

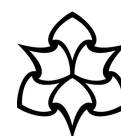
EVALUATION REPORT

St Christopher's Fellowship Protective Sibling Mentoring Programme

Feasibility study

Kevin Wong, Anton Roberts, Gavin Bailey, Rachel
Kinsella and Paul Gray

January 2023



**Manchester
Metropolitan
University**

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.

Just as important is understanding children and young people's lives. Through our Youth Advisory Board and national network of peer researchers, we'll ensure they influence our work and we understand and are addressing their needs. But none of this will make a difference if all we do is produce reports that stay on a shelf.

Together, we need to look at the evidence, agree what works and then build a movement to make sure that young people get the very best support possible. Our strategy sets out how we'll do this. At its heart, it says that we will fund good work, find what works and work for change. You can read it [here](#).

For more information about the YEF or this report, please contact:

Youth Endowment Fund
C/O Impetus
10 Queen Street Place
London
EC4R 1AG

www.youthendowmentfund.org.uk

hello@youthendowmentfund.org.uk

Registered Charity Number: 1185413

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About the Evaluator

The Manchester Metropolitan University evaluation team has extensive experience and knowledge of designing and delivering evaluations of interventions that target young people at risk and/or involved in antisocial/criminal behaviour. Their methodological expertise embraces knowledge and practical expertise in both experimental and quasi-experimental impact evaluation and an unrivalled experience of working with large and complex administrative datasets both independently and within the Office for National Statistics Secure Research Service. They also offer expertise and experience in the use of validated tools and Police National Computer data to measure intervention outcomes and the design of longitudinal surveys of young people. Their track record highlights a commitment to mixed methods programme evaluation, using the latest qualitative and quantitative techniques, rooted in the experience of service delivery in challenging environments.

Enquiries for the evaluation team should be addressed to: kevin.wong@mmu.ac.uk

Executive Summary



The project

The St Christopher's Fellowship (SCF) Protective Sibling Mentoring Programme aims to prevent antisocial or criminal behaviour among 10-14 year olds who have older siblings known to, or at risk of involvement in, the youth justice system. Developed by SCF and delivered for the first time in this project, mentoring is delivered by youth workers, who provide 10 one-hour mentoring sessions over a 10-week period. Mentoring sessions centre on the young person's own personal reflections, with the youth worker then signposting and supporting the young person to access services for their self-identified needs. Sessions are also accompanied with sports and leisure-based activities (such as trampolining and eating out). Young people are referred to the programme via Early Help Services, youth offending teams (YOTs), social care and schools. The project provided mentoring to 25 young people between February 2020 and July 2021.

YEF funded a feasibility study of the Protective Sibling Mentoring Programme that aimed to ascertain whether it achieved its intended aims for the target group. Using nine qualitative interviews with programme participants, project staff and partners and quantitative monitoring data on 25 participants, the study explored whether programme delivery was consistent with design; the barriers and facilitators to good delivery; how much of the service young people received; the quality, responsiveness and reach of the programme; the extent to which it was a genuinely new and innovative offer; and what adaptations were made to the intervention. The evaluation was undertaken between November 2019 and July 2021. Both delivery and evaluation therefore took place during the COVID-19 pandemic, requiring both the evaluators and delivery team to adapt.

Key conclusions

The programme failed to reach the intended number of participants. St Christopher's Fellowship had intended to deliver mentoring to 160 young people, but only 25 received the intervention. This was, in part, due to an overestimation of the size of the target group. Restrictive referral criteria and COVID-19 restrictions preventing SCF staff from effectively liaising with other agencies and promoting the programme also hampered recruitment. Signposting to other services was also limited, only occurring on 11 occasions.

Of the 25 young people who engaged with the mentoring programme, just over half of the young people (13 out of 25) attended the intended 10 sessions, with two thirds (17 out of 25) attending six or more sessions. This suggests that the SCF mentors were generally able to engage with those young people who did attend and managed to sustain their involvement over several sessions. Duration of delivery ranged from 4-13 months, suggesting that sessions did not always occur on a weekly basis.

The evaluators found that SCF staff applied youth work practice and principles and were led by the young people in determining the activities they jointly engaged in. Young people reflected that sessions provided a safe space to discuss concerns, while the programme also offered young people – who in many cases were financially disadvantaged – opportunities to enjoy activities such as trampolining, bowling and eating out.

SCF staff engaged with young people differently to other services, offering a new and different intervention. Project staff perceived that the opt-in, unstructured, light-touch approach of the programme differed to the compliance-led model of other statutory services, while SCF were also able to offer leisure activities not provided by other services.

As a result of COVID-19, delivery was adapted to provide remote mentoring. Nearly three fifths (59%) of monitored sessions were delivered face to face, with the remainder being delivered remotely.

Interpretation

St Christopher's Fellowship did not achieve the intended reach of the mentoring programme. The programme was projected to work with 40 young people every six months – a total of 160 young people across the duration of the programme. However, based on the monitoring data records, SCF only delivered mentoring to 25 young people in the 15-month period between February 2020 and July 2021. This was, in part, due to an incorrect estimation of the size of the target group, which was based on data from a different local authority.

Programme delivery was also not consistent with design, with a number of barriers impeding effective delivery. For instance, interviews of project staff reveal that the referral criteria was very challenging to use. Specifying a strict 10-14 age range for participants acted as an inhibitor to referrals while there was only a limited pool of eligible young people to draw from. COVID-19 restrictions also hampered the ability of SCF staff to liaise with children's social care staff and promote the mentoring service more widely, thus inhibiting recruitment.

Part of the theory of change of the intervention was to signpost young people to relevant services. However, in practice, project staff suggested that there was limited scope to do this as SCF had limited influence on these other services. There were only 11 occasions where young people were signposted to other agencies, which included children's social care and child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS). Additional barriers to delivery included young people's previous involvement and negative experiences with other support services, which may have led them to 'have their guard up'.

Facilitators to the programme included access to a shared information system used to record information on the young people. This enabled SCF staff to find out about the other services young people were engaged in and understand more about their family lives. In addition, the co-location of SCF staff with local authority staff was perceived as beneficial for fostering effective working relationships.

In terms of dosage, the programme was intended to work with each young person on a one-to-one basis for 10 weekly sessions. Of the 25 young people who engaged with the mentoring programme, just over half of the young people (13 out of 25) attended 10 sessions, with two thirds (17 out of 25) attending six or more sessions. This suggests that the SCF mentors were generally able to engage with the young people who did attend and managed to sustain their involvement over several sessions. The duration of delivery ranged from four months to 13 months, suggesting that sessions did not always occur on a weekly basis. Reasons for disengagement reported via interviews included families relocating, young people losing interest early on and one instance where an older sibling encouraged disengaging with the programme.

With regard to the quality of the programme, the evaluators found that SCF staff applied youth work practice and principles and were led by the young people in determining the activities they jointly engaged in. Interviews with young people suggested that the sessions provided them with opportunities to discuss their concerns, including incidents of violence, while a variety of topics were covered in the monitored mentoring sessions. Relationship-building was the most commonly discussed issue, while school, anger management, lockdown, meditation and mindfulness, and family and future goals also featured on numerous occasions. The programme also offered young people – who in many cases were financially disadvantaged – opportunities to enjoy activities such as trampolining, bowling and eating out.

In exploring service differentiation, the evaluators found that SCF staff were able to engage with young people and their families differently compared to statutory services such as the Youth Offending Service. A lighter-touch, opt-in approach contrasting with the compliance-focused model of statutory services was perceived by project staff to differentiate the programme. SCF staff also acknowledged that they could offer leisure activities to young people that other services could not.

COVID-19 posed some challenges and led to adaptations in the form of virtual mentoring sessions. Nearly three fifths (59%) of sessions that were monitored were delivered face to face, with the remainder, a significant minority, being delivered remotely.

Due to the limitations outlined in the study, particularly the inability of the project to recruit the intended number of young people, YEF has no immediate plans to fund a further evaluation of the Protective Sibling Mentoring Programme.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The St Christopher's Fellowship (SCF) Protective Sibling Mentoring Programme – the subject of this feasibility study – aimed to work with young people in Barnet aged 10–14 with a sibling 'known to the youth justice system'¹ or at risk of involvement in the justice system. The programme sought to lower their risk of antisocial and/or criminal behaviour through mentoring. The programme had not been delivered previously. It was developed by SCF based on research (reported by SCF) showing that young people who have a sibling in contact with the criminal justice system are at increased risk themselves of becoming engaged in antisocial and/or criminal behaviour.

The principal purpose of this study was to test whether the SCF programme can be delivered to the intended group in the way in which it was designed. Details of the study research questions are set out in Section 1.5, while further information about the programme is detailed in Section 1.4.

1.2 Research literature

The research literature offers some qualified support for the developer's assertion, although it should be noted that the literature relates to North America, with limited evidence pertaining to the United Kingdom (UK). A review of family-based risk and protective factors suggested that parental and sibling criminality had cumulative and interactive effects on risk of delinquency for 6–17 year-olds (National Crime Prevention Centre 2008). More recent studies have suggested that the effect of sibling criminality on risk may vary based on age and gender. For example, a study of white students by Walters (2018:343) found that 'sibling delinquency predicted participant delinquency 5 years later, after age, prior delinquency, number of siblings, father absence, family socioeconomic status, parental monitoring, parental disciplinary style, parental acceptance, and peer delinquency were controlled for'. However, the study also found that the effect of sibling delinquency applied to 13–17-year-old participants but not those aged 9–12. Huijsmans et al. (2019:239) found that sibling gender was a factor but that it operated differently for females and males: '...siblings' behavioral influence explains part of adolescents' behavior in early adolescence in sister pairs, and in later adolescence for brother pairs, beyond the influence exerted by peers, parents, and school'. It should be noted that while sibling criminality may influence the risk of delinquency, other risk factors apply at the same time, as noted by Walters (2018), including

¹ This was defined by SCF and Barnet Council as an older sibling with a referral order or out-of-court disposal.

(i) social risks – peers and gang associations – and (ii) community risks, such as physical and psychological neighbourhood characteristics, social inequality and cultural influences.

The relationship between the behaviours of siblings is not straightforward. Whiteman et al. (2014) found both ‘convergent and divergent influence processes’, where the former is risky behaviours in a sibling being associated with the same in another child, whereas the latter is the opposite – risky behaviours making the same less likely in another child. They identified three clusters: where a younger child admires the older sibling and wants to imitate them; where being in the same friendship group is a mechanism; and where a child wants to differentiate from the sibling and so diverges.

There is very limited evidence for the mentoring of siblings of older young people involved in or at risk of involvement in the criminal justice system. One study that examined this was Medina et al. (2012), who expressed scepticism about mentoring of younger siblings as a gang prevention measure. None of the children in the scheme they examined were screened for conduct disorder, and none had an offending record, with the authors highlighting that short mentoring schemes may result in adverse effects on participants. In short, they suggested that having an older sibling is an inappropriate way to assess risk.

Focusing on mentoring more broadly as a youth crime prevention intervention appears to be supported by government in England and Wales (GOV.UK n.d.). A review by Adler et al. (2016) of evidence for interventions targeted at young people who commit crime included an assessment of mentoring. They found that the evidence on mentoring suggested that it was ‘promising’ (ibid:21), given the variability in the type of schemes, limited detail about the activities delivered and the characteristics of successful implementation. The YEF-commissioned evidence review of mentoring by Gaffney et al. (2021) drew on three systematic reviews – Burton (2020), Raposa et al. (2019) and Tolan et al. (2013) – and found that mentoring was effective in reducing crime and the behaviours associated with crime and violence: Tolan et al. (2013) found a 26% reduction in juvenile delinquency based on 25 evaluations of mentoring programmes, with an evidence rating of 4 (on a scale of 1–5), while Raposa et al. (2019) found a 19% reduction in externalising behaviours based on 38 evaluations of mentoring programmes, with an evidence rating of 2.

Mentoring can also contribute to the other outcomes. As reported in the YEF review, Tolan et al. (2013) found desirable effects on academic achievement, drug use and aggression, while Raposa et al. (2019) reported desirable effects on school, psychological, social, cognitive and health outcomes (Gaffney et al. 2021).

In relation to how mentoring is intended to work, Tolan et al. (2013) posited that mentees can develop social-emotional and cognitive skills through their relationships with mentors. In turn, good mentor–mentee relationships can assist young people in developing other prosocial relationships and enable them to improve self-regulation and information processing (Gaffney et al. 2021).

For adult-youth mentoring programmes, Tolan et al. (2013) identified the key components of these programmes as modelling/identification formation, emotional support, teaching and advocacy, and Raposa et al. (2019) supported this change model by proposing that adult-youth mentoring programmes comprise three interconnected processes that enable behaviour change: (i) social-emotional processes, where positive mentoring relationships between adults and young people change the young people's perceptions of other relationships, facilitate the development of prosocial bonds and behaviours; (ii) by engaging in discussion with adults, young peoples' cognitive skills, such as information processing and self-regulation, may be enhanced; and (iii) adult mentors act as role models, providing young people with aspirational qualities and goals (Gaffney et al. 2021).

In relation to duration and scale, Raposa et al.'s (2019) review of 70 evaluations of adult-youth mentoring found that, on average, mentoring programmes lasted 11 months, ranging from two months to five years (Gaffney et al. 2021). The average mentor-mentee meeting was one hour and 42 minutes, ranging from 30 minutes to four hours, with an average number of four meetings. The majority of these programmes were identified by Raposa et al. (2019) as 'unstructured' (61%) or semi-structured (22%).

In summary:

- Mentoring programmes have a supportive evidence base.
- There is some evidence that siblings can exert an influence on each other, although this should be regarded as one among other risk factors.
- There is limited evidence that mentoring can counteract the influence of siblings.

1.3 Intervention

It was intended that the SCF Protective Sibling Mentoring Programme would be delivered by youth workers (employed by SCF) meeting with the targeted young people at times when they felt most comfortable or when they were most at risk. The young people were intended to be selected based on having an older sibling involved in or at risk of involvement in the criminal justice system. Details of the specific referral/eligibility criteria developed during the implementation of the programme are reported in Section 3.2.

As detailed in the grant application, each young person would receive 10 one-hour mentoring sessions over an intended 10-week period. The sessions would be structured around action learning sets and social pedagogy strengths-based approaches while also tailored to the interests of the young person. This was combined with sports- and leisure-based activities that included trampolining and eating out.

The approach was intended to centre on the young person's personal reflections, with the worker signposting and supporting the young person to access services for their self-identified needs. By doing so, the project aimed to improve a young person's well-being and

resilience, thereby reducing the risk of them offending and/or engaging in risk-taking behaviour and their vulnerability to criminal and/or sexual exploitation.

Please see Figure 1.1 for the theory of change logic model.

This was a new project that had not been delivered before. As described in the grant application, the programme was intended to draw on ‘the low-contact, high-impact tenets of the successful Independent Return Home Interview Service in LB Barnet working closely with the 0–19 Early Help Services, YOT, social care and local (and virtual) schools’ (St Christopher’s Fellowship 2019).

As indicated in this description, the intended referral routes into the programme included Early Help Services, the youth offending team (YOT), social care and schools.

As detailed in the grant application, it was projected that 40 young people would receive one-to-one mentoring support over a six-month period, generating a total of 160 young people receiving this support over the two-year lifetime of the programme. The programme commenced in January 2020.

As set out in the grant application, this target projection was based on:

- the number of young people aged 10–18 who received mentoring intervention (delivered by SCF) in a different local authority area;
- the caseloads of the six mentors and manager for the programme; and
- the caseloads of the three mentors and mentoring service manager who were to be allocated to deliver the sibling programme in Barnet.

The programme was originally due to commence in October 2019 but was delayed and started in January 2020.

1.4 Research questions

The overarching research question for this feasibility study is:

Did the programme achieve its intended outputs for the intended target groups?

The rationale for this question is two-fold: (i) to assess whether or not the programme can deliver as envisioned by SCF and partners to the projected numbers of young people for the programme and (ii) to provide an indication – based on whether or not the target number of young people can be attained – about scalability for either a pilot randomised control trial and/or an efficacy study.

It should be noted at this stage of the report that the challenges of programme delivery meant that there were limitations in the methodology employed and data collected. Within these

limitations, the research team sought to answer the research question as fully and robustly as possible. Details of the limitations are set out in Section 2.3.

The overarching research question is underpinned by the implementation evaluation (IPE) framework adapted from Humphrey et al. (2016). Initially developed by Durlak and DuPre (2008), this framework is based on a systematic assessment of programmes, examining which dimensions of implementation are most crucial in terms of identifying problems and improving performance.

This report therefore focuses on these dimensions as a framework for understanding and examining the implementation of the SCF Protective Sibling Mentoring Programme.

The dimensions and related questions are:

- Fidelity: How far was programme delivery consistent with design, identifying facilitators and barriers?
- Dosage: What was the level/amount of the service received by the target young people?
- Quality: How well was the service delivered, including how far did it conform to regulatory or professional service standards/guidance?
- Responsiveness: How well did the programme engage with the young people, and did they see it as addressing their needs?
- Reach: To what extent did the targeted young people come into contact with the programme?
- Service differentiation: To what extent was the programme genuinely new and innovative? Did it offer support in ways not previously available to specific priority groups?
- Adaptation: Did the service diverge from its initial design? What was the nature of these adaptations and the reasons for them? Were they beneficial or detrimental?

In considering the implementation of the mentoring programme as captured in the theory of change logic model (see Figure 1.1), this IPE framework guided the questions for the feasibility study, the data collected and the analysis undertaken. The findings in Section 3 are grouped together and themed according to these seven dimensions. Where appropriate, given the level of data available, some themes have been grouped together and the findings presented under these combined themes.

1.5 Ethical review

The research team received ethical approval from the University's Arts & Humanities Committee for the research activities described in this report. This required the submission of a lengthy and detailed application that was subject to review by two independent (and anonymous) peer reviewers and scrutiny by the Arts and Humanities Head of Ethics. It is a

requirement that no fieldwork/research is undertaken until ethical approval has been granted.

1.6 Data protection

A data-sharing agreement signed by both Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) and SCF was developed by MMU through the university's legal team, the university's Deputy Data Protection Officer and the evaluation team, with assistance from the SCF Data Protection Officer.

It should be noted that there was a delay in signing off the data-sharing agreement, which impacted on the collection of survey data.²

A full data protection impact assessment (DPIA) was undertaken for this study by the evaluation team, supported by the university's Deputy Data Protection Officer and colleagues from Records Management and Information Security. It incorporated relevant elements from the YEF's DPIA. However, it should be noted that as this is a feasibility study, the data gathered by the evaluation team will not form part of the YEF archive, where data from pilot studies will eventually be stored after their completion. The MMU DPIA was signed off by a senior manager within the university – the designated data owner. This DPIA has been shared with the YEF. Summary details of this are presented in Appendix 1.

In accordance with the processes set out in the DPIA, the ManMet research team were the only individuals with access to the data during and after the research period. While authorised personnel from the university may be given limited access to the data in the event of an audit of the research project, no third parties have access to any of the data. As previously mentioned, all digital data were stored on the university's research data storage (RDS) system. All interview transcripts were redacted and anonymised. No digital data were stored on the personal computers of any of the research team. Any hard copies of documents were stored in a locked filing cabinet in the Policy and Evaluation Research Unit (PERU) office at MMU.

1.7 Project team/stakeholders

The Protective Sibling Mentoring Programme was developed by SCF in conjunction with Barnet Council.

² The delay was due to a number of factors, including: a request that Barnet Council needed to be included in the data-sharing agreement; concerns about the transfer and retention of data after the evaluation by the YEF in their data archive; and issues raised by a different local authority – where the same data-sharing agreement and data collection were planned to be implemented alongside this evaluation – about the necessity of collecting personal data and the archiving of data by the YEF.

Staff from both organisations were involved in developing the theory of change logic model for the programme detailed in Figure 1.1. Staff from SCF were involved in designing the monitoring data collection template along with evaluation team; selecting the individuals who were interviewed for this study; and determining the wording and finalisation of the data-sharing agreement between MMU and SCF.

The MMU evaluation team and their roles are detailed below:

- Kevin Wong: Project director and lead for data sharing and data protection
- Rachel Kinsella: Project manager/site lead – key liaison with the SCF Programme
- Steve Morris: Quantitative data lead
- Paul Gray: Validated survey tool lead
- Gavin Bailey: Qualitative fieldwork researcher
- Anton Roberts: Monitoring data and qualitative fieldwork researchers

2. Methods

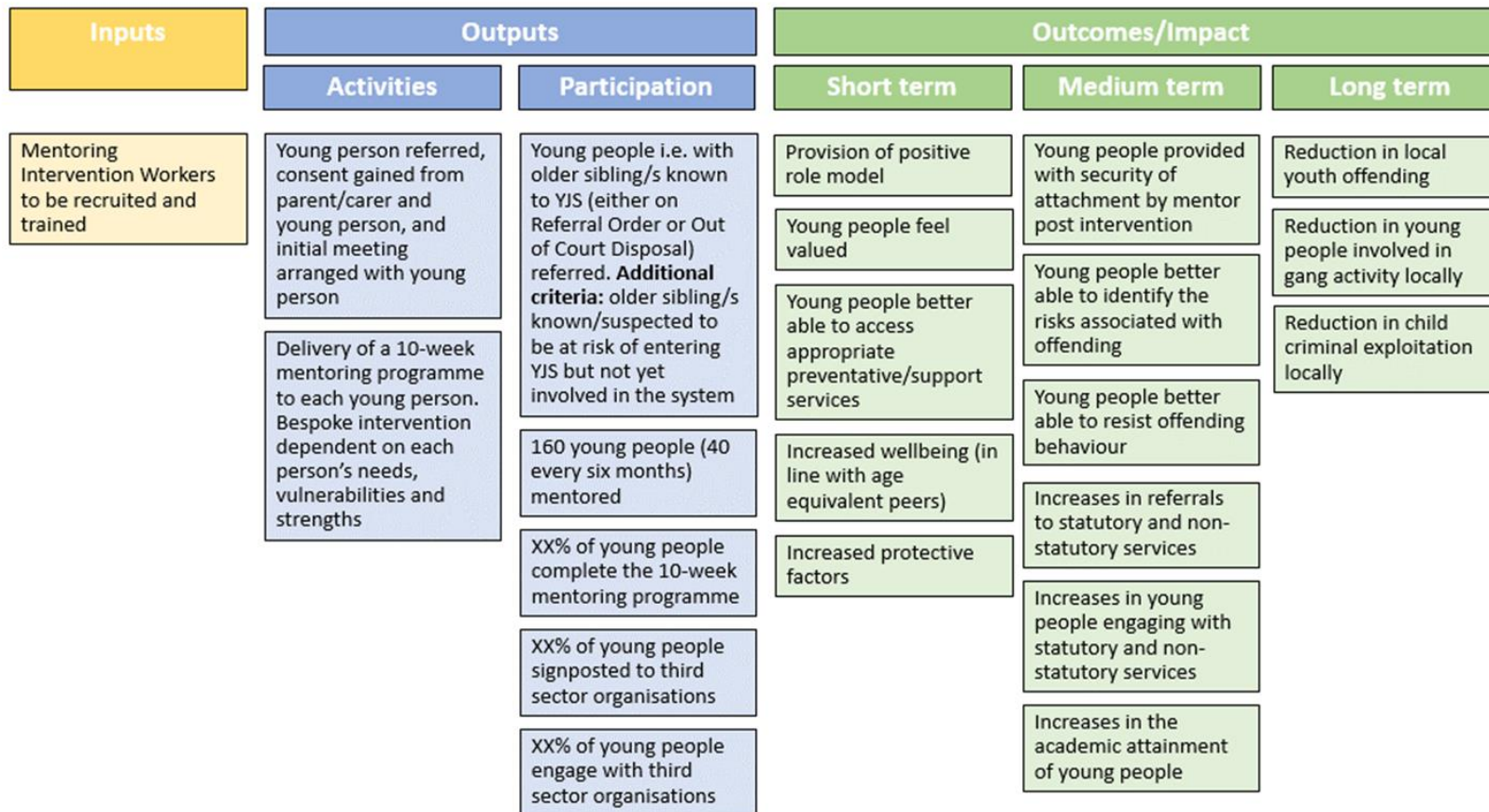
2.1 Theory of change logic model development

The theory of change logic model (see Figure 1.1) was developed by the research team and SCF staff shortly after funding for the project and evaluation was confirmed. The version presented below was the result of several iterations and was finalised in January 2020. It should be noted that three of the participation outputs relating to completion, signposting and engagement were not able to be estimated by SCF.

In subsequent discussions, including the project/evaluation review in October 2020, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the delivery of the project was considered.

During 2020, SCF adapted their delivery and managed to provide interventions remotely to young people during the pandemic-related lockdowns. Outside of the lockdown periods, SCF reported that they offered a hybrid delivery and, wherever possible, interventions in person. This is explored in more detail in Section 3.2.

Figure 1.1: SCF Protective Sibling Mentoring Programme – theory of change logic model



2.2 Data collection

The research team completed the following activities summarised in Table 2.1. Details of the methodological limitations, in particular relating to sample size, are detailed in Section 2.3.

Table 2.1: Summary of data collection

Data collection method	Participants/data source (type, number)	Data analysis methods	Research questions addressed
Qualitative interviews with programme participants, project staff and partners	Participants n = 4 Project staff and partners n = 5	Thematic analysis related to the intervention implementation questions	Intervention IPE questions
Quantitative monitoring data on intervention take-up	Data on 25 programme participants recorded by SFC using a data collection monitoring tool developed by the evaluation team in conjunction with SCF	Descriptive analysis	Intervention IPE questions
Online satisfaction survey to be undertaken following programme completion	Four participants used the survey tool, with one survey completion	Descriptive analysis reporting response rates	Intervention IPE questions

Interviews

All interviews were undertaken between April 2021 and June 2021. These comprised:

- Interviews with five agency stakeholders, including SFC project staff and partners (managers and frontline staff)³ – sampling of partners was based on individuals who had the most extensive knowledge of the project.

³ Given the small sample size, the individual agencies have not been named to preserve interviewee anonymity.

- Interviews with four young people. Given the low numbers of participants engaged with the project at the time of preparing for and conducting the interviews, sampling was opportune, based on who was available and willing to participate in the research.

The project staff and partners that were interviewed were identified by the project manager. They were contacted by email and asked if they would agree to be interviewed. Participant information sheets and consent forms were sent in advance, and verbal consent was gained at the beginning of the interview. The interviews were all around 60 minutes in length. The young project participants were recruited by their mentors in a relatively formal manner, with the mentor securing consent from parents, and then a convenient time was found for an online interview. This was more difficult, as interviews were arranged around mentoring sessions and therefore depended on the mentoring sessions taking place. In some instances, they did not occur and had to be rearranged. To provide flexibility, the researchers kept themselves available for impromptu arrangements, e.g. where they might be contacted in the morning to undertake an interview that afternoon. Again, verbal consent from the young person was gained, and these interviews typically ran for between 20 and 30 minutes.

In all interviews, schedules were used with a number of main questions and prompts. The interview schedules were developed by the research team, drawing on previous knowledge of similar projects, and interviewers could flexibly respond to the conversation. The interviews with project staff and partners were largely focused on process – how the project recruits and proceeds with its work, barriers to the work and so on – and the needs of the participants. The interviews with young participants focused on what they were getting from the service, the impact on their lives, the structure of the project and their relationships with their mentors. A sample interview schedule is included in the Appendix.

Interviews were conducted and recorded through Microsoft Teams. The audio files were sent for transcription, with the transcripts being read and analysed using a topic frame based on the IPE dimensions identified by Humphrey et al. (2016) – detailed in Section 1.3. Further themes were added, either as subcategories or new categories.

Monitoring data

Descriptive analysis was undertaken of monitoring data for 25 young people collected by the project (using a template provided by the research team). Details of the data variables requested are provided in Appendix 2.

According to the records, the young people commenced with the project between February 2020 and July 2021.

Survey

An online satisfaction survey tool was provided by the research team for young people to complete at completion of the programme. It was agreed that SCF staff would provide the online survey for the young people to complete.

As mentioned in Section 1.6, due to delays in signing off the data-sharing agreement, the online survey was implemented later than had originally been planned. Therefore, it was not possible to obtain survey responses from young people who had engaged with the programme at an earlier point in time.

Due to the small numbers of young people engaged with the project at the point when the survey was completed (and thereafter), only four young people used the survey tool. Of these, only one provided a complete survey response.

Given these limitations, no survey data have therefore been used in this report.

2.3 Interpreting the findings and limitations

In common with much evaluation research of similar projects undertaken by the research team, there were methodological limitations to this study that need to be understood when interpreting the findings. These are set out below. However, it is also important to note that both the delivery of the mentoring programme and the evaluation was undertaken during a period when the COVID-19 pandemic affected the access and delivery of the programme, with a subsequent knock-on impact on the data collected through the evaluation. Fewer partner agencies than intended were involved with the project, which necessarily limited which agencies and individuals could be recruited for the evaluation with sufficient understanding and insight into the project.

Given the small sample sizes providing qualitative and quantitative data, the findings from this report need to be read with caution. While the findings are as representative as possible of the data collected, the limited data necessarily limits the generalisability of the findings.

Interview data

The agency staff (project and partners) who were interviewed may not have represented the whole range of views among all these stakeholders. For example, the partner interviewees were sampled from one agency.

The original research design included *up to* six interviews with project delivery staff and managers and *up to* 10 interviews with partner agencies. This was predicated on there being more staff from SCF who were involved in the project and more partner agencies involved with the project who could provide insight into its operation: either referring into the project and/or receiving onward referrals from the project. During the interviewee recruitment phase – in discussions with SCF – the research team recognised that the numbers of agency staff with the requisite insight/experience was not achievable.

The young people who participated in the interviews were engaged with the project at the time of the interviews and therefore may not have represented the range of views of all the young people who SCF worked with. Additionally, the interviewees were both engaged and willing to participate in the research, which suggests that they were drawn from an even smaller pool of potential interviewees.

It was not possible to obtain the views of young people who had disengaged from the programme because this required contacting them via the SCF project staff, and undertaking interviews with the young people who were engaged with the programme supported though the SCF project team was sufficiently challenging. Additionally, it should be noted that there was insufficient budget/resources for the research team to track down and engage with disengaged young people to recruit them to be included in the study.

The original research design included *up to* 12 interviews with young people. During the interviewee recruitment phase – in discussions with SCF – given the low numbers of young people engaged with the programme at that point in time, the research team recognised that the number of young people interviewees was unattainable.

Monitoring data

This dataset represented 25 young people that the SCF worked with over the duration of the programme, specifically those who commenced the programme between February 2020 and July 2021. Complete records were provided for the majority of the data variables collected. However, for a small number of variables, data were limited. Further details of data limitations are presented in the findings section.

2.4 Analysis

Qualitative data

Thematic analysis was used to identify, analyse and report patterns (themes) (Braun and Clarke 2006). This was initially guided by the IPE questions set out above. The transcribed interview data were read and re-read several times. Pertinent data were grouped into themes provided by the dimensions of the IPE questions. Sub-themes from these grouped data emerged. The findings from the themes and sub-themes were then refined to ensure narrative cohesion in reporting.

Quantitative data

The monitoring data collected by SCF were analysed descriptively. The results of this analysis were considered in relation to the IPE questions. The quantitative data findings were presented alongside the qualitative data findings to provide nuance and/or additional insight to answer the IPE questions.

2.5 Timeline

Table 2.2 sets out the timeline for undertaking the evaluation

Table 2.2: Timeline

Date	Activity
November 2019–January 2020	Theory of change development
Collected for individuals who commenced the programme from February 2020–July 2021	Monitoring data collection
Undertaken between April–June 2021	Qualitative interviews
Completed by participants between 1 December 2020 and 22 April 2021	Satisfaction survey

3. Findings

3.1 Participants

Analysis of the monitoring data shows that 22 out of 25 participants were aged between 10 and 14 at the time they commenced the programme. These matched the 10–14 age criterion for the programme. Three participants were outside the 10–14 age criterion: two participants were 15 years old, and one participant was nine.

It should be noted that the other demographic characteristics of the young people engaged by the mentoring programme are provided here for context. Neither gender nor ethnicity were set out by the project as selection/exclusion criteria for the programme.

Analysis of the monitoring data shows that the overwhelming majority of participants were male (22 out of 25), with only three female participants.

In terms of ethnicity, just under half of the young people (11 out of 25) were recorded as black, seven of mixed ethnicity, three were white and four recorded as other ethnicity.

Table 3.1: Demographic characteristics of programme participants at commencement

Age	22 out of 25 were aged 10–14. One was aged 15. One was aged nine.
Gender	22 out of 25 were male. Three out of 25 were female.
Ethnicity	11 out of 25 recorded as black. Seven out of 25 recorded as mixed ethnicity. Three out of 25 recorded as white. Four out of 25 recorded as other ethnicity.

Family and education circumstances

Monitoring data on family and educational circumstances were recorded as a proxy for background information for potential risk and protective factors in the lives of the programme participants.

- **Family circumstances:** Four fifths (20 out of 25) of participants lived with one parent. The remaining five young people lived with two parents.
- **Looked after children:** Two of the 25 participants were recorded as being looked after by the local authority.
- **Statemented special educational need:** Three of the 25 young people were recorded as having a statemented special educational need (SEN). Fifteen young people were recorded as having no SEN, and no record was provided for seven young people.
- **School exclusion:** Four of the 25 young people were recorded as having been excluded from school in the previous 12 months. Seven young people had no school exclusions recorded. For the remaining 14 young people, no data on exclusions were recorded.
- **Pupil referral unit:** Two of the 25 young people were recorded as attending a pupil referral unit (PRU); 22 of the 25 were recorded as not attending a PRU; and for one young person, no record was provided.

Involvement with police

The overwhelming majority of young people (21 out of 25) had no previous contact with the police. Two young people had a single contact with the police. One had two contacts with the police, and one young person had more than two contacts with the police.

It should be noted that the records do not indicate the context for the police contact, e.g. whether as a victim of crime and/or in connection with committing an offence.

The limited level of young people's contact with the police reflects the intent of the mentoring programme to work with young people who had older siblings involved in the justice system rather than the participants themselves being involved in the justice system.

Referral sources

The monitoring data show that approximately two thirds of referrals (17 out of 25) to the programme were from social workers, one referral was from the Youth Offending Service and the remaining seven were from other agencies. This accords with the interview data from project and partner staff. The referral sources generally reflect the intended referral sources as set out in the grant application.

3.2 Intervention feasibility, reach and adaptation

This section addresses the questions:

How far was programme delivery consistent with design, identifying facilitators and barriers?

To what extent did the targeted young people come into contact with the programme?

Did the service diverge from its initial design? What was the nature of these adaptations and reasons for them? Were they beneficial or detrimental?

As detailed in the theory of change logic model (see Figure 1.1), the SCF mentoring programme was projected to work with 40 young people every six months, a total of 160 young people across the duration of the programme. Based on the monitoring data records, SCF commenced working with 25 young people during the 15-month period between February 2020 and July 2021. This indicates a gap between intention and what occurred in practice. Additional information supplied by SCF provides context for this.

SCF recorded a total of 36 young people who had access to the mentoring service. Of these, 11 young people did not meet the specific referral criteria agreed between SCF, YEF and the research team. Details of the referral criteria are reported below in this section.

In addition to the 36 young people who had access to the programme, SCF recorded over 70 other cases where staff explored diversionary intervention, although these young people did not receive support due to various reasons, e.g. they were not eligible, they declined the offer, delayed referral and change of circumstances.

This section aims to examine the factors that may explain these throughput figures, the extent to which the programme worked with the targeted young people (as set out in the theory of change logic model) and other phenomena that may have facilitated and/or inhibited the implementation of the programme as designed. As stated above, the findings have been grouped thematically in accordance with the dimensions of Humphrey et al.'s (2016) IPE framework. However, given the inter-relationships between phenomena that may straddle more than one dimension, it has not been possible to wholly align all relevant findings under one heading.

Project rationale

The interview data from project staff and partners indicated that the identification of the target cohort for the SCF mentoring programme – younger siblings of young people in the justice system – was made jointly by SCF and Barnet Council. This arose from an examination of data held by Barnet Council on the identified cohort of young people who were themselves not involved with services but had siblings known to the council. Allied with the identification of this cohort was the recognition that there was a gap in local provision for this particular group of young people. These points are illustrated by the following account from an SCF interviewee:

'The idea of setting up a mentoring project for a specific cohort of children came about between Barnet and St Christopher's looking at the data that Barnet had regarding that specific cohort of younger children who were not yet known to the services but had connections within the family to young people who were already known to the justice system. So, Barnet felt, and also we did feel, that there was a bit of... potentially a gap in the provision of preventative and diversionary support.' (Project staff)

Further, the commitment locally by project and partner staff to the programme's rationale of prevention and diversion for this at-risk cohort was intended to pre-empt the target group of young people from developing what could be deemed as problem behaviours, as illustrated by this partner account:

'I see in our youth offending team... I could probably go back to that child in Year 6 and say there was your evidence right there, that that was going to happen to that child... This is about... we know who these kids are, we know the ones that are at the greatest risk, so yeah, we're doing something sooner. We're not waiting for a problem to arise; we're not waiting for a school exclusion; we're not waiting. We're using our data intelligently because we know who these kids are, the ones that are at the greatest risk of going into a trajectory of criminal and mental health problems – let's get them help early.' (Partner staff)

The specific risk posed by the older sibling(s) of the young people who were intended to directly benefit from the SCF mentoring programme was that of normalisation (for the target group of younger siblings) of prison and/or the criminal justice system:

'It's the risk that the [older] sibling may have exposed the family to. For young people that might go to prison, you've got young people [younger siblings] growing up thinking this isn't as bad as it really is.' (Partner staff)

Misaligned rationale for estimating target numbers of young people

As detailed in Section 1.4, the grant application for this programme stated that the target projection of 160 young people over the duration of the programme was based on:

- the number of young people aged 10–18 who received mentoring interventions (delivered by SCF) in a different local authority area;
- the caseloads of the six mentors and manager for that programme, which was then adjusted for the three mentors and mentoring service manager who were budgeted to deliver the sibling programme in Barnet.

The rationale for this estimate appears to be misaligned to the sibling programme in Barnet for the following reasons:

- The 10–18 age range of the young people receiving the mentoring provision in a different local authority was wider than that for the Barnet programme, where the age range was 10–14 year olds.
- Eligibility for the mentoring provision in a different local authority was not predicated on having a sibling involved in or at risk of involvement in the criminal justice system.
- The estimate of young people to be target by the Barnet programme therefore appeared to be based on the number of young people who could be supported by the staffing resource rather than based on an estimate of the number of young people in Barnet who might meet the initial eligibility criteria.

In short, the projected numbers for the sibling programme in Barnet were not modelled on the projected numbers of young people with older siblings involved in the criminal justice or at risk of involvement in Barnet.

Development of programme referral criteria

The expressed commitment of SCF project and partner staff to the importance of engaging with this at-risk target group was challenged in relation to translating this into programme referral criteria.

The referral criteria set out below were developed by SCF following detailed discussions with the research team and were intended to address the following key objectives:

- *Replicability and scalability*: If the programme was rolled out and delivered in other local authority areas, the young people selected for inclusion in the programme elsewhere would be the same/similar to the young people in Barnet.
- *Objective, unambiguous and consistent*: This objective aimed to avoid potential variation from referrers in the assessment of what constitutes an ‘at-risk’ young person.

Aligned to the originating ethos and rationale for the programme, the original referral criteria set out in January 2020 as recorded in the theory of change logic model (see Figure 1.1) were:

Young people aged 10–14 with an older sibling who is:

- a) Already involved in the youth justice system, either on a referral order or out-of-court disposal; or
- b) Known or suspected to be at risk of entering the criminal justice system but not yet involved in the system.

Further iterations of the referral criteria were developed by SCF and Barnet Council in conjunction with the research team. This was in accordance with the YEF’s aims to robustly test the interventions they fund, which in this instance necessitated the referral criteria to be aligned with YEF’s objectives.

At the same time, it was recognised that the referral criteria needed to avoid inadvertently excluding young people who may have benefited from the SCF programme.

The significant challenge for SCF and Barnet Council was in determining ways to objectively and unambiguously define criteria that operationalised criterion (b): ‘known or suspected to be at risk of entering the criminal justice system but not yet involved in the system.’

The final version of the referral criteria was agreed between the SCF, the YEF and the research team in July 2020:

- 1) Children aged 10–14 with older siblings who are known to the justice system;
- 2) The older sibling(s) referenced in (1) meet one or more of the following criteria:
 - Subject to a reparation order
 - Subject to a referral order
 - Subject to a youth rehabilitation order (YRO)
 - Subject to a custodial sentence (including those spent in secure children’s homes, secure training centres and young offender institutions, for example, under a detention and training order or longer sentences under S.91 or S.226b)
 - Subject to an out-of-court disposal (O OCD), pre-court conviction, youth caution or youth conditional caution
 - Under the Probation Service (18+ up to the age of 25 or under 18 with bespoke family intervention from Troubled Families)
 - On a resettlement panel for transition to the Probation Service (usually aged 17)
 - On Vulnerable Adolescents at Risk Panel (VARP)
 - On Serious Adult Violence Panel (SAV)
 - On SEAM* Panel, with a score from 3 to 5 on ‘Association with gangs/criminals/peers and adults who pose a risk’ and/or ‘Recognition of abusive and exploitative behaviour receipt of unexplained gifts money’

*SEAM was changed to CEAM (Child Exploitation and Missing) in 2021.

Operation of the referral criteria

The interview data identified a number of challenges to the operationalisation of the referral criteria that appeared to have affected the number of young people referred to and taking up the mentoring programme. These are explored below.

It should be noted that, as demonstrated in Section 3.3, while the numbers of young people who took up the programme may have been low, those who did engage with the mentoring programme generally sustained their involvement over several sessions.

Age restrictions

Agency interviewees suggested that the 10–14 age range of the young people who were to receive the intervention acted as an inhibitor to referrals, although it should be noted that the grant application to the YEF (for this programme) was made on the basis that 10–14 year olds were the intended age cohort for this programme. Nevertheless, operating to such specific age criteria was new to SCF and the partner agencies, who were used to adopting a more flexible approach:

‘When you set an age group of a cohort of children you can work with, you are very limiting, particularly when it’s quite a specialist cohort of children. It should just be all siblings of children that are offending as opposed to only ones that are in that age bracket because as I say, they grow out of that age bracket very quickly.’ (Partner staff)

While these interviewees acknowledged that an age limit was required for the purpose of generating evidence, it made less sense in terms of service delivery because they suggested that age in itself was not necessarily a risk factor for a young person in developing potential problem behaviours:

‘If you spot a kid at thirteen [or] fourteen who is someone who really needs this service but by the time they’re going to get it, they’re going to be over the age range, it’s like, “What?” Do you exclude that child because they were born two months too early?’ (Partner staff)

Limited pool of appropriate young people

In support of the above point, the interview data indicated that local agencies had identified an initial ‘standing’ cohort of young people aged 10–14 that met the criteria of having an older sibling involved in the criminal justice system or on the point of entering the system near to the commencement of the project. However, once this cohort had been engaged by the SCF programme, there was a limited pool of other young people who matched the criteria. For example, one partner interviewee reported:

‘We’d identified all the children we could in that cohort prior to the pandemic. After the pandemic, we said, “Well, do you know what? Let’s go outside of those numbers because we need to make sure that we’ve got reach; we don’t have a new cohort of offenders coming in, so we’re not going to be able to identify siblings if we’ve got no older siblings that are committing crime”.’ (Partner staff)

The accounts of staff interviewees demonstrated that efforts were made to identify additional appropriate young people through the development of referral pathways via the resettlement, VARP and SAV panels that formed part of the referral criteria detailed above.

Parental perception as an inhibitor

Interview data suggested that the focus on young people with older siblings involved in or on the point of entering the criminal justice system meant that some parents did not feel their younger children needed any support or intervention. This meant that the mentoring programme was not able to work with them, as reflected in the following account:

'Thinking about it from a parent perspective, sometimes the parents are like, "The rest of the kids are amazing. They're fine. They don't need any support. It's the one that's involved [in the criminal justice system] that needs the support".' (Partner staff)

COVID-19 as an inhibitor of co-located service delivery

As detailed below, one of the perceived facilitators for the programme was the co-location of SCF staff with Children's Social Care staff, which had enabled joint working and sharing of information – factors that would have assisted referrals for the mentoring programme. This benefit was curtailed during periods of lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which interviewees reported had consequently resulted in low referral numbers. More generally, COVID-19 made it more difficult for SCF staff to promote the mentoring service to other professionals working with the potential target young people.

COVID-19 as an inhibitor of young people coming to the attention of local agencies

The interview data indicated that the COVID-19 lockdown had affected the number of 'at-risk' young people coming to the attention of local agencies, which had the knock-on impact of reducing the pool of young people who might be appropriate for the SCF mentoring programme. For example, a project staff interviewee reported:

'Children who stayed at home were less visible to services, apart from those who were already known to the agencies for various reasons. So, what I think we have missed on were new cases, new potential cases of young people who were potentially at risk... So, we were expecting around twenty referrals per quarter, and we have been able to pick up between five or six each quarter, on average, maybe. I mean, very roughly.' (Project staff)

Additionally, as observed by some staff interviewees, during the periods of lockdown, the young people were less exposed to the risks that the mentoring programme was intended to address, which further impacted on the number of potential programme participants:

'A lot of the potential new recruits didn't have the chance to be exposed to that, basically, to that risk; they were effectively staying at home. You know, in the first two or three months of the lockdown, the full lockdown, that's certainly true... that there has been a reduction in the number of children that could potentially be exploited.' (Project staff)

COVID-19 as an inhibitor of engagement with young people

More pointedly, the interview data indicated that the inability to work with young people in person had impacted on their engagement with the mentoring programme. While SCF staff attempted to engage young people virtually, this was not universally acceptable for all young people and may have run counter to expectations about young people's appetite for engagement via the internet, as illustrated by the following account:

'As much as everyone would have thought, young people would love to be on the internet and love to do things virtually; when it comes to speaking to professionals, it's not the same thing... I know that there's been a family that they [SCF] were working with where they found it difficult to engage them virtually, and then when they met them, the engagement completely changed.' (Partner staff)

Additionally, during the COVID-19 lockdowns, the interview data suggested that SCF and other youth services were potentially competing with schools for virtual space/time to engage with the young people and their families. During this period, there also appeared to be limited incentive for young people to engage with a professional. Young people appear to have adapted to being at home and not attending school in person, and they had no perceived immediate requirement to engage with a professional adult:

'Young people don't want to talk to us because everyone is at home. They're happy. It was the best time for kids being off school, being a kid, being told you don't have to go to school, so why would they then want to talk to a professional when they don't really have to.' (Project staff)

Mode of delivery and content

Analysis of the monitoring data shows that nearly three fifths (59%) of sessions with the young people (108 out of 183) were face to face, with the remainder (75 out of 183) delivered remotely.

Remote delivery was valued as illustrated by the recounted experience of one young person who was in COVID-19 quarantine at the time:

'I was in quarantine. I was like, you know, lonely, but then, they were there to talk to me... It was online because of the quarantine.' (Young person)

The content of these sessions was recorded/classified in 138 instances, which provided insight into some of the issues and concerns of the young people who engaged with the mentoring programme. Of these, relationship-building (22 of out 138) was recorded most frequently. This is reflected in the following comment from one young person:

'...it's like as if they were my friend... They were really helpful with like communicating with me.' (Young person)

School was the next most frequently recorded content classification (13 out of 138). Anger management, lockdown and meditation/mindfulness were each recorded on five occasions, and family, future goals and positive living were each recorded on four occasions.

Onward referrals

As detailed in the theory of change logic model, projected outputs from the SCF programme included young people being signposted and/or referred to other services following completion of the 10-session mentoring programme.

In practice, project staff suggested that there was limited scope to do this, given that SCF had limited influence on other services to take on the young people. Such limitations were also perceived to be exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic:

'From a signposting perspective, it's harder because obviously that's not in our control, and so it's not the sort of thing we should have in our project's official scope because we can't say we can sign... We can shout all we want into the wind, but no one is going to pick up on it, especially in times like this when everyone is feeling behind and working from home.' (Project staff)

The findings from the interview data were reflected by the monitoring data, which recorded 11 occasions in total where young people were signposted to other agencies, including Children's Social Care, Reach, Early Help, and CAMHS.

Shared systems

The interview data from project staff and partners indicated that access to a shared information system hosted by Barnet Council acted as a facilitator for the mentoring programme. This system was used by SCF staff and staff of other agencies – statutory and non-statutory – working in Barnet to record information on the young people they were all working with.

It enabled SCF staff to find out about the other services that were engaged with the young people they were working with and the young people's family history:

'Our staff have been provided with IT equipment for them to be able to access the information that is needed when we get referrals... For example, we get the name of a young person, and... we can check the family composition, for example, and see, you know, who are the siblings that we should be working with and stuff like that.. also who we should be speaking to about that family, you know, in terms of who's the allocated social worker... Also, we have a dedicated section in that system where we can record information about our sessions.' (Project staff)

Equally, it enabled other agencies to check case-note information recorded by SCF:

'I think communication with St Christopher's is very good. So, if there's anything I need to know, I can email them, and I get a prompt response, and because we use the same systems, it means I could also check a case note and be able to get up to date from that way.' (Partner staff)

Partnership arrangements and co-location

This shared information system appeared to be an integral part of the partnership arrangements that were enabled by the local authority. This approach recognised the roles that different agencies such as SCF played in providing services to young people in the borough, while also facilitating effective referral arrangements and enabling continuing professional development across agencies. The extent of the support for the SCF programme from Barnet Council through the local partnership arrangements and access to staff training and other resources is illustrated by the following partner account:

'We put a lot of time and energy into supporting them to do a good job. We help them find the children, and we partner them with our partners, so we get them access to schools and families and our early help systems. We join them to our strategic board meetings, and we treat them like they are a true partner in delivery for us, so they're not just another provider – they are delivering a core part of our service. If there's access to training, if there's access to resources [or] venues, we will help them, fund them and supply them.' (Partner staff)

Additionally, co-location of SCF staff with local authority staff was perceived as beneficial for fostering working relationships. For example, it was reported that SCF staff were *'sitting just next to'* the specialist children's social work team that worked with young people deemed to be higher risk. Although it was acknowledged that while local authority service managers *'have been on board'* with the SCF mentoring programme, this may not have been the case with frontline staff, where information about the SCF offer may not have been fully communicated to them. This is exemplified by the following project staff account:

'Sometimes at [an] operational level, the messages can be lost. Managers are on board, [and] they know what we can provide. [However,] when it comes to staff, sometimes that's where we might become less clear about what we can offer, what our remit is, what are they asking us to do sometimes.' (Project staff)

However, it was also acknowledged by SCF staff that the limited understanding and awareness of front-line staff was *'nothing out of the ordinary'* (Project staff) and may be an artefact of the general high turnover of staff in children's social care.

Notwithstanding the supportive partnerships arrangements that were in place, SCF struggled to attain the throughput figures for the project that had been projected during the early commencement phase of the project. For example, as highlighted earlier, COVID-19 had significantly curtailed the benefits of co-location.

Prior experience of support services

The interview data from project staff highlighted the potential for young people's prior experience of support services to shape their responses to further support, specifically that the young people *'might already have their guard up'* (Project staff) and were therefore less willing to engage with the SCF programme:

'We met a boy recently, and he was like, "Oh yes, I had a mentor last year. He worked with me for a year but nothing came from it".' (Project staff)

Clearly, this prior negative experience had the potential to act as a barrier to the engagement by SCF mentors with this young person and others who had similarly negative experiences. As a wider learning point for practice and policy in working with young people – and arguably vulnerable people more generally – the importance of a meaningful engagement between service user and practitioner is significant for the current and/or existing relationship but can also influence the success or otherwise of other relationships occurring in parallel as well as future relationships. Without wishing to unnecessarily burden practitioners, being aware of this additional responsibility is important, in addition to recognising that such a situation is recoverable. The interview data suggested that for this young person at least, the SCF worker managed to surmount this challenge and establish an effective relationship with them.

Interactive effects of other interventions

The interview data demonstrated that the SCF programme was not delivered in isolation from or in the absence of other provision. For example, interviewees reported that in some instances, SCF staff had visited a young person alongside someone from the youth offending service. Where such direct co-delivery was not taking place, interviewees acknowledged that the young people in receipt of SCF mentoring provision might have been receiving other support in parallel. Observations from staff such as the following demonstrate that, in some instances, interventions were jointly planned:

'It's that sense of, you know, joint intervention. You know, we're not coming with a magic wand, we're not the saviours, but working together is the way that we think it's most valuable. And, you know, also it's making sure that we take our own part of the bargain and make sure that others do the same.' (Project staff)

It was beyond the scope of this study to examine this further. However, these findings suggest there may have been interactive effects between the SCF and other support that may have impacted on the target young people, as illustrated by the following observation:

'As much as St Christopher's are doing their side of it, the support that we're doing, we're also involved in a family, trying to support where we can. So, it is a joint effort together kind of thing.' (Partner staff)

Additionally, as proposed by some interviewees, rather than being immediately apparent, the impacts of such interventions may be realised some years later. In addition, a change may not present as a direct change on the participant but as an indirect one, such as the way the young person may relate to other agencies (more positively) as a consequence of their engagement with SCF.

3.3 Dosage

This section addresses the question:

What was the level/amount of the service received by targeted young people?

Project staff acknowledged the limitations of the 10-session mentoring programme they were delivering. One described their intervention as an additional less formal intervention to existing provision that the young people might be receiving, as illustrated by the following account:

'... providing a little bit of extra and informal, professional insight or less formal, maybe, professional insight into these at risk young people.' (Project staff)

While the project staff voiced that the aims of the mentoring programme were diversionary, described as reducing the risk of offending and/or being criminally exploited or exploiting others, they acknowledged that the outcomes were more proximal, such as enabling the young people and their families to overcome their suspicions of professionals:

'... improve the general trajectory, if not of their whole life or even their current behaviours because it is only 10 sessions, it's pretty limited, at least of their engagement with professionals from thereon and their capacity to talk to social workers or YOT workers or whomever when they come to visit.' (Project staff)

This view of the intended outcomes of the programme from partners appeared to be more significant than those of the project staff, building the resilience of young people and enhancing their self-esteem, as illustrated by the following account:

'Building those trusted relationships is so important, and that's what mentoring is supposed to do – help them have some guided self-help in a way. Finding out what they're good at, recognising, having somebody else recognise that you're really good at this, giving them that positive affirmation, helping them access the things that are going to keep building on the things they're good at; fundamentally, it's resilience building and making sure that their characteristics that are positive and worthwhile and meaningful are recognised and promoted and valued and that they can see another individual sees them for what they can be.' (Partner staff)

Partner staff also recognised that the programme provided something more fundamental for the young people, described by one partner interviewee as *'a little bit of joy and positivity'*, where the family, due to financial disadvantage, were not able to pay for activities for their children:

'I know, speaking to a family where St Christopher's took them bowling, the children had never been bowling before, and that experience... it really was, I think, something that they'll remember for the rest... at least until they're an adult, that will really stick with them.' (Partner staff)

While limiting, the short time frame for the intervention was viewed positively by project staff because it focused their attention on determining what could be realistically achieved within the 10 sessions and what support needed to be in place after the 10-session period:

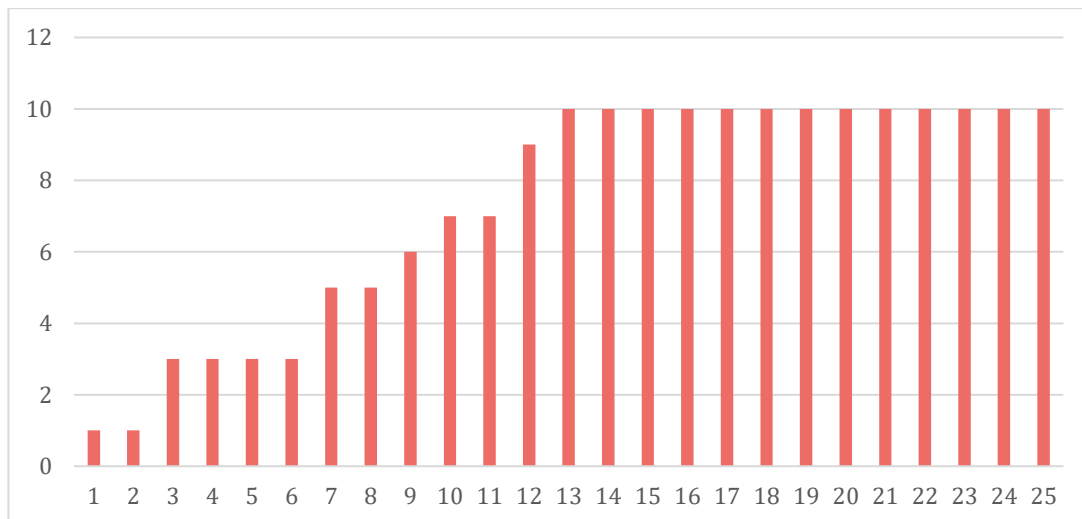
'I think the aspect of doing 10 sessions really helps because rather than say, "Right, we're going to work with you and achieve this," ...with us, it's like, "Okay, 10 sessions – what are we going to look at with you for a short period of time, in the whole scheme of things? What can we achieve in that time?" Or when it gets near the end, be like, "Actually, I'm not going to be here forever. What things can we put in place?'' (Project staff)

The interview data indicated that in some instances, project staff continued to work with the young person after the 10 weekly sessions had been completed, particularly where the young people had not engaged during each of the 10 weeks.

As shown in Figure 2.1, the number of sessions attended by individual young people ranged from one to 10, with the average (mean) being seven sessions. However, it should be noted that just over half of the young people (13 out of 25) attended 10 sessions, with two thirds (17 out of 25) attending six or more sessions. This suggests that the SCF mentors were generally able to engage with the young people and managed to sustain their involvement over several sessions.

The interview data indicated reasons for disengagement, which included families relocating to another local authority – meaning that it was not practical to continue the programme with the young person – and the young person losing interest, which appeared to occur during the early stage of the programme. One instance was cited where an older sibling appeared to have dissuaded the younger sibling and parents from disengaging with the programme.

Figure 2.1: Number of sessions attended by young person



Programme duration

End dates for the last point of engagement with young people were not recorded on the monitoring data. As a proxy way of assessing duration, the research team calculated the number of days between commencement date and the date of the session, recorded as ‘Celebration’ – with celebration providing a proxy end date.

‘Celebration’ as the purpose of a session was recorded for seven young people, and the results of the assessment of their duration on the programme are detailed in Table 3.2. This shows that for this small sample, duration of engagement ranged from 123 days (four months) to 408 days (13 months), suggesting that among these young people, mentors worked with them beyond the 10 weekly sessions that were envisaged. Additionally, it also confirms the interview data from project staff, which suggested that the sessions with young people did not always take place as consecutive week-on-week sessions. The interview data with the small sample of young people indicated that, at the time of the interview, the mentors had worked with these individuals for between three and six months.

Table 3.2: Duration of young people’s involvement with the SFC mentoring programme by days and months of contact

Days	Months
123	4
175	5
181	5
214	7
408	13
216	7
126	4

3.4 Quality and responsiveness

This section addresses the questions:

How well was the service delivered, including how far did it conform to regulatory or professional service standards/guidance?

How well did the programme engage with the young people, and did they see it as addressing their needs?

Mentor expertise and experience

The mentoring programme did not conform to any specific regulatory standards other than those that apply to working with vulnerable young people.

The interview data from young people, project and partner staff suggested that the SCF staff had applied youth work practice and principles in the way they engaged with the young people and, to large extent, were led by the young people in determining the activities that they jointly engaged in. The findings demonstrating this are presented in the following sections.

Engagement as an outcome

The interview data suggested that, while not explicit, effective engagement with young people emerged as an outcome in its own right for the SCF mentoring programme. The notion of engagement as an earned outcome rather than an immediate starting point for working with a young person is illustrated by the following observation:

'I think definitely with St Christopher's it is, I'm going to try and earn your engagement. I'm not someone that's just: come in here, and you've got listen to me, and you've got to do what I say.' (Partner staff)

This is exemplified by the account from a young person describing their first meeting with the mentor as a low-key encounter that focused on the young person's interests/concerns:

'The first time when we met, I think we were just talking, and we were just talking about movies and sometimes my school... what's happening in my school.' (Young person)

Persistence was required of SCF staff to work with some of the targeted young people, given their reluctance to engage. This included messaging and calling regularly and attending the young person's home to establish/maintain contact. Such efforts are captured in the following account:

'We can offer our services. We can offer to meet up, but if they're not willing to engage, what can you do, really? There's some that I'd be messaging and calling regularly... going to their house. There's a boy I worked with, a few times I went to his house, [and]

he wouldn't come out the door. I'd actually chat to him on his doorstep, him with his duvet over his head, and that would be a positive interaction... positive in relating to how difficult it's been.' (Project staff)

The requirement and capacity for the mentors to maintain their enthusiasm as a means of engaging with the young people was important as a means of establishing trust and enabling a positive relationship to develop. This is demonstrated by the following observation from a young person who regarded the mentor as their friend:

'They were brilliant. Yes, as I say, they were really, like, enthusiastic with all they were doing. They would help a lot. Now, how do I say? It was like as if ... it was like as if ... Yes, exactly, it's like as if they were my friend.' (Young person)

Benefits to the young people and their families

The interview data indicated that the SCF mentoring programme generated the following benefits to the targeted young people and their families.

Bridge between young people, their families and statutory services

Project and partner staff indicated that the SCF mentors had occupied an impartial role that was trusted by the young people and their families and had enabled them to interact more effectively with statutory services, as illustrated by the following observation:

'For the young people and the parents, so have someone they feel they can... someone they can recognise as an independent person and they feel they can trust. For some parents, for example, it has been really crucial that we have been able to sort of mediate between them and the statutory sector, for example. So, it has ensured the fact that the voice and the opinions of those parents were being actually heard and understood by those who are making decisions.' (Project staff)

Safe space for young people to explore their concerns and address loneliness

The interviews with young people demonstrated that the mentors provided them with opportunities to discuss their concerns, including incidents of violence experienced by the young people:

'They helped because like obviously, I had like someone to talk about what happened, you get me?... Because there was an incident that happened like, with me getting stabbed.' (Young person)

The interview data from the project and partner staff also suggested that the SCF mentors had provided a safe space where the young people could open up about themselves. This was particularly the case for young boys who were described as being *'very quiet, who don't give much away'* (Project staff). Perhaps importantly, it was acknowledged that without the

mentoring provision, the opportunity for the young people to explore their concerns and other issues may not have arisen.

This function of a safe space through the young person's relationship with their mentor was reflected in an observation from a partner interviewee:

'What they do is they give young people a trusted relationship with a positive adult, which they don't always have at home. Because they do have siblings that are engaged in criminal behaviours or group offending type of behaviours, they're often shrouded in a little world of secrecy as well, so they're fearful about telling people about what things might be happening, what they're worried about.' (Partner staff)

Additionally, online sessions with the mentors had helped one young person cope with their feelings of being lonely as a result of 'quarantining':

'[When] I was in quarantine, I was like, you know, lonely, but then they were there to talk to me.' (Young person)

Gateway to other provision and experiences

In addition to addressing the emotional and well-being needs of the young people, the mentoring programme also acted as a gateway to other provision. As examples of this function, agency interviewees reported that young people had been able to access football clubs, martial arts classes and sports equipment for use at home, in addition to returning to school. The young people interviewees reported being taken by the mentors to trampolining and Nandos. As reported elsewhere, in part, the mentoring provision appeared to offer up quotidian experiences that less financially disadvantaged families were not able to afford for their children, such as going bowling and/or eating in a café. The responsiveness of the project to the specific needs of young people was exemplified by the project enabling a young person to purchase a suit so that they could attend a prom and also use it for any future interviews.

Offering additional and alternative parental support

The accounts of project and partner staff indicated that the mentors provided reassurance to the parents of the targeted young people, in some instances acting as a proxy for the parents themselves, in particular where it was reported that parents were unsure about how to respond and support their children:

'It's knowing that maybe there's a safe, trusted adult in that space that's guiding them... I think it's quite reassuring [for the parents]. Parents want us to help their kids because quite often they don't know how to.' (Project staff)

In a similar way to the mentors acting as a bridge between the young people, parents and statutory services, the interview data also suggested that the mentors mediated between the parents and their children by providing advice and support:

'I think we're able to be the middleman in terms of dynamics with the young people and parents. Parents might say, "Actually, I'm finding this really difficult at home," but then we can talk to them and find ways, even though we don't work directly with the parents in terms of parenting support... They've been really grateful for, I'd like to think, just calling them, discussing how their kid's doing or just talking about the best way to liaise.' (Project staff)

Addressing safety needs

The interview data highlighted online and in-person safety as a significant issue for the young people that the SCF programme aimed to address. Online safety was exemplified in the account below pertaining to youth sexuality:

'On the online safety thing, we've worked with a few kids who... I mean, there's so many themes going on there. One would be around TikTok and not knowing how many people you're broadcasting out to... and especially sexualisation. We had one young person who went viral in a video, and this young person is 12.' (Project staff)

Concern was also expressed by agency stakeholders about the potential for young people to be exploited through online gaming:

'Online gaming is also a very socially risky thing; obviously, there's risk of exploitation online. For young people, they were sat at home, on their computers, playing with their friends, [and] we were really worried about exposure to inappropriate online content and grooming online during that period.' (Partner staff)

Physical safety concerns were also identified as issues for young people and were illustrated by the examples of project staff advising young people to adopt precautionary behaviour in relation to walking down a side road late at night and encouraging them to reflect on their personal safety where dressing in an expensive tracksuit could make them a potential target.

Managing attachment

As indicated above, the interview data suggested that the experience of young people with other prior services influenced their likelihood of engaging with the SCF mentoring programme and also how they engaged with the programme and other services operating in parallel.

As a corollary to this, the interview data also highlighted the need to positively manage the ending of the relationship between the young people and the mentors, given the relatively short-term nature of the 10-session intervention. This was described as a process of 'managing the attachment' of the young people to the mentors:

'Because I think we explain it from the start, hopefully, with most kids, especially kids who maybe are on the more mature side of things in terms of just envisioning what 10 sessions look like, I think they can moderate their attachment levels so to speak and know when they're getting out at the right time.' (Project staff)

This contrasted with the experiences that the young people had recounted to the SCF mentors about other mentors they had worked with, where the ending of support had occurred at the point when the relationship between mentor and young person was established. This suggested that the ending of the relationship was poorly managed.

In relation to ending engagement with younger people (within the target cohort), project staff reported that this could be more challenging than with older individuals within the target cohort. For example, the younger people forgot that the engagement was going to end and were less able to understand the timescales. Project staff also identified that this occurred particularly with young people who were reported to have autism.

Young person led

The interview data reflected the young person-led ethos of the mentoring programme, as set out in the theory of change logic model in Figure 1.1, in terms of flexibility and responsiveness to the needs and interests of young people.

For example, flexibility was manifested in timings about when the mentors engaged with young people, as illustrated by the following account from a young person:

'We got to pick like the times and all that. So, if I was busy, then I could tell them to call me later or whatever, and I thought that was really nice and good.' (Young person)

This was also demonstrated in the types of activities the mentors undertook with the young people, taking their cue from the young person's interests:

'They understood that I like to play games a lot, so they played games with me. They do like puzzles and stuff.' (Young person)

This negotiated and young person-led approach, which occurred at the point of delivery, is expanded upon by the following account from a mentor:

'We are led by young people in choosing part of the activities. So, I like to think that there is always a negotiation between what we bring into that relationship and what we bring into in terms of activities... but also give them a choice of what the session on that specific day is going to be all about. And, yeah, it's based around their needs and their wishes and things they are interested in.' (Project staff)

Inevitably, as recognised by the project staff, this young person-led approach was constrained by the resources available, which required the mentors to manage the expectations of the young people in relation to what activities could be provided:

'The negotiation about what is realistic and what isn't... for example, the young person who has been signposted to one-year football lessons. You know, we had to keep it to a level that was achievable and realistic.' (Project staff)

3.5 Service differentiation

This section addresses:

To what extent was the programme genuinely new and innovative? Did it offer support in ways not previously available to specific priority groups?

Non-statutory service

The interview data indicated that SCF staff were able to engage with young people and their families differently to that of statutory services, such as the Youth Offending Service. This appeared due to the voluntary opt-in nature of the engagement of young people and their families with SCF staff compared to a perceived compliance to engage required by statutory services. Additionally, the lighter-touch approach associated with SCF staff contrasted with the perceived requirement of young people and their families to comply with the expectations of statutory services. This is illustrated by the following account provided by an SCF staff member:

'I'd describe our project [as working] in parallel to the YOT work in a sense because that was all about these, I think it was six months I want this responsible behaviour. I said, "We'll talk about what's going on for you, but we can do it in these different contexts. We might have a bit more freedom around it".' (Project staff)

Maintaining this difference with young people and their families was regarded as vital by SCF. They operationalised this at an everyday level by SCF staff using identity badges to reinforce the perception of organisational differentiation and emphasising their acting as a separate organisation from the local authority. In addition, the role that SCF played – offering mentoring to young people – appeared to further mark out a functional difference between SCF and statutory services, as illustrated by this project staff observation:

'I think the minute you mention mentors or mentoring, automatically it kicks in, you know, the perception that we are... we're not really a social worker or... YOS officer. Yeah, it's something additional.' (Project staff)

Linked to this perception of difference between SCF and statutory services, it was acknowledged by all the agency interviewees that SCF staff were able to offer activities to the

young people and their families that would not be available for other agencies. This is illustrated by the following partner staff account in relation to SCF meeting a gap in the experience of the young person by, for example, taking the young person bowling, an activity that the young person's family was unable to provide:

'At the moment, parents haven't got the financial capabilities to be able to do a lot with their children...I know, speaking to a family where St Christopher's took them bowling, the children had never been bowling before, and that experience, it really was, I think, something that they'll remember for the rest... at least until they're an adult, that will really stick with them.' (Partner staff)

Unstructured nature of the mentoring programme

The interview data indicated that the unstructured nature of the mentoring programme was a significant point of differentiation for the SCF mentoring programme when compared to other interventions that the target young people might have been receiving:

'There's not something where there's someone that can come to your house and take your child out on a regular basis, that doesn't necessarily need to be very structured... With St Christopher's, there's definitely a higher level of flexibility in terms of the unstructured side [of] what they can deliver.' (Partner staff)

However, it should be noted that the design of the programme as detailed in the grant application suggested a greater degree of structure – around action learning sets and social pedagogy strengths-based approaches – than was reflected in the interview findings.

Development of online gaming as a means of engagement

The interview data highlighted the development and 'manualisation' of online gaming as an innovation that appeared to facilitate engagement by the mentors with the young people. This occurred during a later COVID-19 lockdown as a way to remotely work with young people that would be attractive to them, where overt remote support was perceived by young people and their families as a burden.

The accounts of project and partner staff illustrated that the joint activity of online gaming by the young people and mentors was a virtual hook to involve young people, in the same way that sport might be used as an in-person activity to engage young people. The conceptualisation of online gaming as an extension of youth work practice is exemplified by the following account:

'I guess, in some ways, things like the video gaming I think are reasonably good examples of pedagogy in practice in terms of meeting the kids where they're at and not thinking because we're professionals, we're not allowed to engage in... well, not on their terms.' (Project staff)

The manualisation of online gaming activities enabled the learning about how to use this activity with young people to be shared with other agencies across Barnet.

Organisational reputation

The reputation of SFC itself, based on past experience, was regarded by partner interviewees as giving them confidence about SCF's ability to implement the mentoring programme and deal with challenges that might arise, in addition to the SCF team involved in delivering the mentoring programme being able to draw on other expertise and support from the wider SCF organisation:

'St Christopher's is a big organisation; it's well established; they've got a strong ethos and values. When they hit a bump in the road, they're not fazed by it, and what they do really well is come together and say, "What can we do to get round it?" Go over it, problem solve and they do that really well, and I think they've evidenced that beautifully in the delivery of this programme. I think that having that wider organisational capacity around them is definitely a strength.' (Partner staff)

While not necessarily a significant point of service differentiation, the reputation of SCF within Barnet nevertheless appeared to have facilitated the partnership arrangements required for the programme to work.

4. Conclusion

The conclusions set out in this section need to be read and understood against the context of the limitations of the research methodology set out in Section 2.3, i.e. that the findings are derived from small interview samples of agency stakeholders and young people participants and the monitoring data analysis reported on above is also drawn from a small sample of participants. Therefore, there are limitations to the generalisability of the findings.

4.1 Evaluator judgement of intervention feasibility

In response to the overarching research question – *Did the programme achieve its intended outputs for the intended target group?* – the findings from this study show that the SCF mentoring programme as implemented was not able to achieve its intended outputs for the intended target group, i.e. young people aged 10–14 with older siblings involved in or at risk of involvement in antisocial/criminal behaviour.

There appear to be three sets of interrelated factors that may explain this.

Programme challenges: There were three challenges for the programme – setting robust, objective and unambiguously replicable referral criteria; recruiting sufficient young people to the programme that met the criteria; and addressing the inhibiting effect of COVID-19 on recruitment.

Referral criteria reducing the numbers of programme participants: While referral criteria had been set for the programme at the initial YEF bidding stage by SCF and local partners, these were drawn too widely and were subsequently refined during the first six months of the scheme. This was designed to address issues of programme replication and scalability that would be required for a pilot study. As the final criteria were much more specific and narrow, it was perhaps likely that the projected numbers devised at the initial bidding stage (by SCF) were not going to be met.

Inappropriate rationale for estimating projected numbers: It should be recognised that the rationale for devising the projected target numbers for the programme was inappropriate and did not align to the referral criteria set out in the grant application. These were detailed in the grant application and reported in Section 3.2. Therefore, the projected number of participants may not have reflected what was feasible within Barnet, irrespective of the programme challenges and reduction in numbers of programme participants due to the referral criteria.

Could SCF and their partners have done more to identify and recruit the required numbers? The findings suggest that SCF and their principal partner Barnet Council did make efforts to recruit through other sources, such as the VARP and SAV panels. However, it was acknowledged that there may have been a limited pool of young people from Barnet who

matched the criteria. After the 'standing' cohort of eligible 10–14-year-olds who had been offered the programme at the start of programme delivery had been exhausted, there were limited numbers to take their place.

However, it was not possible to unequivocally confirm this in this study. Further research would be required to estimate the potential numbers of young people eligible for this programme in Barnet and/or other comparable local authorities and whether the pandemic was not an inhibiting factor. Doing this would enable a determination to be made about whether there are sufficient numbers to viably deliver the programme for the purposes of a pilot study.

The COVID-19 pandemic hampered SCF in engaging directly with social services staff and other agencies to facilitate referrals of young people eligible for the programme. How much the pandemic affected recruitment is difficult to determine, given that it has not been possible in this study to accurately estimate the population of eligible young people that the programme could have drawn from.

The way in which the mentoring programme was implemented reflected three of the four features of effective mentoring programmes identified in the YEF mentoring toolkit (Youth Endowment Fund 2021), which was derived from the YEF-commissioned evidence review by Gaffney et al. (2021). These are detailed below.

First, the SCF mentors were professional youth workers, which reflects the finding from the YEF toolkit and evidence review that found larger impacts of mentoring when mentors had professional experience of working with young people.

Second, the SCF mentors providing emotional support to their mentees as part of a holistic process of engagement that also included facilitating access to leisure and other activities the young people were interested in. The YEF toolkit and evidence review found that mentoring had a greater impact when it provided emotional support to the mentee and where the mentor advocated for the mentee to ensure they had access to services and opportunities.

Finally, at the time of research, both of the SCF mentors were male. The monitoring data demonstrated that the majority of mentees (22 out of 25) were male. This reflects the effective practice guidance from the YEF toolkit, which identified that mentoring programmes with a greater proportion of male mentors and male mentees were more effective.

Should the SCF Protective Sibling Mentoring Programme proceed to a pilot study? It is recommended that this should only be considered once the following are further investigated:

- The likelihood of obtaining a sufficient cohort for a pilot randomised control trial from Barnet and other comparable local authorities, given that Barnet alone is unlikely to generate a sufficient number of participants;

- The appropriateness and replicability of the referral criteria for the programme as devised by SCF and Barnet Council; and
- A review of the theory of change that incorporates the learning from this study and answers to the above bullet points.

This might necessitate a further, more expansive, feasibility study than was possible for this report.

What learning can be drawn from this study for SCF and the YEF? It should be acknowledged that this programme was commissioned during the YEF's first grant round in 2019, during a period when processes and guidance for programme applicants were being developed. The research team are aware that more rigorous processes for programme bids and assessments have since been introduced by the YEF; therefore, what follows may have greater applicability to SCF. In the case of the YEF, the points below may already have been addressed.

It is recommended that the YEF ensure that provider organisations receive clear guidance at the bidding/development stage of their funding applications so that they:

- fully understand the requirements for setting programme referral criteria that adhere to the objectives of being replicable and scalable, objective, unambiguous and consistent; and
- linked to this, that they provide an estimated range for the numbers of young people they are expecting to work with to allow for the effect of unanticipated events that may impact upon participation numbers.

For SCF, it is important that they factor in such considerations when bidding for programme funding from a commissioner such as the YEF, where a comparable level of interventions testing is required. Most importantly, SCF should ensure that the rationale/modelling used to estimate the target numbers is aligned to the referral criteria for the programme and the locale where the programme is to be delivered.

More generally, given the optimism bias that occurs in planning (see Kahneman and Tversky 1977) and the inclination to generalise from the particular – for example, 'My grandfather smoked forty cigarettes a day and lived until he was 95, and he didn't get lung cancer'⁴ – it is further recommended that programme developers such as SCF should consider worst-case as well as best-case scenarios when estimating participant numbers. While risk planning and

⁴ The reverse being drawing the particular from the general, i.e. that people are less willing to apply research stating that smoking causes seven out of every 10 cases of lung cancer to individual risk. See <https://www.nhs.uk/common-health-questions/lifestyle/what-are-the-health-risks-of-smoking/>

mitigation may partly address this at the bidding stage, it is perhaps only after funding is secure that a more realistic assessment of worst-case scenarios can actually occur.

This feasibility study sits alongside the three other feasibility studies that the research team have undertaken for the YEF, where mentoring was the intervention, either one-to-one or in a group. This study appears to confirm the centrality of the relationship between the young people and the mentor/coach/caseworker (either one-to-one or in a group setting) as the key factor that has the potential to enable change in the young people. Based on the three feasibility studies undertaken by the research team, this appears to be independent of the hooks to engage young people, whether that be sport or online gaming. Importantly, it confirms the finding from Gaffney et al.'s (2021) evidence review of mentoring (based on three systematic reviews) about the positive effects on mentees of a good mentor-mentee relationship.

4.2 Implementation

This report has focused on the Protective Sibling Mentoring Programme delivered by St Christopher's Fellowship (SCF) in the London Borough of Barnet between January 2020 and September 2021.

Drawing on the findings detailed in Section 3, this section of the conclusion summarises the extent to which the programme as delivered addressed the dimensions of the IPE framework adapted from Humphrey et al. (2016). The headline findings are presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Headline findings of implementation evaluation

Research question	Finding
Fidelity: How far was programme delivery consistent with design, identifying facilitators and barriers?	Generally, the programme was delivered as designed. However, SCF and Barnet Council experienced challenges in specifying the referral criteria and recruiting the projected numbers of young people.
Dosage: What was the level/amount of the service received by the target young people?	For the small number of young people who participated, the programme was generally able to engage with the young people and managed to sustain their involvement over several sessions.
Quality: How well was the service delivered, including how far did it conform to regulatory or professional service standards/guidance?	SCF applied youth work practice and principles in the way in which they engaged with the young people and were led by the young people in determining the activities they jointly engaged in.

Responsiveness: How well did the programme engage with the young people, and did they see it as addressing their needs?	The programme was generally well received by the small number of young people who participated.
Reach: To what extent did the targeted young people come into contact with the programme?	The programme did not achieve the projected numbers of young people.
Service differentiation: To what extent was the programme genuinely new and innovative? Did it offer support in ways not previously available to specific priority groups?	The programme was viewed as offering a different type of intervention in Barnet for this cohort when compared to other local provision.
Adaptation: Did the service diverge from its initial design? What was the nature of these adaptations and reasons for them? Were they beneficial or detrimental?	The programme adapted to COVID-19 by providing remote delivery.

Fidelity

How far was programme delivery consistent with design, identifying facilitators and barriers?

The findings suggest that one of the significant challenges for SCF, Barnet Council and other local agencies was determining referral criteria in relation to defining ‘older siblings at risk of entering the justice system’ that met the objectives of being replicable and scalable, along with being objective and unambiguous.

Allied to this, SCF and partners found it challenging to recruit the projected numbers of young people intended during the development of the programme. While 40 young people were projected to be engaged with the programme for each quarter (three months), between February 2020 and July 2021, 25 young people were engaged with the programme. Many more young people (70) were identified and approached to be offered the programme but either did not meet the criteria or were not interested in being involved.

From the data available, the programme was delivered as intended, although it was recognised that the mode of delivery had been adapted to address issues arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. The SCF staff had adapted to working with young people in ways that the young people generally accepted and participated in, e.g. remotely and through online gaming.

Dosage

What was the level/amount of the service received by the target young people?

The programme intended to work with each young person on a one-to-one basis for 10 weekly sessions.

Of the 25 young people who engaged with the mentoring programme, just over half of the young people (13 out of 25) attended 10 sessions, with two thirds (17 out of 25) attending six or more sessions. This suggests that the SCF mentors were generally able to engage with the young people and managed to sustain their involvement over several sessions.

Quality

How well was the service delivered, including how far did it conform to regulatory or professional service standards/guidance?

In relation to conforming to professional service standards/guidance, the qualitative findings suggest that SCF staff applied youth work practice and principles in the way in they engaged with the young people and were led by the young people in determining the activities that they jointly engaged in.

Responsiveness

How well did the programme engage with the young people, and did they see it as addressing their needs?

The qualitative data suggest that the small number of young people who were engaged with the programme found it beneficial in providing them with opportunities to openly discuss their experiences and concerns. The families of the young people saw the programme as enabling them to engage better with their children; similarly, other services regarded the mentoring programme as facilitating engagement with their interventions.

Reach

To what extent did the targeted young people come into contact with the programme?

As reported earlier in relation to fidelity, SCF and other local agencies found it challenging to identify and encourage young people who met the referral criteria to engage with the programme. While a standing cohort of young people had been identified prior to and/or around the commencement of the programme, once these young people had engaged with the programme, agencies found it difficult to replace them.

However, the extent to which it was possible at all for the SCF and local agencies to meet the projected numbers remains unanswered, given that the rationale behind the original estimate (detailed in the grant application) was not aligned to the intended eligibility criteria for the programme.

Service differentiation

To what extent was the programme genuinely new and innovative? Did it offer support in ways not previously available to specific priority groups?

Within the borough of Barnet, the mentoring programme was viewed as an addition to existing services, working with a cohort of young people for which there was limited other provision. Delivery of the programme by SCF, a voluntary sector organisation, allowed for greater flexibility with regard to young people and their families choosing to engage with the programme compared to a perceived requirement to comply with statutory organisations.

The flexibility of the programme to directly meet (within reason) the requests from young people – for example, around joining a football club or playing computer games – was regarded as markedly different to other local provision.

Adaptation

Did the service diverge from its initial design? What was the nature of these adaptations and reasons for them? Were they beneficial or detrimental?

The programme was adapted by SCF staff to meet the challenges of COVID-19. Online delivery was utilised, and the use of gaming with young people as a hook for engagement was adopted and developed by SCF staff.

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Appendix 1: MMU Data Protection

The MMU Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) stipulates and relies on the following legislation.

GDPR art. 6 Lawful basis for processing personal data

MMU will process personal data under Article 6(1)(e) of the GDPR: processing necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest or in the exercise of official authority vested in the controller.

Per Article 6(3) of the GDPR and section 8 of the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA), MMU's study is in line with the university's powers under the Education Reform Act 1988, in particular section 123A and 123B:

123A higher education corporation in England has power—

(f) to carry out research and to publish the results of the research or any other material arising out of or connected with it in such manner as the corporation think fit.

123B Supplementary powers of a higher education corporation in England

(1) A higher education corporation in England has power to do anything which appears to the corporation to be necessary or expedient for the purpose of, or in connection with, the exercise of any of their principal powers.

GDPR art. 9 Lawful basis for processing 'special category' data

Any special categories of personal data used by MMU will be processed under Article 9(2)(j) of the GDPR: processing necessary for archiving purposes in the public interest, scientific or historical research purposes or statistical purposes and Section 10 of the DPA, which provides that processing meets the requirement in Article 9(2)(j) of the GDPR if it meets a condition in Part 1 of Schedule 1 to the DPA. Specifically Paragraph 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 1 provides that this condition can be used for processing which is:

Schedule 1(1)(4) This condition is met if the processing—

(a) is necessary for archiving purposes, scientific or historical research purposes or statistical purposes,

(b) is carried out in accordance with Article 89(1) of the GDPR (as supplemented by section 19), and

(c) is in the public interest

Appendix 2: Sample interview schedule

Interview schedule: Young Person

The interview schedule is a semi structured interview schedule. It will be used flexibly to allow participants to discuss their views, perceptions, attitudes and experiences in an open way. The topics will be introduced and explored with each interviewee. The amount of time spent on different themes will vary in response to the answers given by participants.

NB: text in italics within the guide denotes instructions to the researcher.

Introduction

- Introduce yourself and the Policy and Evaluation Research Unit (PERU)
- Ensure interviewees have read and understood information sheet and remind interviewee of the purpose of the evaluation (who it is for, aims of study, how their participation will help)
- Stress confidentiality and how *their* data will be used.
- Make the YP aware there are no 'wrong' answers and all their insights are important.
- Remind participants of the voluntary nature of their involvement.
- Remind participants that they are free to terminate the interview at any point without giving a reason and they don't have to answer any questions that they do not want to.
- Explain purpose of audio recording and confirm that they are happy to have the interview audio recorded - (offer note taking as an alternative if needed).
- Answer any questions that the participant may have.
- Ensure you have a signed consent form from the participant and have verbal consent prior to beginning the interview.

1) Background

Aim: to explore YP's involvement in the SCF mentoring programme.

- **Participant details**
 - Age
 - Gender
 - Ethnicity
- What town do you live in?
- **Participation history**
 - How long did you go for?
 - How did you first hear about them or get involved?
 - Can you remember what was going on in your life at the time? (*attempt to ascertain if any key transitions / changes happening or factors linked to the project aims*)
 - What did you think the mentoring (change as appropriate) was going to be about? *Prompt for following:*

- Who told you about the project
- What were you told about the project?
- How did you feel about doing it?
- Why did you choose to go to the sessions?

2) Involvement with the Interventions

Aim: to understand the participant's experiences of the SCF programme including the activities involved in any support the YP's received.

▪ Initial assessment

- Can you tell about what happened what you first met the project staff/mentor?
- Did they ask you do a questionnaire or test when you first started?
- Did they ask you about your family?
- Did they ask you about any problems you were having?
- How did you hear about the project?

If no

- How did the staff get to know you and what you needed?
- How was it helpful when staff understood you?
- How do you think they could have understood you better?

▪ Intervention activities

- Can you tell me about the types of activities you did as part of the sessions?
- How much say did you have in the types of activities you did?
- How have you found those activities?
- What have you enjoyed most / least about the mentoring so far?
- Have you ever done anything like this before? If you have what ways (if any) is this different or better from what you've done before?
Did you what you expected? Did they miss anything

▪ Support

- What help did you get during your time with the mentoring project? (*probe for any support with key transitions in y/p life*)
- What other help (if any) has the project linked you in with?
- How much do you think the project helped you get what you wanted?
- What help or support did you think was the most / least helpful?
- Was there any other help or support you didn't get? (provide a few examples of what support means if required)

▪ Project programme staff

- How have you found your mentor? *Probe for following:*
 - Professionalism
 - Ability to motivate / inspire
 - Extent to which they understand their needs
 - Consistency in staff members
- What are the most important things about your mentor and the way they worked with you? (*probe for the most important staff factors from the YP point of view e.g could relate to their problems*)

3) Impact

Aim: to explore what impact the programme has had on the individual participants.

▪ Impact on individual

- What difference (if any) has the mentoring sessions had on your life? *Allow for spontaneous responses initially and then probe for factors relevant to the aims of the SCF programme:*
 - Improved relationship building (e.g. making friends)
 - Improved health and well-being (e.g. feel healthier)
 - Offending (e.g. not get in trouble as much)
 - Education, employment and training and opportunities
 - Development of new skills (e.g. got better at certain things)
 - The way you feel about yourself (e.g. feel less scared or worried all the time)
 - Ability to deal with significant life changes (e.g. better at dealing with things happening in my life)
- Did the mentor ask you about the effect the sessions had had on you?
- How did they do this (e.g. did you have to fill something out like a form?)

If they have used a form:

- Did you find filling out the questionnaire/test was useful?
- Did you fill anything out at the end of your time there?

4) Overall assessment

Aim: to explore overall satisfaction with project and support received and any suggestions for improving / changing the project.

- How happy are you with what you did in the mentoring project overall?
- Would your life be any different if you had not taken part in the sessions with your mentor?
- Was there anything else you wanted to get but didn't? (activity)
- What has been the most useful for you, when taking part in these sessions?
- If someone else was thinking about taking part, what would you say to them?
- What (if anything) would you change / improve about the sessions or the mentors?

5) To close

- Is there anything that we haven't talked about that you would like to add?
- Do you have any questions for me?

Remind participant of the information sheet and who to contact should they have any concerns or questions following the interview.

Check whether they have any further questions about the research.

Thank them for their participation.



youthendowmentfund.org.uk



hello@youthendowmentfund.org.uk



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