from the feasibility study was that the combined elements of the programme were working together to provide a valued and useful intervention. Observations from stakeholders, staff and parents suggested that Branching Out had provided a critical programme of support and prevention at a time when other services were absent in the target areas.
What are the factors that support or hinder the successful implementation of the different programme elements and of the programme as a whole?	Factors that facilitated successful implementation overall included: Maintaining relationships with partner organisations during a period of disruption to services for young people Flexible and agile responses to changing requirements relating to restrictions on social mixing and pivoting delivery modes accordingly

	Responding to local need: working with place-based forums in the target areas to respond to risk and maintain presence in the local communities
	Consistent engagement with young people in accordance with the project's focus on developing and maintaining trusted relationships with them. Despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, the project team sustained the participation of the majority of the young people referred across the 12-week programme.
How are young people referred to the programme, and is there any evidence to suggest that different referral routes are more or less successful in terms of reaching the target group and the sustained engagement of programme participants?	The project received referrals from a range of routes including schools, other partner agencies and self-referral, and there was no evidence to suggest that some referrals were more successful than others in reaching the target group. Referrals from schools slowed as COVID-19 affected the delivery of SFA, but other partner agencies continued to refer young people.
What are the factors that contribute to programme success from the perspective of those delivering it?	Factors identified by staff that contributed to the programme's success included: • Providing a routine and diversionary activities for vulnerable young people. • Good relationships with key local organisations, including the police and involving the PCSOs in programme delivery. • Building relationships with families, thus helping to reinforce the impact of sessions with young people.
What are the experiences of the young people and families being supported by the programme, and what are their views on what contributes to its successful delivery?	Young people and their carers who were supported by the programme were positive about their experiences and compared Branching Out favourably to other services. They felt that the attitudes and skills of the project team and the positive activities offered to young people were important to the overall success of the project.
What do the programme participants identify as the benefits of the programme?	Young people identified the opportunity to be involved in new and exciting activities as beneficial in helping them to build confidence and social skills and better manage challenging situations.

Is the programme achieving its targets in terms of recruitment and delivery?	Recruitment and delivery targets were revised down over the COVID-19 period to facilitate smaller group work. The project met (and succeeded) revised targets for the recruitment and retention of young people and successfully delivered the revised intervention.

Evaluator judgement of intervention feasibility

The conduct of the feasibility study was affected by restrictions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, meaning that research was conducted remotely. This had some impacts on data quality, particularly in relation to data on the experience and outcomes for young people participating in the programme.

Nevertheless, there was strong evidence based on interviews to suggest that despite the considerable challenges faced, the project adapted delivery mechanisms successfully to maintain an offer to young people in the communities in which it is working. The broad architecture of the programme remained consistent with that outlined in the ToC, and most aspects of delivery were working well both individually and in combination, although, as noted, COVID-19 affected the delivery of SFA in schools in particular

Factors that contributed to successful implementation include multiple referral routes, good relationships between the project and local services (built on a strong local reputation and basis of trust), positive relationships between project workers and young people and their families, and a consistent and relentless focus on the needs of young people – which informed the team's response to the pandemic. The latter included a stronger emphasis on the use of social media, which stakeholders, including young people, seemed to value.

Challenges that were highlighted to be addressed in the pilot phase included re-establishing relationships with schools, revisiting the potential for delivery of SFA in the way in which it was originally proposed, expanding the focus of activity weeks, reintroducing challenge activities outside the local area, and addressing mechanisms for follow-on support for young people after Branching Out.

The project was viewed favourably by young people, families and stakeholders. All agreed that the provision of support to young people and opportunities for engagement in positive activities had been vitally important in the context of COVID-19. It was notable that in the feasibility study, both the young people and their families reflected on the value of the support they received from project workers when other local services were absent. Maintaining a visible community presence also helped to regulate young people's behaviours during periods of social restriction.

There was insufficient data from the feasibility study to draw any conclusions around programme impact.

Implications for pilot study

The feasibility study concluded that, overall, there was sufficient evidence that the intervention was feasible, notwithstanding the changing context in which it was delivered.

To address the issues identified with data completeness and data quality, the pilot study aimed to:

- gather additional data on pre- and post-intervention outcome change, working with the project team to maximise the quantity and quality of data available;

- undertake a further training session with staff to reemphasise the importance of data collection, work with staff to understand the reasons for any issues and put in place actions/systems to prevent these continuing;

- reemphasise that ongoing support from the evaluation team is available to help them with data collection;

- explore the possibility of creating an offline version of the questionnaire to assist data collection and data transfer; and

- gather qualitative data from young people and their carers, project staff and stakeholders to identify the specific elements of the project that lead to positive outcomes for young people participating in the intervention.

Pilot (Pre/Post-Test) Study

Study Overview

Research questions

The overall research question identified by the project was:

How does Branching Out achieve sustainable positive change for children and their communities by reducing the number likely to become involved in violent crime?

The pilot study focused on the outcomes achieved by young people as a result of their participation in the programme and the effectiveness of the measures used to capture these.

The research questions for the pilot study were as follows:

a) What measures are in place to determine the impact of the programme, and how effective are they?

b) Do these measures capture the relevant outcomes in terms of increased resilience, improved decision making and reduced engagement in risky behaviours, as articulated in the programme's ToC?

c) What evidence is there of positive outcomes for programme participants?

d) Is there any evidence of statistically significant positive outcomes for programme participants?

e) What level of confidence is there that any identified positive outcomes will contribute to reductions in crime and antisocial behaviour (ASB) in targeted communities?

f) What are the implications for scaling up and a more rigorous evaluation study?

Success criteria and/or targets

The target of the pilot study was to collect outcomes data via the SDQ and PBFS on all participants engaged with the programme during this phase. If this was achievable, or close to achievable, a more rigorous evaluation of the project would likely be more feasible in the future.

Methods

Participant selection

As indicated above, the target of the pilot phase was to collect outcomes data via the SDQ and PBFS on all participants engaged with the programme. The evaluation team added a section to the project's parental consent form, providing parents with information on the purpose of the questionnaires (including who the data were being collected for and on behalf of), data usage and the data archiving process and who data would be shared with. They were then asked to indicate agreement that their child's responses could be shared. The electronic questionnaire also provided young people with this information on the first page, indicating that by providing responses to the questionnaire, they were consenting to their responses being used as part of the evaluation and shared. Project staff facilitated collection of questionnaire responses across a range of settings (via detached/street-based youth work, mentoring, keep-warm activities and in schools).

The first phase of project delivery within the pilot study period (Easter 2021 phase) commenced during the feasibility stage, so questionnaire data collected from young people

engaged during this phase were not collected with the appropriate identifiers and consents in place for archiving.

To help answer the research questions, a series of interviews were also undertaken with young people (see Table 9 for how the methods chosen related to the research questions). The selection of groups of young people to interview was driven by wanting to speak to young people engaged across the pilot study period and across the three target areas. Those who had participated in the SFA element of the programme were also specifically targeted. Project staff helped support the recruitment of young people to be interviewed by identifying groups of participants available to participate and ensuring consent forms were completed by parents/guardians and young people before the sessions took place. Interviews took place outside in a park and inside a fire station and a school.

Quarterly interviews were also undertaken with project delivery staff, and a round of interviews were undertaken with project partners. All core members of the staff project team were interviewed. Project partner selection was driven by seeking interviewees who would be able to reflect on the impact the service might have had and any outcomes achieved. This process was supported by project staff, who provided contact details for partners fitting these criteria. All interviews were undertaken remotely, excluding a final face-to-face workshop that took place with project staff in May 2022 at Wakefield Youth Services Team's Young People's Centre.

Informed consent was sought from all interviewees and, in the case of young people, from their parents/guardians. Information about study purpose (including who the data were being collected for and on behalf of), data usage, consent and the right to withdraw from the study and have all information destroyed at any stage was given in a form appropriate to the participants' needs and a separate consent form used to collect consent for participation.

Data collection

The pilot study utilised the following methods:

Pre- and post-intervention outcomes data

The pilot study required pre- and post-intervention data to be collected from participants in the form of the SDQ and PBFS. Young people were asked to complete a questionnaire (featuring the SDQ and PBFS measures) when they first engaged with the project and at the end of the intervention. These measures were used to help identify positive outcomes in terms of improved decision making and reduced engagement in risky behaviours over time. During the pilot phase, identifying information (such as names and dates of birth) was also collected from young people to enable data to be archived at the end of the project, and a data sharing agreement was put in place between Sheffield Hallam University and Wakefield

Youth Services Team to allow data to be shared (excluding data for those engaged during the Easter 2021 delivery phase, which commenced during the feasibility stage).

As in the feasibility phase, data collection was facilitated by staff, who provided young people with an electronic version of the questionnaire for self-completion. Both staff and the questionnaire introductory text made it clear that only combined and anonymised data would be used in reporting and data analysed by the evaluation team.

The feasibility study identified a number of issues with the completeness and quality of data provided. This included data not being collected for some cohorts, missing responses within submitted data and SDQ data being collected more frequently than PBFS data. In response to these issues, an offline version of the questionnaire was created during the pilot study to help assist data collection and transfer. This enabled responses to be collected electronically when access to the internet was unavailable. A training session with staff was undertaken in the early stages of the pilot phase to reemphasise the importance of data collection for the evaluation and to introduce the offline questionnaire as a tool for collecting responses. Ongoing support was also provided by the evaluation team to assist with data collection throughout the study.

In addition, the pilot stage provided an opportunity to reflect on the degree to which the SDQ and PBFS measures were able to capture the outcomes identified in the programme's ToC.

Interviews with young people

Online group interviews with young people were conducted during the feasibility stage, and while useful data were gathered, there were some challenges in terms of building rapport with young people and generating responses to questions. Fortunately, the easing of COVID-19 restrictions allowed face-to-face interviews to be undertaken with young people participating in the programme on three separate occasions during the pilot phase:

1. **October 2021:** two groups of six young people from the Airedale and South East cohorts during their activity weeks

2. **December 2021**: five individual interviews with young people from the Wakefield Central cohort who were planning their social action

3. **March 2022:** two group interviews with young people from the South East cohort (one with six participants and the other five) who had been participating in SFA and had recently taken part in their activity week, which included a residential overnight stay

Interviews focused on the extent to which engagement in Branching Out had helped young people or resulted in any changes for them and whether they planned to do anything different in the future due to taking part.

Interviews with project delivery staff

Quarterly interviews were undertaken with project delivery staff (project leads and youth workers; eight individuals in total) to help provide an ongoing assessment of the effectiveness of the process of delivery and an opportunity to gather views on the quality and impact of the support being delivered. Interviews took place remotely during January 2021, July 2021, October 2021 and January 2022. A face-to-face workshop took place during May 2022, providing staff with a final opportunity to reflect on the impact and outcomes of the project and to consider the extent to which the project's ToC still reflected what had been delivered by the programme.

In addition to formal interviews, regular meetings also took place between project and evaluation teams throughout the pilot phase to discuss how the project was progressing.

Interviews with project partners

A round of interviews was conducted with six partners towards the end of project delivery. This included a local school, Wakefield Children's Services, West Yorkshire Police Force and two voluntary sector organisations. Interviews provided an opportunity for project partners to reflect on how Branching Out had evolved and the impact the service had had and any outcomes achieved. Interviews were undertaken remotely, either over the phone or video call, and lasted around 45 minutes.

Table 8: Research questions and methods overview

Research questions	Data collection methods/analysis	Participants/data sources
What measures are in place to determine the impact of the programme, and how effective are they?	Examination of the quality of the data collected via the SDQ and PBFS measures to determine how effective these measures have been in practice.	• Pre-and post-intervention questionnaires collecting data on all participants
Do these measures capture the relevant outcomes in terms of increased resilience, improved decision making and reduced engagement in risky behaviours, as articulated in the programme's ToC?	Pre- and post-intervention outcomes data examined to determine what changes had been captured. Qualitative interviews used to assess the degree to which the quantitative tools captured the outcomes identified in the programme's ToC and whether there were any further impacts not captured that could be picked up by additional tools in the future.	• Pre-and post-intervention questionnaires collecting data on all participants • Group interviews with young people • Quarterly interviews with core staff delivery team • Interviews with project partners

Research questions	Data collection methods/analysis	Participants/data sources
What evidence is there of positive outcomes for programme participants?	Pre- and post-intervention outcomes data examined to determine if any positive changes had been captured. Group interviews to examine positive changes experienced by participants. Staff and partner interviews to provide an opportunity to pick up on their perceptions of the impact of the programme on young people.	• Pre-and post-intervention questionnaires collecting data on all participants • Group interviews with young people • Quarterly interviews with core staff delivery team • Interviews with project partners
Is there any evidence of statistically significant positive outcomes for programme participants?	Utilise statistical tests such as t-tests to determine if any statistically significant improvements had occurred between pre- and post-intervention.	• Pre-and post-intervention questionnaires collecting data on all participants
What level of confidence is there that any identified positive outcomes will contribute to reductions in crime and ASB in targeted communities?	Draw on existing evidence on the relationship between the types of activities delivered by Branching Out and reductions in crime and ASB to help determine if any outcomes identified were likely to contribute to reductions in the targeted areas. Interviews with staff and partners to provide an assessment of the local context and the extent to which they believed the outcomes observed would lead to reductions in crime and ASB in the targeted communities.	• Existing evidence • Quarterly interviews with core staff delivery team • Interviews with project partners
What are the implications for scaling up and a more rigorous evaluation study?	Draw on all the above analysis and data sources to help determine if the project could be scaled up and whether an efficacy study for example should be recommended.	• Existing evidence • Pre-and post-intervention questionnaires collecting data on all participants • Group interviews with young people • Quarterly interviews with core staff delivery team • Interviews with project partners

Table 9: Logic model outcomes and methods overview (Pilot phase)

Logic Model: Expected outcomes	Methods to assess outcomes
Intermediate outcomes: Staff	
Staff have knowledge, skills and confidence to deliver the work.	• Quarterly interviews/regular catch-up meetings with core staff delivery team
Team have built relationships with local community, partner organisations and schools.	• Quarterly interviews/regular catch-up meetings with core staff delivery team • Interviews with project partners
Teams are beginning to build trusting relationships with young people.	• Quarterly interviews/regular catch-up meetings with core staff delivery team • Group interviews with young people
Transitional work is planned.	• Quarterly interviews/regular catch-up meetings with core staff delivery team
Staff are contributing to evaluation processes and know their role in this aspect of the project.	• Training session on quantitative data collection • Wakefield Youth Services Team inform planning and conduct of research with young people • Regular catch-up meetings with core staff delivery team
Intermediate outcomes: Staff and place	
Youth workers are delivering SFA and young people in the identified schools	• Quarterly interviews/regular catch-up meetings with core staff delivery team • Interviews with project partners
They are out on the streets delivering youth work; these locations are identified through partnerships and the trust built with young people.	• Quarterly interviews/regular catch-up meetings with core staff delivery team • Interviews with project partners
Young people have built confidence and are able to trust the youth workers and thereby take part in activities away from school.	• Group interviews with young people • Quarterly interviews with core staff delivery team
Intermediate Outcomes: Children and young people	
Young people are building trusting relationships with their youth workers and know their names.	• Group interviews with young people
Young people enjoy attending the SFA sessions in school and are working together in groups *(Note: SFA is not currently being delivered in schools, but young people are working together through other activities).*	• Group interviews with young people
Young people are developing critical thinking and have strategies around impulse control.	• Group interviews with young people • Pre-and post-intervention questionnaires collecting data on all participants
Young people don't feel judged or punished.	• Group interviews with young people
Young people feel positively challenged.	• Group interviews with young people
Final outcomes: Place	
There is a reduction in youth-led ASB and violence in target areas against baseline figures.	• Location-based crime data from Wakefield Youth Services/police (Not available).
Young people report that they feel safer on the streets (locality).	• Group interviews with young people
Schools are able to describe how the work has benefited them and the young people (Note: SFA is not currently being delivered in schools. We will talk to other partners about benefits).	• Interviews with project partners

Logic Model: Expected outcomes	Methods to assess outcomes
Young people are confidently taking part in activities around youth voice and are more aware of other activities and places across the district.	• Group interviews with young people • Quarterly interviews with core staff delivery team • Interviews with project partners
Final outcomes: Children and young people	
Risk of offending is reduced; children are actively engaged in skills-based programmes with positive activities delivered by trusted adults.	• Group interviews with young people • Pre-and post-intervention questionnaires collecting data on all participants • Quarterly interviews with core staff delivery team • Interviews with project partners
There is a clear progression to other activities with support to help them achieve.	• Group interviews with young people • Quarterly interviews/regular catch-up meetings with core staff delivery team • Interviews with project partners
Children have gained social identity and are engaging in prosocial behaviours.	• Group interviews with young people • Pre-and post-intervention questionnaires collecting data on all participants

Analysis

Quantitative data analysis

Ongoing checks were made on the data received throughout the pilot stage to assess the completeness and validity of the data provided and to assist with meeting the pilot study target of collecting outcomes data via the SDQ and PBFS on all participants engaged with the programme. Where issues were identified, the evaluation team worked with staff to understand the reasons and put in place actions to help address these. This included meeting with staff face to face to work through issues, linking pre- and post-responses and identifying missing responses.

The data were used as indicated in the methods overview table above to help answer the research questions set out for the pilot study. Analysis was undertaken on the pre- and post-intervention data collected at the end of the period of project delivery. Analysis focused on the 108 individuals who completed questionnaires both pre- and post-intervention. Data were examined to determine if any positive changes were captured, and paired t-tests were used to determine if any statistically significant improvements had occurred between pre- and post-intervention.

Qualitative data analysis

Qualitative interviews were undertaken at various points during the pilot study (see the timeline in Table 10). Initial analysis was undertaken during and shortly after these interviews in the form of note-taking, writing-up, transcription, identifying themes and areas to follow-up. A more extensive period of analysis was conducted following the end of project delivery.

Data were drawn upon as indicated in the methods overview table above to help answer the research questions set out for the pilot study.

The methods overview table also indicates how data sources were triangulated to provide a fuller assessment of the changes experienced by young people and the extent to which the measures put in place were able to capture any outcomes.

Timeline

The table below shows the timeline of activities for both the programme and the evaluation. Each programme delivery phase was designed to be provided to each cohort over a period of 13 weeks, with an activity week in the middle of the delivery period. Programme activities included detached/street-based youth work, mentoring and social activities. The South East February 2022 cohort also participated in SFA. The last two of the 13 weeks were to involve social action activities. In reality, programme delivery was much more fluid (see the earlier discussion on evaluation feasibility for more detail).

Figure 4: Timeline

Date	Activity	Staff responsible/leading
Programme activities		
Feb 21–May 21	Easter 2021 delivery phase	Wakefield
Jun 21–Oct 21	Summer 2021 delivery phase	Wakefield
Sep 21–Dec 21	October 2021 delivery phase	Wakefield
Jan 22–Apr 22	February 2022 delivery phase (including SFA delivery for the South East cohort)	Wakefield
Evaluation activities		
Apr 21–Apr 22	Quantitative data collection (SDQ and PBFS)	Wakefield, with ongoing support from SHU
Jun 21	Training session on quantitative data collection	Delivered by SHU and attended by Wakefield
Oct 21, Dec 21 and Mar 22	Interviews with young people	SHU, with support from Wakefield
Jan 21, Jul 21, Oct 21 and Jan 22	Quarterly interviews with project delivery staff	SHU, with Wakefield participating
Feb 22–May 22	Interviews with project partners	SHU, with support from Wakefield
May 22	Workshop with project staff	SHU, with Wakefield participating
Apr 22–TBC	Data analysis, reporting and data archiving.	SHU, with support from YEF

Findings

Participants

The target was to include all participants in the pilot study by collecting SDQ and PBFS data on all young people who received support. Table 10 below provides a breakdown of all the pre- and post-intervention data collected during the pilot phase. Questionnaires both pre- and post-intervention during the pilot phase were completed by 108 participants, and the quantitative analysis for the pilot study focused on these young people.

There were 18 young people who completed a questionnaire pre-intervention but not post-intervention.

Reasons for attrition included young people refusing to complete the questionnaire and data collection being missed. A small number of young people also likely dropped out of the intervention before data collection was attempted. In addition, flexibility in both the duration and nature of support delivered appears to have affected data collection and likely led to some attrition (see 'Evaluation feasibility' for detail on issues with the timings of data collection).

Attrition was similar across the three target areas. Data were collected across a range of settings (via detached/street-based youth work, mentoring and keep-warm activities). It was not possible to break down settings beyond target area, the exception being the 12 young people who had also participated in SFA and were identified in the data. These were the 12 young people who were part of the February 2022 South East cohort.

Table 10: Summary of questionnaire responses (SDQ and PBFS[3]) by target area

Target area	Easter 2021		Summer 2021		October 2021		February 2022		Total	
	Pre-	Post-	Pre-	Pre-	Post-	Pre-	Post-	Post-	Pre-	Post-
Airedale	6	5	18	16	8	8	10	8	42	37
South East	8	6	21	20	7	3	12	12	48	41
Wakefield Central	5	4	16	12	3	2	12	12	36	30
Total	**19**	**15**	**55**	**48**	**18**	**13**	**34**	**32**	**126**	**108**

Most of the 108 participants who completed questionnaires both pre- and post-intervention were aged between 10 and 13 at the start of the intervention, while the proportion of male participants was more than double that of female participants.

Table 11: Age at start of intervention

Age	Count	%
9	1	1
10	19	18
11	28	26
12	25	23
13	22	20
14	10	9
15	3	3
Total	**108**	**100**

Table 12: Gender at start of intervention

Gender	Count	%
Male	72	67
Female	33	31
Other	3	3
Total	**108**	**100**

Table 13 outlines the research questions for the pilot study and the number of participants included in each analyses.

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[3] There was one case where PBFS was missing at post-intervention.

Table 13: Number of participants included in analysis

Research questions	Participants/data sources	Number of participants included in analysis
What measures are in place to determine the impact of the programme, and how effective are they?	Pre-and post-intervention questionnaires collecting data on all participants	108 young people
Do these measures capture the relevant outcomes in terms of increased resilience, improved decision making and reduced engagement in risky behaviours, as articulated in the programme's ToC?	Pre-and post-intervention questionnaires collecting data on all participants	108 young people
	Quarterly interviews with core staff delivery team	One youth team manager One project manager Three youth and community development project workers leading on delivery in each of the target areas Three youth and community development support workers supporting delivery in each of the target areas
	Interviews with young people	12 young people, October 2021 Five young people, December 2021 11 young people, March 2022
	Interviews with project partners	Six partners
What evidence is there of positive outcomes for programme participants?	Pre-and post-intervention questionnaires collecting data on all participants	108 young people
	Quarterly interviews with core staff delivery team	One youth team manager One project manager Three youth and community development project workers Three youth and community development support workers
	Interviews with young people	12 young people, October 2021 Five young people, December 2021 11 young people, March 2022
	Interviews with project partners	Six partners
Is there any evidence of statistically significant positive outcomes for programme participants?	Pre-and post-intervention questionnaires collecting data on all participants	108 young people
What level of confidence is there that any identified positive outcomes will contribute to reductions in crime and ASB in targeted communities?	Existing evidence	N/A
	Quarterly interviews with core staff delivery team	One youth team manager One project manager Three youth and community development project workers Three youth and community development support workers
	Interviews with project partners	Six partners
	Existing evidence	N/A

Research questions	Participants/data sources	Number of participants included in analysis
What are the implications for scaling up and a more rigorous evaluation study?	Pre-and post-intervention questionnaires collecting data on all participants	108 young people
	Quarterly interviews with core staff delivery team	One youth team manager One project manager Three youth and community development project workers Three youth and community development support workers
	Interviews with young people	12 young people, October 2021 Five young people, December 2021 11 young people, March 2022
	Interviews with project partners	Six partners

Evaluation feasibility

The pilot study appears to have largely achieved the target of collecting outcomes data via the SDQ and PBFS on all participants engaged with the programme. Of the 126 young people who completed a questionnaire pre-intervention, 108 also completed a questionnaire post-intervention.

Problems identified during the feasibility study with the completeness and quality of data were largely resolved during the pilot study; however, there remained issues with regard to when data were collected from young people during the pilot phase. As in the feasibility phase, a project plan was provided by Wakefield Youth Services Team, which indicated that data would be collected during the initial and final weeks of engagement with each cohort. The dates provided on questionnaires, however, suggest inconsistencies in data being collected at these points during the pilot study. This appears to be the result of largely two issues:

Data collection being missed and responses not collected until a later date when identified by the evaluation team as missing.

A lack of consistency in how the programme was delivered. The project plan for the pilot phase indicated that the programme would be delivered to each cohort over 13 weeks, with an activity week in the middle of the delivery period. In reality, because COVID-19 impacted on delivery timescales, the programme provided support to some young people for much longer periods of time and shorter periods for others, meaning that the time period between pre- and post-intervention data varied noticeably, as demonstrated in Table 14. Different elements of the programme were also delivered across different contexts, making data collection more difficult. If delivery had taken place in a more structured context, this might have made data collection easier; however, this would have likely compromised the nature

of the programme and its ability to flex under changing circumstances, particularly in response to COVID-19.

Table 14: Months between pre- and post-data collection

Months	Count	%
Less than one month	3	3
One month but less than two months	44	41
Two months but less than three months	27	25
Three months but less than four months	9	8
Four months but less than five months	0	0
Five months but less than six months	3	2
Six months but less than seven months	2	2
Seven months but less than eight months	13	12
Eight months but less than nine months	5	5
Nine months but less than 10 months	1	1
10 months but less than 11 months	1	1
Total	**108**	**100**

Given the variation in the time period between pre- and post-intervention data collection highlighted above, analysis was undertaken to see if there were any differences in outcomes recorded when participants post-intervention questionnaires were completed. This is detailed in full in the next section and suggests that those completing the SDQ and PBFS after a greater period of time may have experienced slightly better outcomes.

While the pilot study appears to have largely achieved the target of collecting outcomes data on all participants, suggesting an appropriate sample size could be achieved for a main-stage study, the lack of consistency in when these data were collected would need to be addressed before a more rigorous evaluation of the project could take place.

Evidence of promise

This section returns to the pilot study research questions and outlines findings in relation to each.

Research Question A: What measures are in place to determine the impact of the programme, and how effective are they?

The target of the pilot study was to collect outcomes data via the SDQ and PBFS on all participants engaged with the programme during this phase. The target was largely met (86%

of programme participants who completed a pre-intervention questionnaire also completed a post-intervention questionnaire), and problems identified during the feasibility study with the completeness and quality of data were largely resolved during the pilot study. There remained, however, issues with when data were collected from young people, largely due to a lack of consistency in how the programme was delivered (see the discussion of programme implementation in the 'Feasibility Study' section for more detail). While the pilot study appears to have generally achieved the target of collecting outcomes data on all participants, the lack of consistency in when these data were collected had an impact on how effective these measures were in determining impact in practice.

Research Question B: Do these measures capture the relevant outcomes in terms of increased resilience, improved decision making and reduced engagement in risky behaviours, as articulated in the programme's ToC?

The logic model developed by the project team prior to the commencement of the programme articulates outcomes for young people participating in the programme (see Figure 3). These include improved social identity and prosocial behaviours that will reduce the risk of offending. For the purposes of this evaluation, progress against these outcomes was measured using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) and the Problem Behaviour Frequency Scale (PBFS). Analysis of pre- and post-intervention outcomes data suggests some of the young people taking part in the programme during the pilot study phase experienced improvements in terms of improved decision making and reduced engagement in risky behaviours, as measured by the SDQ and PBFS; however, a notable proportion of young people also reported a deterioration on these measures. Full detail on the analysis undertaken is provided beneath the following research question.

Resilience questionnaire data

There are some limitations in terms of the outcomes collected by the SDQ and PBFS. In discussions with staff and young people, additional outcomes were highlighted that included young people's capacity and willingness to engage in activities and interventions and their resilience to cope with challenging events. In addition to the requirements of the pilot study, programme staff also collected data from participants in the form of a questionnaire asking young people how they felt about seven statements related to their resilience. This questionnaire was administered by staff at the start and end of the activity weeks young people participated in rather than pre and post the whole intervention period, as was the case with the SDQ and PBFS. Full questionnaire responses at both the start and end of their activity weeks were provided for 120 young people. The data from the resilience questionnaire are presented here for further contextual explanation. However, it is important to note that these data have not been independently verified, and the evaluation team were not involved in determining the process of data collection.

The total possible score was 28 (a higher score is more positive). The average (mean) for the total score is shown in the table below. The average score was slightly higher at the end of participation in the activity week compared to at the start.

Table 15: Resilience questionnaire average (mean) total score pre- and post-intervention

Stage	Resilience questionnaire total score
Start	21.54
End	22.87

Base: 120

Over half of individuals reported a more positive score after participating in the activity week, while one quarter recorded a more negative score.

Figure 5: Resilience questionnaire score individual change

| Resilience Total score | 55% | 20% | 25% |

■ Positive change   ■ No change   ■ Negative change
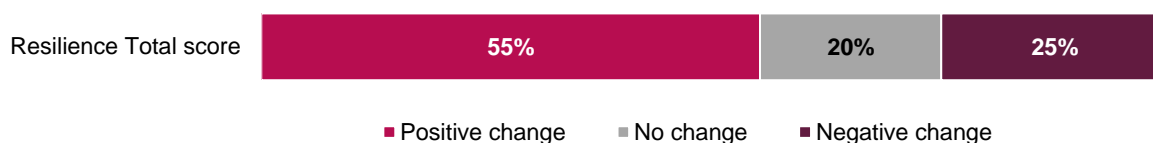
Base: 120

Further contextual data

Programme staff also provided the evaluation team with additional anonymous data on those involved in Branching Out during the pilot phase. These data indicated whether any of the following applied to young people both when they joined the programme or during the period after they left (from the time they left the programme to 18 May 2022):

- A case open to Children's Social Care

- A case open to Early Help

- Had an exclusion

- Were in care

Of the young people for whom data were provided both at the start of the programme and after (n = 125–128):

- Sixty-one per cent had a case open to Children's Social Care when they joined, while only 21% had a case open at any point during the period after they left.

- Sixty-eight per cent had a case open to Early Help when they joined, while only 31% had a case open at any point during the period after they left.

- Fifty-two per cent had an exclusion when they joined, while only 36% did so at any point during the period after they left.

- Five per cent were in care when they joined, compared to 2% during the period after they left.

While these data present potential evidence of positive outcomes for Branching Out participants, they have also not been independently verified, and the evaluation team have not been involved in data collection or analysis. In addition, nothing is known about whether there were any relevant changes to Wakefield Council Children's Services or in local schools implemented during the period of the study that may have impacted on the outcomes identified. The data do suggest, however, that any future evaluation studies may usefully capture data through which to undertake a robust analysis of changes in these outcomes for young people participating in the programme.

Research Question C: What evidence is there of positive outcomes for programme participants?

Quantitative analysis

The analysis that follows focuses on the 108 individuals who completed questionnaires both pre- and post-intervention.

SDQ scores pre- and post-intervention and individual change

The proportion 'close to average' was higher post-intervention on three out of the five SDQ scales and on the total difficulties score. The proportion 'close to average' was the same on the prosocial score, although the proportion reporting a very low score was lower.

Figure 6: SDQ scores pre- and post-intervention

Legend: ■ Close to average ■ Slightly raised (slightly lowered) ■ High (low) ■ Very high (very low)

	Pre-Total difficulties score	Post-Total difficulties score	Pre-Emotional problems score	Post-Emotional problems score	Pre-Conduct problems score	Post-Conduct problems score	Pre-Hyperactivity score	Post-Hyperactivity score	Pre-Peer problems score	Post-Peer problems score	Pre-Prosocial score	Post-Prosocial score
Very high (very low)	27%	25%	18%	19%	19%	17%	30%	19%	17%	19%	16%	7%
High (low)	11%	14%	8%	8%	11%	13%	16%	10%	16%	16%	4%	12%
Slightly raised	21%	18%	9%	13%	19%	12%	12%	20%	25%	18%	9%	9%
Close to average	41%	44%	65%	60%	52%	58%	43%	51%	43%	47%	71%	71%

Base: 108

The average (mean) scores for the five SDQ scales and the total difficulties score are shown below. On all scales except the emotional problems scale, the average score was slightly more positive post-intervention (a higher score is more positive on the prosocial scale).
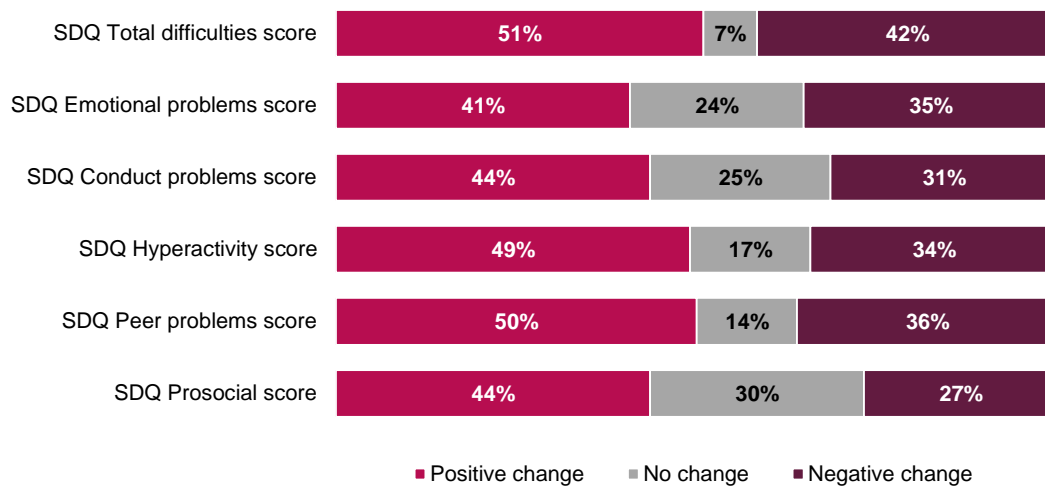
Table 16: SDQ scores pre- and post-intervention

Stage	Emotional problems scale	Conduct problems scale	Hyperactivity scale	Peer problems scale	Prosocial scale	Total difficulties score
Pre-intervention	3.73	3.47	5.78	2.94	7.34	15.93
Post-intervention	3.90	3.11	5.15	2.73	7.77	14.89

Base: 108

To determine if there were any statistically significant differences between the pre- and post-mean scores, paired sample t-tests were used. **These did not identify any statistically significant change.**

On all five of the SDQ scales, over two fifths of individuals reported a more positive score post-intervention than pre-intervention, and over half recorded a more positive score on the total score. Around one third or more, however, reported a more negative score on every measure.

Figure 7: SDQ scores individual change

	Positive change	No change	Negative change
SDQ Total difficulties score	51%	7%	42%
SDQ Emotional problems score	41%	24%	35%
SDQ Conduct problems score	44%	25%	31%
SDQ Hyperactivity score	49%	17%	34%
SDQ Peer problems score	50%	14%	36%
SDQ Prosocial score	44%	30%	27%

Base: 108

PBFS scores pre- and post-intervention and individual change

The average (mean) for the PBFS total score is shown in the table below. The score was very slightly lower post-intervention compared to pre-intervention. On the PBFS, a higher score reflects a higher self-reported frequency of delinquent behaviour. A paired sample t-test was used to determine if there was any statistically significant difference between the pre- and post-mean scores. **No statistically significant change was identified.**

Table 17: PBFS average (mean) total score pre- and post-intervention

Stage	PBFS total score
Pre-intervention	10.61
Post-intervention	10.41

Base: 107

Figure 8: PBFS total score individual change

Almost three in 10 of those completing the PBFS at both stages reported a more positive score at post-intervention; however, a similar proportion reported a more negative score.

	Positive change	No change	Negative change
PBFS Total score	29%	40%	31%
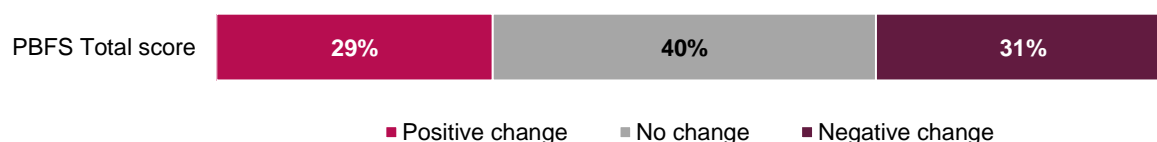
Base: 107

Analysis by post-intervention questionnaire completion date

Analysis was undertaken to see if there were any differences in outcomes recorded by when participants post-intervention questionnaires were completed. Analysis compared those completing their post-intervention SDQs and PBFSs less than four months after their pre-intervention questionnaires, with those completing five months later or more (there were no young people who completed their post-intervention questionnaire between four months and five months after their initial questionnaire). **Note: only 25 young people completed post-intervention questionnaires five months later or more, so results should be regarded as very exploratory.**

SDQ by post-intervention questionnaire completion date

Those completing the post-intervention questionnaires after a longer period generally reported more positive scores post-intervention on the SDQ measures, although they appear to have started from a worse pre-intervention position compared to those completing after a shorter period. Both groups reported slightly more positive scores on all measures at post-intervention, excluding those completing under four months on the emotional problems scale.
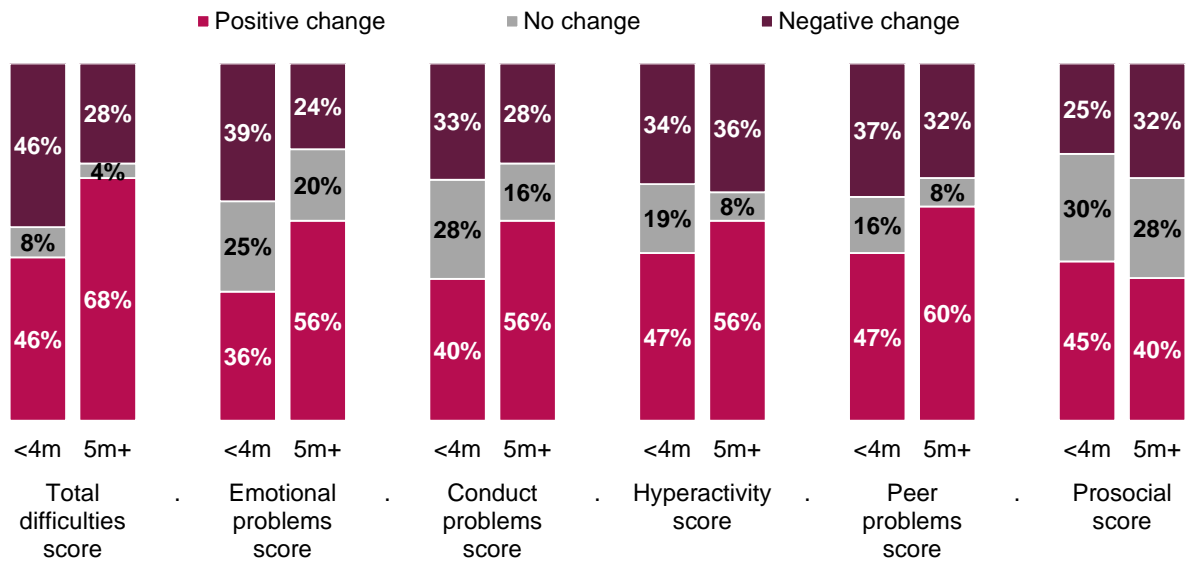
Table 18: SDQ average (mean) scores pre- and post-intervention by post-intervention questionnaire completion date

SDQ measure	Pre-intervention		Post-intervention	
	Under four months	Five months+	Under four months	Five months+
Emotional problems scale	3.67	3.92	4.20	2.88
Conduct problems scale	3.37	3.80	3.07	3.24
Hyperactivity scale	5.65	6.20	5.18	5.04
Peer problems scale	3.08	2.48	2.89	2.20
Prosocial scale	7.60	6.48	8.04	6.88
Total difficulties score	15.78	16.40	15.35	13.36

Base: 83 (under 4 months); 25 (5 months+)

A greater proportion of those completing the post-intervention questionnaires five months or more after the pre-intervention questionnaire reported more positive scores post-intervention on all SDQ measures, excluding the prosocial scale, compared to those completing after a shorter period.

Figure 9: SDQ scores individual change by post-intervention questionnaire completion date

Base: 83 (under 4 months); 25 (5 months+)

PBFS by post-intervention questionnaire completion date

Those completing the post-intervention questionnaires after a longer period of time reported less positive scores both pre- and post-intervention on PBFS compared to those completing after a shorter period. Both groups reported slightly more positive scores post-intervention, although the difference in pre- and post-scores was slightly greater for those completing post-intervention questionnaires after five months or more.

Table 19: PBFS average (mean) total score pre- and post-intervention by post-intervention questionnaire completion date

Stage	Under four months	Five months+
Pre-intervention	10.04	12.58
Post-intervention	10.06	11.63

Base: 83 (under 4 months); 24 (5 months+)

A greater proportion of those completing the post-intervention questionnaires after a longer period of time reported a more positive score post-intervention on the PBFS compared to those completing after a shorter period.

Figure 10: PBFS total score individual change by post-intervention questionnaire completion date

	Positive change	No change	Negative change
5 months+	38%	29%	33%
Under 4 months	27%	43%	30%
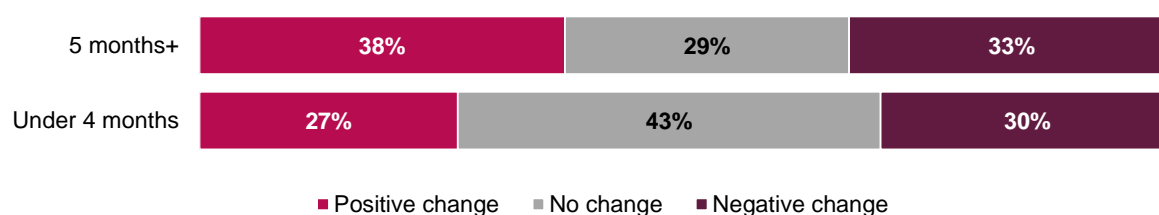
Base: 83 (under 4 months); 24 (5 months+)

Skills for Adolescence (SFA) analysis

Analysis was undertaken to see if outcomes recorded by the cohort of young people who received the SFA element of the programme (South East – February 2022 cohort) differed to those recorded by programme participants as a whole. **Only 12 young people returning pre- and post-intervention data had received the SFA element, so results are not reported here.**

Conclusions

The quantitative data analysis suggests that some of the young people taking part in the project during the pilot study phase experienced improvements in terms of improved decision making and reduced engagement in risky behaviours, as measured by the SDQ and PBFS, although no statistically significant differences were identified. A notable proportion of young people also reported a deterioration on these measures.

Exploratory analysis of outcomes by when post-intervention questionnaires were completed suggests that those completing the SDQ and PBFS after a greater period of time experienced slightly better outcomes. Many of those completing questionnaires after a longer period of time were likely to have received support for longer, suggesting that longer-lasting support may have helped boost outcomes, although caution should be taken in drawing conclusions based on the limited data available.

However, it was not possible within this evaluation to draw robust conclusions on the degree to which different elements of the project contributed to outcome change. In future evaluations, this could be addressed through the gathering of more robust and proportionate monitoring data through which to assess referral routes and participation – the project team were unable to make these data available to the evaluation team. Ensuring that there is greater clarity on inclusion criteria for different project elements would also assist in the assessment of outcomes for those who have received a higher dosage or duration of support.

Data gathered from qualitative research, through focus groups with young people and project staff and interviews with project partners stakeholders, also reflected on the outcomes for young people participating in the project. While the pilot study did not identify any

statistically significant change on the outcome measures utilised (PBFS and SDQ), qualitative data suggest that for both the recipients and the delivery team, there was a strong sense that, overall, the intervention was beneficial to the young people and that it was helping young people to build skills and resilience, which meant they were better equipped to make positive choices.

Key themes to emerge from the qualitative data are outlined below.

<u>Confidence</u>

Being taken out of their 'comfort zone' and having to challenge themselves was highlighted by young people as helping them build their confidence to take part in similar activities in the future:

> *'I think, for us, it's level of confidence increases in terms of… we've got some young people who are very reluctant to engage at the beginning, and we amend the programme to meet their needs, control how they engage, and then by the end, they're fully immersed in the experience.'* (Project delivery staff focus group)

A number of project partners also pointed to the positive effects of young people being 'pushed out of their comfort zone' and familiar situations by taking part in new and different kinds of activities and being compelled to mix and work with young people from outside their friendship networks. Participants explained how staff were able to create an environment, referred to by more than one as a 'safe space', which made this unfamiliarity and discomfort feel comfortable and safe for the young people, in turn allowing them to take risks, be open to new possibilities and influences and learn new skills. It was felt that being in this unfamiliar environment and away from their reputations allowed some young people to flourish:

> *'She found a connection and a safe place where nobody knew her. It enabled her to do something positive, and we've been able to sustain the positive work.'* (Project partner interview)

It was felt that, in many cases, 'Branching Out' worked to build the confidence, self-esteem and skills of the young people. One person made the comment that Branching Out *'makes them realise they can achieve things', thus* opening up the possibility of young people trying other things: *'…we can do the Duke of Edinburgh'*. During the activity weeks, older young people, including those commonly considered 'difficult', were said to have displayed more prosocial behaviours, displaying caring and mature social competencies:

> *'[Young person], who has normally been a nightmare in the local community, has actually been really nurturing.'* (Project partner interview)

'If there was messing about on the back of the bus, he'd be the one to step in and sort it out and calm it down, whereas I'd have said he'd be the one causing the problems.' (Project partner interview)

Project partners described transformational outcomes for some young people that they attributed directly to Branching Out:

'One young person was a nightmare. Really loud, always getting into trouble… he's doing really, really well. You see him now, and he's very calm, not shouting or swearing. Might stop him going down that other path.' (Project partner interview)

Social skills and relationships

Building confidence around people and making friends was a benefit highlighted by participants:

'I've started talking to more people 'cos, like, you're kind of forced to speak to people… when I've been at school, I've been wanting to talk to more people instead of, like, being quiet all the time.' (Young people focus group)

'Before, I was more scared of, like, socialising… well, I still am, but I'm a lot less scared now cos of them [staff member's name].' (Young people focus group)

'Just [wanting to] socialise more and try not to play on my own.' (Young people focus group).

However, some young people still reported difficulties with social interaction.

'I'm still lonely.' (Young person interview)

It was visible from observing young people taking part in their activity weeks that they had developed positive relationships with adults. Young people were visibly comfortable with youth workers and the park ranger, and these adults respected, trusted and engaged them.

For staff, it was evident that some young people benefitted greatly in terms of learning about and improving their social skills. Meeting and interacting with a group of young people from different areas helped them understand not only how to work in a group but also other people's perspectives and views. More importantly, being in a different environment helped young people to speak about their concerns or anxieties in a less formal setting while undertaking other activities. One example given was of a young person keeping in contact with other young people after the programme had completed:

'We had one person that was very, very anxious about being with young people that he didn't know. And at the start of the week, he was quite nervous at the start

[about] meeting more people from different areas, but by the Friday, when we got together again, he was a lot more comfortable talking to new people and he mentioned himself, you know, he was feeling really anxious, so it's good that he made himself aware that that's how he was feeling… was able to speak about it throughout the week, and by Friday he was speaking to young people from a different group, from a different area, and I think he wanted to keep in contact with some of those young people as well.' (Project delivery staff focus group)

After attending the programme, some young people were inclined to return and offer their help to others.

'We had one young person that is actually relishing in the opportunity to come back and be responsible. And then he's actually taking it upon himself now to kind of educate other young people as well… that if some people say stuff to you, can't always get angry.' (Project delivery staff focus group)

'If there are young people that do need extra support, or you think that the needs aren't quite filled, and its good they be brought back as graduates, which is young people who are going to come and help out at another Branching Out and as a good role model, and if it's a person that does have some needs that need filling as well, and it's kind of like a best of both worlds. If you've got young person that's been on the project and are going out to continue that relationship we'll work well with, and then they're going to be able to help other young people as well. And it's going to obviously help them socially and emotionally, too.' (Project delivery staff focus group)

There is some evidence that parental relationships also improved:

'I don't think it was purely us [Branching Out] that were responsible for getting him back in school, but we were opening them conversations about why he does need to be back in school and why it needs to be supporting his mum in actually be willing to go, and he's doing better now. … there was a point where his mum would being overwhelmed, and that relationship was then deteriorating because obviously she's really frustrated, and then he's just not responding well to that.' (Project delivery staff focus group)

'… like coming home and letting them know about how their day's gone, you know, telling them things that maybe they wouldn't have had a conversation about before. Parents saying that they've never seen young people happy or excited before, you know, just being able to be given something positive to do. I think it has really helped the young people and the parents.' (Project delivery staff focus group)

This was supported by stakeholders who suggested that Branching Out triggered notable improvements within young people's home environments and family relationships,

particularly during the activity week: *'It's encouraged positive family time'.* During that week, young people were said to appear happier, more motivated and enthused, and this was said to manifest in more positive behaviours and better interactions. Parents fed back to partners that their children were 'different' on Branching Out activity weeks, in the sense that they talked more with their parents, usually about the activities they had taken part in; in addition, because they were more tired than usual, arguments were less likely to occur and bedtime routines were improved:

> *'I can't think of one parent that has ever said they [child] haven't come back in a good mood and that there's not been argument that night, and for a week after.'* (Project partner interview)

Some parents made a concerted effort to build on and sustain these positive changes. One example was given in which the parent of a girl fed back that her daughter had always refused to walk their family dog but began doing so after the activity week and realised that she enjoyed it – it became an activity mother and daughter continued together.

Branching Out also provided structure in the holidays where there might not otherwise have been any. This was said to have prevented boredom and isolation but also helped to keep young people safe and protect their wellbeing, where home did not always provide that. One interviewee made the comment that this was particularly helpful for neurodiverse young people, such as those with ASD, as they would not be out of their routine for an entire week, but Branching Out would facilitate their engagement in a very structured activity.

Behaviour regulation

There was some evidence that young people had started to regulate their behaviour in response to taking part in Branching Out activities. A number of young people spoke about being able to control their emotions better, citing benefits such as improved communication with friends, being more patient with younger children, being more helpful and becoming more mature:

> *'I'm more mature. Since my mum has disabilities, I have to do a lot of things in the house, and I've become more mature [since taking part].'* (Young person interview)

Young people participating in SFA explained how the sessions had developed their understanding of the difference between positive and negative behaviour and that this had led to a change in their attitudes and/or personal behaviour. Young people spoke about learning not to steal, smoke or drink alcohol. In one instance, a young person had stopped vaping in response to taking part.

> *'It helped me know what's good to do and what's bad.'* (Young person interview)

'[The sessions helped them] to not be an idiot half the time.' (Young person interview)

'My attitude… I used to be gobby.' (Young person interview)

'I've learned to respect other people and what they do.' (Young person interview)

Staff also described how the group work that they had facilitated supported young people to understand more about their emotions and be better able to deal with their feelings.

'Some people might take the mick out of him, and he can't just think about fighting straight away. He's got to realise… to be able to understand their emotions, and working with him, also doing the Branching Out activities, it gives us an opportunity to do a really positive activity with him while we can have them conversations.' (Project delivery staff focus group)

Staff pointed to examples of improved school attendance for young people participating in the programme, although this was not verified through analysis of attendance data for schools in the target areas:

'We've had a few starts go up 'cause I attend the meeting that the school hold, which is called the Joint Consultation Meeting, and they've actually said to us, you know, that this young person's attendance has gone up, starting to come into school, but even the attitude in school, and has improved as well massively, so like behavioural issues, and they're not going into detention and stuff as much, and so we are seeing positives from all sorts of different angles, really.' (Project delivery staff focus group)

'We had a young person referred from school… this young person was being bullied in school, and then that lowered the attendance rate for that young person due to not wanting to go. This young person had no friends and wasn't playing out in the evening, and so we've never seen this person out on detached since us going to see through the home visit getting the young person involved, he completed the full week… [with] Branching Out. He's made friends on the group. We've seen him out on detached since with friends, and he's also been attending school with the young people he's met on detached; he is also engaging with different things we are delivering out on detached… in different projects [we're] running.' (Project delivery staff focus group)

With reference to the activity week, project partners usually praised workers' ability to successfully engage young people, thereby facilitating their involvement in the 'Branching Out' programme and associated positive activities. This was felt to have been achieved largely through effective relationships project workers built with the young people. In interviews, partners talked about how enthused young people were during the activity week, describing

them as 'buzzing', 'over the moon' and 'hyper'. They described how young people, who often struggled to maintain a routine and get up for school in the morning, were out of bed early and keen to get to the activity week during the school holidays:

> *'One kid, can never get him up. That week, up at 6.30… up, ready and waiting with backpacks to be collected.'* (Project partner interview)

Two partner interviewees suggested that they were surprised by how well project staff were able to engage particular young people and that the positive outcomes achieved with these individuals had exceeded their expectations. This included one young person who had been causing a lot of problems in the local area who returned to Branching Out as an Ambassador to provide peer mentoring:

> *'I wouldn't have expected that kid to have had the opportunity to go back in that capacity. I wouldn't have expected him to embrace Branching Out so much and engage so well.'* (Project partner interview)

Two people acknowledged the significance and importance of 'small gains' with particularly hard-to-reach (older) young people for whom the activity week probably wasn't 'cool enough' and who remained somewhat 'out of reach'. The detached element of Branching Out was said to have helped bring these young people described as being 'on the periphery' (e.g. they are not attending school regularly and not in contact with professionals) a little closer to services and organisations, enabling a loose relationship and informal 'check-ins': *'Alright, how ya getting on?'*; *'they're more likely to speak to us now because of time spent with [Branching Out worker], so that worked well. It's little wins'* (Project partner interviews).

There was, however, a sense that for some young people, taking part in Branching Out had only had a limited effect on regulating their emotions and behaviour:

> *'It was really fun, but the fears still stayed with me.'* (Young person interview)

> *'I still am gobby, I try not be sometimes… I try to, but when my mum and dad get me wound up… .'* (Young person interview)

<u>Staff–young people relationships</u>

Finally, project partners also reflected on the quality of staff–young people relationships as a factor influencing outcome change. Branching Out is effectively relationship-based work, and the relationships that workers established with the young people were considered the crucial ingredient in the ability of Branching Out to effect positive outcomes:

> *'… it's only as good as its practitioners… and they've [Branching Out staff] been sound. Young people like them, young people engage with them, they say what they're going to do, they turn up when they say they're going to.'* (Project partner interview)

Key factors that were felt to underpin 'good' staff–youth relationships were:

Trust: '*In a lot of cases, these kids will have been promised things, and it will never have come to fruition, and with Branching Out it does; it happens.*' (Project partner interview)

Being non statutory/a non-uniform presence: Partners talked about engagement with young people being hindered by uniforms and negative associations with certain professions, in particular the police and social services: '*The uniform makes them shut down. Kids will ultimately open up more to them*' (Project partner interview).

Ongoing contact through the different elements of Branching Out allowed relationships to be enhanced and supported across different settings in young peoples' lives, such that, for some, Branching Out was an ongoing presence. Workers built up the relationship and rapport with young people over a long period, engaging with them on the streets, in schools and during the activity week. The familiarity already established through the detached youth work element was felt to support positive engagement with the programme.

Personal qualities: Staff were praised for their interpersonal skills and abilities to bond with the young people. For one participant, the fact that a Branching Our worker was a local resident and shared a common background was thought to be a strength. For another, the youthful age of most staff was felt to aid the development of relationships. Staff were praised for being able to relate to the young people yet retain professional boundaries and authority.

There was a consensus that the core Branching Out workers developed effective and supportive relationships with young people such that some developed an emotional attachment to them, particularly in the absence of caring and supportive relationships with other adults in their lives. These positive staff–young people relationships were contrasted with the relational experiences in other spheres of their lives, such as school. Branching Out workers were described as sometimes being the only trusted professional in a young person's life.

The relationship of trust formed between staff and the young people was felt to work both as a vehicle to engage the young people with the project and keep them involved and as an intervention in and of itself in the sense that it was felt to support the young people in multiple ways, e.g. by providing practical and emotional support, creating a 'safe space' for them to 'open up' about any problems they may be facing and enabling a form of intervention that other services were unable to provide in the current context of constrained resources.

Although the relationship-building skills of Branching Out staff were praised by all project partners interviewed, it was necessary to employ casual workers alongside Branching Out staff during the activity weeks, thus creating a turnover and inconsistency of staff during the week. Two people commented on how having the same face for the duration of the week was important and that some of the staff were not as adept at engaging with the young people.

Research Question D: Is there any evidence of statistically significant positive outcomes for programme participants?

As detailed in the analysis above, no statistically significant change was identified.

Research Question E: What level of confidence is there that any identified positive outcomes will contribute to reductions in crime and ASB in targeted communities?

As outlined above, no statistically significant change in outcomes was identified for the young people participating in Branching Out. However, it should be noted that the study had a small sample size, and issues in the quality of the data (outlined above) may well have affected the determination of outcomes. As such, it is useful to reflect on qualitative evidence from staff and stakeholders in relation to their views on the impacts of the project on crime and ASB in the target communities. These interviewees pointed to individual instances of young people ceasing engagement in ASB, although they also pointed out that there were limitations in the degree to which the project would impact on area-level outcomes.

> *'I had a young person say to me that during Branching Out, they've done no offences, which is massive for them because usually they're out causing antisocial behaviour in the school holidays, so taking them away from the area and doing something positive, that means for that week, I don't even think about this young person, from the antisocial behaviour team, that he's been doing any offending behaviours since Branching Out.'* (Project delivery staff focus group)

Awareness of the Branching Out programme, networking and attendance at joint meetings increased referrals of young people and the ability of the Branching Out team to reach young people who may have 'slipped through the net' and provide support and inclusion in activities:

> *'A lot of the referrals have been working closely with the local youth offending team, and I've been involved in the Joint Consultation Meetings, so all the schools in, like, a specific area will meet up to discuss any young people that [are] potentially having to seek alternative provisions or you know, wanting to try to move to a different school, so you know, those are the young people that are slipping through the net. You know the ones that aren't disengaging, the ones that you know, there isn't anything for them to do, they're the ones that I really wanted to capture, and those are quite… those make up quite a lot of our cohorts, which is excellent because it's giving them something, you know, to feel as though they are not just an outcast kind of thing, so that as well, I think, contributes to the group.'* (Project delivery staff focus group)

Building wider relationships within the area, such as ongoing relationships with local supermarkets and the police, can have an impact on managing ASB in local communities, facilitating a greater emphasis on prevention rather than enforcement:

'Yeah, we were talking about the police earlier… that's a massive relationship and partnership because they're the ones that… they may deal with the young people in a very different way to how we deal with it, so by collating that information, you can manage the young people and that situation very differently to how they might deal with it. It's just the small steps that make up the bigger picture.' (Project delivery staff focus group)

Among the project partners interviewed, there was not an expectation that 'success' should or could be evidenced quantitatively in reduced incidents of ASB or criminal activity in the areas where Branching Out operated. This was felt to be an unrealistic expectation for three keys reasons. First, it was felt to be unlikely that a small-scale intervention could have a measurable and significant impact on rates of crime or ASB in an area. One participant made the point that five out of six groups of young people might engage with Branching Out, and it might have had a positive impact for those young people but, statistically, the one group that does not engage might be the one that's still causing the majority of problems in an area. Second, there was a view among most that the relationship between Branching Out and crime ASB is not a direct or immediate one. Rather, the positive effects of Branching Out might only be realised later down the line and perhaps even when the young people taking part are older: *'Something that happens on Branching Out might have an impact but that might not be felt straightway'*. Third, Branching Out was also understood not to work in isolation but to complement, support and benefit the work of other organisations, e.g. through joint working, providing an additional intervention/something more than what other services can offer in a resource-scare/high-caseload environment.

Despite some misgivings about the potential for Branching Out to have identifiable impacts on crime and ASB, project partners did identify ways in which Branching Out acted as a form of informal social control and/or supported the efforts of other organisations to reduce the risk of young people being involved in criminal behaviour. Participants explained how Branching Our staff work with police and other organisations within multi-agency fora to share information and also act as 'another pair of eyes' on the streets.

One project partner described how young people were starting fires during lockdown in wooded areas in one of the locations where Branching Out was being delivered. Working in partnership with youth workers from WDC, Branching Out staff helped police these activities, providing adult supervision and informal social control: *'We'd be the ones on foot going into the woods, having conversations with the kids if they were starting fires and things like that; we knew they were going to start these fires. So, "How are you going to put it out? What are you going to do if it spreads? Can you control it?"'*. This informal education linked in with the more structured learning about fire safety taking place as part of the activity week. During the summer months, the same group of young people moved from starting fires to jumping in areas of open water. Again, Branching Out workers were able to provide informal supervision and social control based on a relational dynamic largely motivated by care and

concern rather than enforcing – they didn't stop the young people but made them aware of dangers and risks and ensured they knew how to keep themselves safe and get help in an emergency. They also demonstrated care, e.g. in hot weather and in the absence of adult supervision, Branching Out staff in one area brought the young people water, ice pops and sun cream and encouraged them to just 'chill out'.

There was a view that Branching Out was working well in partnership with other organisations that were also working to prevent or reduce young people's involvement in ASB and criminal activity. Some of the project partners had worked collaboratively with Branching Out staff, either co-working the detached youth work element or helping on the activity weeks. Partnership working also resulted in Branching Out bringing young people who may otherwise have been overlooked to the attention of services. The momentum following positive impacts of Branching Out was also sustained by partner organisations, as young people were pulled back into their provision as an informal exit strategy, while Branching Out was also used by other services as part of their exit strategies. This was seen as particularly beneficial where services are under pressure to close cases due to resource constraints. In these circumstances, Branching Out offered continued support, ensuring that other professionals 'have eyes on' the young people.

Research Question F: What are the implications for scaling up and a more rigorous evaluation study?

Branching Out shows promising signs of an intervention that is valued by young people and stakeholders and has made an important contribution to keeping young people safe, diverted from crime and ASB and engaged in positive activities over the period of implementation. Qualitative data suggest that the intervention has positive impacts for local communities and young people. The quantitative evidence collected for this evaluation does not demonstrate statistically significant outcome change for the young people participating. This means that we cannot be sure that any changes observed are not simply a reflection of the composition of the cohort of participants. We have documented above challenges in the sample size, which is small, and inconsistencies in the data collection method that further inhibit the drawing of any robust conclusions from these data.

It is our assessment that Branching Out is not suitable for scaling up or a more rigorous evaluation study at this point in time. There are two key reasons for this:

We do not have enough good-quality quantitative data to draw robust conclusions about the impact of the pilot, but what data there are do not demonstrate statistically significant outcome change for the participants.

The implementation of the project was severely disrupted by COVID-19. The project team are to be commended for their commitment to supporting young people in the target communities throughout a period of huge upheaval in their lives. There is clear evidence from qualitative interviews that the project was very well received by young people, their carers and partner organisations and that it played an important role in mitigating the risks to young people over this time. However, the need to modify the implementation model and work flexibly around restrictions on social mixing meant that key elements of the programme were not sufficiently tested. In particular, there is very limited evidence on the benefits of delivery of the Lions Quest Skills for Adolescence programme as an integral part of the intervention.

Readiness for trial

For the reasons outlined above, the intervention is not ready for trial at this stage. Our recommendation is that a repeat of the pilot phase (with some adjustments to methodology as outlined below) would be beneficial in establishing a more robust basis on which to assess the suitability of the intervention for efficacy evaluation.

Conclusion

Figure 11: Summary of pilot study findings

Research question	Finding
What measures are in place to determine the impact of the programme, and how effective are they?	The pilot study utilised the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) and Problem Behaviour Frequency Scale (PBFS). All young people participating in the programme were expected to complete a pre- and post-intervention questionnaire at or as close as possible to their first engagement with the project and again after the 12-week 'Branching Out' intervention. In practice, there was considerable variation in the intervals between the first and second data collection points for the young people participating in the programme: for 44% of young people completing both stages of the questionnaire, the interval between pre- and post-intervention completion was less than two months; for 21% of participants, the time gap was six months or more. This is likely to be a reflection of inconsistencies in data collection rather than large numbers of young people leaving the programme early. Project data indicate that 236 young people started the Branching Out element of the intervention, and 204 of these completed the 12 weeks. Greater consistency in terms of data

	collection would improve confidence in assessment of the effectiveness of the measures used to capture outcomes for young people participating in the programme.
Do these measures capture the relevant outcomes in terms of increased resilience, improved decision making and reduced engagement in risky behaviours, as articulated in the programme's ToC?	Qualitative evidence suggests that additional outcomes for young people include greater willingness to engage in new and social activities, improved relationships with families, improved school attendance, greater resilience and desistance from ASB. Additional measures that capture these outcomes would be beneficial.
What evidence is there of positive outcomes for programme participants?	There is insufficient data to draw robust conclusions about the impact of the programme on positive outcomes for the young people participating. Evidence that is available points to positive outcome change for some participants, although a small group of young people experienced no or negative change. There is also some tentative evidence indicating that young people who engaged with the intervention for longer periods, or who had participated in the Skills for Adolescence programme, had more positive outcome change than other participants; however, given the small sample size, we cannot draw any conclusions from these observations.
Is there any evidence of statistically significant positive outcomes for programme participants?	There was no evidence of statistically significant change in the outcome measures used using PBFS and SDQ measures.
What level of confidence is there that any identified positive outcomes will contribute to reductions in crime and ASB in targeted communities?	Staff, stakeholders and young people identified individual benefits for young people participating in the programme. These included improved confidence, skills, participation and engagement. There were also case study examples of young people ceasing involvement in ASB. Collaboration between the project team and other services helped to deal with instances of ASB in communities and prevent their reoccurrence. The evaluation was not able to include any quantitative evidence of a reduction in levels of crime and ASB in target communities.
What are the implications for scaling up and a more rigorous evaluation study?	The intervention was significantly interrupted by COVID-19, and some aspects of the project were insufficiently evaluated. Any future delivery and evaluation should focus on consistent delivery

	against a defined model of intervention for at least 12 months and consistency in data collection to ensure that common parameters for analysis are adhered to and more robust assessments of impact can be made.

Evaluator judgement of intervention and evaluation feasibility

The results outlined above suggest that a further period of evaluation may be beneficial. During this period, it would be vital to ensure implementation fidelity as far as possible to enable all aspects of the intervention model to be fully tested and evaluated. In particular, there were two aspects of implementation that were subject to considerable change over the period of the pilot study:

- The delivery of SFA in target schools: This aspect of the programme was severely hampered by COVID-19. Delivery of the full programme in classroom contexts in a number of schools would allow for more robust evaluation of the impact of this aspect of the intervention.

- Duration and dosage: There was some flexibility in terms of duration and dosage, and it was not always clear that all young people benefitted from the same period of engagement with the intervention or experienced the same activities and processes. We have indicated above that there are some tentative observations around relationships between the length of engagement with the project and outcome change for young people. Greater consistency in terms of duration and dosage would allow for more robust conclusions to be drawn around the impact of the intervention overall. If that is not feasible, the evaluation may consider focusing on a target sub-set of participants with a greater degree of consistency in their experience.

It would also be critically important to strengthen the data available for evaluation. We suggest that this could be done in four ways:

1. Greater consistency in the collection of pre- and post-intervention data: Face-to-face data collection was difficult over the period of this evaluation, and as such the evaluation team was reliant on the support of the project team to capture outcomes data. The project team worked hard to collect the data required, but in future it may be preferable for the evaluation team to have responsibility for data collection and for them to work with the project team and partner organisations to facilitate access to the young people at key stages of their participation.

2. Consideration of the collection of additional outcomes data: While there is a need for balance in terms of the demands for data placed on the young people involved in the

programme, there is some evidence that the project was instrumental in supporting young people to experience improvements in their willingness to engage with activities, in social and family relationships and in resilience to manage challenging situations. These benefits were not adequately captured by the outcomes measures used (PBFS and SDQ) but may be important indicators of positive change for the young people involved.

3. Inclusion of well-defined and robust project monitoring data through which to better understand referrals, participation in different project elements, retention and drop-out, and length of engagement.

4. Capture and analysis of area and organisational-level data: The project team were confident that the intervention was making a positive contribution to young people's engagement with school and preventing their participation in crime and ASB. These observations were, to some extent, corroborated by interviewees in partner organisations, although there was some scepticism that changes in the behaviours of individual young people would translate to reductions in crime and ASB at the area level. Understanding would be strengthened by analysis of area-based data on school attendance and crime and ASB. This would involve work with partner organisations (schools and the police) to agree data collection and sharing.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Evaluation of Branching Out. Wakefield Council Youth Work Team

Stakeholder Information Sheet

1. Invitation and Purpose We are inviting you to take part in a research study evaluating the Branching Out Programme. The study is being conducted by The Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research (CRESR) at Sheffield Hallam University. Please read the following information carefully before you decide whether or not to take part.

2. Legal Basis for Research Studies The University undertakes research as part of its function for the community under its legal status. Data protection allows us to use personal data (i.e. the information you provide us with) for research with appropriate safeguards in place under the legal basis of public tasks that are in the public interest. A full statement of your rights can be found at:

https://www.shu.ac.uk/about-this-website/privacy-policy/privacy-notices/privacy-notice-for-research

All University research is reviewed to ensure that participants are treated appropriately and their rights respected. This study has been approved by the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC). Further information can be found at: https://www.shu.ac.uk/research/ethics-integrity-and-practice

3. Why have I been asked to participate? You have been approached about this study because we understand that you have been involved in the delivery of the Branching Out Programme.

4. Do I have to take part? Taking part in this research is voluntary. **If you would prefer not to take part, you do not have to give any reason. If you change your mind you should contact one of the individuals named in section 11 of this Information Sheet up to 14 days after the interview date. If you withdraw after this point your data may be retained as part of the study.**

5. What will taking part involve? Taking part in an interview over the phone or video call and should last approximately 45 minutes. We will ask you about your involvement in the Branching Out programme and the main benefits you see for service users. We will also ask you about, how the service may have adapted in the light of the Covid-19 pandemic and any challenges with delivering the service.

6. What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part? We do not anticipate that there are any risks in taking part. You will not be under any pressure to answer questions or

talk about topics that you prefer not to discuss and you can choose to halt or withdraw from the interview at any point.

7. What are the possible benefits of taking part? There are no direct benefits of taking part although some people enjoy the opportunity to share their experiences. Your contribution will also help the Branching Out Programme to develop the Programme moving forward.

8. How will my confidentiality be protected? We will record the interview, with your consent. This allows us to accurately reflect what is said. The recording will be transcribed (written out), with any names or identifying information removed. Any quotes that we use will be anonymised (using pseudonyms) in our reports. Confidentiality will only be broken in circumstances where the researcher is concerned that there is a risk of harm to you or someone else. In this instance the researcher must report this information to the relevant agency that can provide assistance.

9. What will happen to my data during the study and once the study is over? Sheffield Hallam University will be responsible for all of the data during the study and when it is over. No one outside of the research team will have access to this data, which will be held securely on Sheffield Hallam University servers. CRESR data management protocols are consistent with government GSAD and NHS Digital Data Security and Protection Toolkit requirements, as well as GDPR legislation.

Data from this study may be retained by Sheffield Hallam University for up to 10 years after the study has finished and may be available to the public but only if it can be sufficiently anonymised to protect your identity. The only personal data we keep will be your signed consent form. We have to keep this for 10 years from the end of the project so we will keep it separately in a secure file for this length of time.

10. How will the data be used? We will use data from your interview to inform our final reports – which will be publicly available – as well as presentations and academic publications. If you are interested, copies of final reports will be available on request from the persons named in section 11 below.

11. Who can I contact if I have any questions or concerns about the study?

Sarah Pearson 07471512983 s.pearson@shu.ac.uk

You should contact the Data Protection Officer if:	You should contact the Head of Research Ethics (Professor Ann Macaskill) if:
- you have a query about how your data is used by the University - you would like to report a data security breach (e.g. if you think your personal data has been lost or disclosed inappropriately) - you would like to complain about how the University has used your personal data DPO@shu.ac.uk	you have concerns with how the research was undertaken or how you were treated a.macaskill@shu.ac.uk

Postal address: Sheffield Hallam University, Howard Street, Sheffield S1 1WBT.

Telephone: 0114 225 5555

Appendix B

Wakefield   Council Youth Work Team

Young person and Guardian Consent Form

This consent form is for both young people and guardians and is about consenting to take part in the Wakefield Council Youth Services and the Branching Out Programme Evaluation. Alongside this consent form you should have also received an information sheet about the research programme and the evaluation. Please ask a member of staff at the Youth Service if this is not the case as it is very important that you have read this carefully before signing.

If there is anything you remain unclear about then please contact Sheffield Hallam University for queries connected to the evaluation (please refer to the information sheet for contact details). I understand that by signing this consent form I am consenting to the following:

Young person	☑	Guardian	☑
I have read the Information Sheet for this study and / or had details of the study explained to me and understand that I may ask further questions at any point.		I have read the Information Sheet for this study and / or had details of the study explained to me and understand that I may ask further questions at any point.	
I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study without giving a reason. If I change my mind I should contact Sarah Pearson up to 14 days after the interview date. If I withdraw after this point then I understand that my data may be retained as part of the study.		I understand that my child is free to withdraw from the study without giving a reason. If my child changes their mind they should contact Sarah Pearson up to 14 days after the interview date. If my child withdraws after this point then I understand that their data may be retained as part of the study.	
I understand that I can stop the interview at any point or choose not to answer any particular questions and this will not have any impact on me or the support I am receiving.		I understand that my child can stop the interview at any point or choose not to answer any particular questions and this will not have any impact on my child or the support they are receiving.	
I understand that the information collected will remain confidential, unless I say anything that makes the researcher concerned that there is a		I understand that the information collected will remain confidential, unless my child says anything that makes the researcher concerned that there is a risk	

risk of harm to me or someone else. In these circumstances I understand that the researcher must report this information to the relevant agency that can provide assistance.		of harm to them or someone else. In these circumstances I understand that the researcher must report this information to the relevant agency that can provide assistance.	
I understand that my personal details such as my name will not be shared outside this project.		I understand that my child's personal details such as their name will not be shared outside this project.	
I agree that the data in anonymised form can be used for other research purposes (e.g. writing articles in journals).		I agree that the data in anonymised form can be used for other research purposes (e.g. writing articles in journals).	
I understand that the data from this study may be retained by Sheffield Hallam University for up to 10 years after the study has finished and may be available to the public (but only if it can be sufficiently anonymised to protect your identity).		I understand that the data from this study may be retained by Sheffield Hallam University for up to 10 years after the study has finished and may be available to the public (but only if it can be sufficiently anonymised to protect my child's identity).	
I agree to take part in the interview for the above study.		I agree for my child to take part in the interview for the above study.	
I agree for the interview to be audio recorded and to quotes being used. I understand my name won't be used.		I agree for the interview with my child to be audio recorded and to quotes being used. I understand my child's name won't be used.	

Young Person Name:	**Guardian Name:**
Young Person Signature:	**Guardian Signature:**
Date:	**Date:**

EVALUATION BRANCHING OUT
PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Invitation and Purpose

YEF has funded Sheffield Hallam University (SHU) to independently evaluate the pilot phase of Branching Out to understand how it works and how useful young people find it. We are interviewing the Wakefield Council Youth Work Team to find out about the activities and progress of the project. We are also talking to young people via video call to find out:

What it's like to take part in activities

What young people like or disliked about taking part.

Anything they found hard about taking part.

The group interview will last no longer than 30 minutes

For further information on the evaluation and if you have any concerns please contact:

Sarah Pearson: 07471512983 / s.pearson@shu.ac.uk

Elizabeth Sanderson: 07501245811 / e.sanderson@shu.ac.uk

The evaluation's ethical approach

This pilot evaluation has been checked and approved by the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC). Below we outline the key things we will do to ensure fair and respectful practices:

Only experienced research team members will undertake data collection.

Age appropriate information sheets will be designed for participants prior to interviews/focus groups, with key content repeated verbally and young people given opportunity to ask questions. Before any data collection takes place you should….

- Understand participation is voluntary and that you can decide to not be involved and/or withdraw from the focus group/interview without giving a reason.

- You will not be under any pressure to answer questions or talk about topics that you prefer not to discuss.

- Know you will be asked to complete a brief consent form to confirm you agree to take part.

- Know that the group discussion will be digitally recorded on a Dictaphone. No video recording will take place.

- Know that anything you say will be treated confidentially [taking steps to make sure you are not identified] unless you say anything viewed as a safeguarding issue and/or that involves criminal activity - in which case the researcher would need to inform the Youth Service safeguarding lead to decide on the most appropriate response.
- Understand that if you become upset or worried we would offer to stop the interview and make sure your youth worker was aware.
- Know we would encourage all participants to discuss any themes raised during the focus group that they were worried about or unclear about with a parent (or guardian), Youth Worker or Youth Worker safeguarding officer.
- Be aware of other independent charities/helplines that we signpost to, that are also available to be contacted if any the themes raised were a cause for concern.

You should contact the **Head of Research Ethics (Professor Ann Macaskill)** if you have concerns with how the research was undertaken or how you were treated a.macaskill@shu.ac.uk

Data protection: Confidentiality and right to withdraw

Personal data will be kept securely on a password protected University folder accessible only to members of the evaluation team. The SHU evaluation team will comply with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and in accordance with the university Data Protection Policy Statement.

All case study and interview data will be reported anonymously (i.e., participant names will not be used).

If you decide that following your interview/focus group you wish to withdraw your data, you will need to contact the researcher within 14 days of data collection.

Data from this study may be retained by Sheffield Hallam University for up to 10 years after the study has finished and may be available to the public but only if it can be sufficiently anonymised to protect your identity. The only personal data we keep will be your signed consent form. We have to keep this for 10 years from the end of the project so we will keep it separately in a secure file for this length of time.

You should contact the Data Protection Officer if:

You have a query about how your data is used by the University.

You would like to report a data security breach (e.g., if you think your personal data has been lost or disclosed inappropriately).

You would like to complain about how the University has used your personal data.

Email: DPO@shu.ac.uk
Post: Sheffield Hallam University, Howard Street, Sheffield S1 1WBT
Call: 0114 225 5555

Outputs and what happens next

THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO READ THIS INFORMATION SHEET

Sheffield Hallam University | Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research

Appendix D

Branching Out Evaluation: Stakeholder consent form

Please answer the following questions by ticking the response that applies:

	Yes	No
1. I have read the Information Sheet for this study and / or had details of the study explained to me and understand that I may ask further questions at any point.	☐	☐
2. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study without giving a reason. If I change my mind I should contact Sarah Pearson 07471512983 s.pearson@shu.ac.uk up to 14 days after the interview date. If I withdraw after this point then I understand that my data may be retained as part of the study.	☐	☐
3. I understand that I can stop the interview at any point or choose not to answer any particular questions and this will not have any impact on me or the support I am receiving.	☐	☐
4. I understand that the information collected will remain confidential, unless I say anything that makes the researcher concerned that there is a risk of harm to me or someone else. In these circumstances I understand that the researcher must report this information to the relevant agency that can provide assistance.	☐	☐
5. I understand that my personal details such as my name will not be shared outside this project.	☐	☐
6. I agree that the data in anonymised form can be used for other research purposes (e.g. writing articles in journals).	☐	☐
7. I understand that the data from this study may be retained by Sheffield Hallam University for up to 10 years after the study has	☐	☐

finished and may be available to the public (but only if it can be sufficiently anonymised to protect your identity).

8. I agree to take part in the interview for the above study. ☐ ☐

9. I agree for the interview to be audio recorded and to quotes being used. I understand my name won't be used. ☐ ☐

Name of participant   *Signature (electronic or typed)*   *Date*

....

Name of researcher   *Signature (electronic or typed)*   *Date*

....

If the researcher is taking verbal consent: *"I confirm that verbal consent has been recorded and that the consent form, information sheet and privacy notice have been read/explained verbally to the participant" (researcher signs below).*

Name of researcher   *Signature*   *Date*

....

YOUTH ENDOWMENT FUND

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